

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JOINT MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Monday, December 10, 2012
8:00 AM**

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CALL TO ORDER

A special Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee (SC) was called to order in open session at 8:10 am by Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Jones and Rojas were present. Town Administrator David Kale and Assistant Town Administrator Kellie Hebert were also present.

School Committee Members Present: Chair Laurie Graham, Anne Lougée, Pascha Griffiths, Laurie Slap, Kevin Cunningham, Dan Scharfman.

School Department Members Present: Interim Superintendent Tom Kingston, Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias, Director of Finance Anthony DiCologero.

Chair Paolillo outlined the context for the meeting. He stated that he would like to start the annual budget process together with the SC to ensure a "one-town, one-budget result."

SC Chair Graham asked Mr. Cunningham (of the School Committee Finance Subcommittee) to review some of the budget-related events on the School Committee's calendar.

Mr. Cunningham reviewed the following ongoing and upcoming initiatives:

- There is a new educator evaluation system and this will be especially useful as a method to foster innovation.
- There are recent reviews of Special Education costs as well as other School Committee projects just completed or underway.
- The SC has extended the interim superintendent contract with Dr. Kingston.
- An enrollment advisory committee has been established to consider ways to deal with the recently-increasing enrollment at the schools.
- The NEASC report (regarding accreditation of the High School) is being addressed.
- There will be solar installations at Wellington (the only "solar-ready" school).
- There is a new principal at the Wellington School.
- A High School building advisory group has been formed and MSBA outreach started.
- There are ongoing meetings with Education Subcommittee of the Warrant Committee.
- Looking ahead, the SC will explore an initial budget internally in January, and work to finalize conditions for land transfer for the library, hold public forums, and complete the budget process through Spring.

Mr. Kale clarified that the sooner the SC can deliver its conditions for the land transfer, the better, as the feasibility study (for preparing that land for new uses) is moving forward.

Dr. Kingston then reviewed several topics.

The School Department, he started, has recently adopted strategic goals. He noted how these goals will inform the FY14 budget, and how a longer-term document will evolve and include focus on an educator evaluation system and its role in improvement strategy. Mr. Cunningham clarified that the Finance Subcommittee is working to establish benchmarks in order to demonstrate progress toward the long-term goals set out by the School Department.

Dr. Kingston also mentioned the recent NEASC report and its implications. He raised the question of whether continued membership makes sense for Belmont. He noted that Burlington has withdrawn from the Association.

Dr. Kingston then informed the Board that a teleconference meeting with the MSBA has been arranged for December 17, 2012. The community advisory group will be present. Chair Paolillo asked how the Board of Selectmen can support the process of planning for a necessary high school renovation.

Mr. Cunningham noted that having the High School project in flux complicates the budgeting process, as the School Department does not have a clear long-term framework for what to replace, what to fix, and what to ignore, in what time frame. Chair Paolillo agreed and added that there is a significant mix of capital and operating needs facing the School Department. Dr. Kingston observed that the complex combination of state and federal funding uncertainties contribute to making the FY14 budget especially hard to predict.

Mr. Kale reviewed the following points:

- a) On December 17th, the Board of Assessors will deliver basis for taxation from which tax rate is derived.
- b) Long-term schedule for debt exclusion will allow future planning for capital debt.
- c) The Town Administrator's Office is gathering other information regarding health rates, pension's costs and other significant budget factors.
- d) Free cash certification from the DOR is expected soon.
- e) FY14 budget calendar, with balanced budget submissions by February 11, capital budgets somewhat later.
- f) Next joint meetings are scheduled for January 14th and February 4th.
- g) Non-budgetary Town Meeting materials will be submitted to Town Clerk by early April.

Mr. Paolillo suggested that both boards (BOS and SC) present budget overviews at the April 29th session of the Annual Town Meeting even though no financial votes will occur at that time. The budget overviews will address the Board of Selectmen's position regarding any potential need for an override decision.

Mr. Cunningham thought it might be useful to clarify in what ways the FY13 budgeting process was different from the process in previous years. Mr. Kale replied that the Warrant Committee will continue to work with the Town Administrator's office to project revenue and propose an allocation between the schools and other town departments as the basis for budgeting. The revenue estimation will be adjusted as the updated information becomes available. His office, he said, will play a central role in generating revenue projections.

Regarding school enrollment issues, Selectman Rojas noted that school enrollment may be affected by new development as well as current growth. This potential increased enrollment will drive many costs, including the possible need for additional classrooms. This comment led to a general sense that additional joint meetings between the Board and the SC will be necessary going forward. The meetings will promote joint leadership should projected revenues not meet the projected needs. It will also be useful to meet again to promote joint planning when enrollment projections become clearer.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 am.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator