

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **February 15, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

- Present: Chair Allison; Members Baghdady, Becker, Brusch, Dash, Grob, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Millane, Sarno; School Committee Representative Slap

- Members Absent: Epstein and McHugh

- The meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm by Chair Allison.

- Chair Allison began by reviewing the evening's agenda items.

- ***FY12 2nd Quarter Results (Town)***

- Chair Allison thanked the Town Accountant, Chitra Subramanian, for her efforts in creating the second quarter report. Ms. Subramanian then reviewed the report. She noted that the property tax number was adjusted, as was number for the ambulance receipts. She noted areas where revenues exceeded expectations: FEMA, state aid, and the electric light board.

- Regarding expenditures, she said that, while overall the town side was on budget, the third quarter report would be more informative. She noted that the reserve fund transfers that the WC previously approved had occurred. She then reviewed the enterprise funds (water and sewer), noting that those accounts were on budget.

- Member Libenson asked questions about the snow account and the public safety account. Members Sarno and Becker asked various questions as well. Chair Allison asked Ms. Subramanian to explain the "tax recap." Ms. Subramanian explained that it was the town budget, both revenues and expenses, as examined and accepted by the state Department of Revenue.

- Chair Allison then reviewed the rationale for the WC review of quarterly budget numbers. She noted that 1) since the FY13 budgets are developed by projecting from a FY12 base, a significant change in the FY12 base would require a reexamination of the FY13 number, and 2) the current available revenue number for FY13 assumes that there will be \$2M available in cash reserves that can be transferred to support FY13 expenditures; if there were to be unexpected expenses in FY12, that would reduce the cash reserve available to support FY13 expenditures. Ms. Subramanian then discussed the timing of the availability of the FY12 quarterly results. She noted that, although a report on expenditures could be available within two weeks after the close of a quarter, providing the WC with quarterly results for revenues required 2-3 additional weeks. She

noted that Belmont has a conservative approach to budgeting, which bodes well for the overall budget process.

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- Regarding format, Chair Allison said that the lining up of budget numbers is helpful. She noted that, under operating expenditures, it was not clear if the numbers had been adjusted or if this was the budget approved by TM last May. She asked if these numbers were consistent with the budget approved by the TM in May 2011. Ms. Subramanian confirmed that they were.

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- The WC then discussed, with the Town Accountant, the budget with regard to the processes. Member Libenson suggested color-coding sections of the budget: green = looks good; yellow = pay attention to this area; red = not at all going well. It was agreed that this would be a useful addition.

Risk and Opportunities Update (Available Revenue Numbers)

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- Chair Allison asked SC Rep. Slap to give this update. SC Rep. Slap reported that the \$300K opportunity flagged by the Assessors is a one-time event. She summarized the Assessor's plan for finalizing new growth numbers, and noted that she and Chair Allison reviewed the recap sheet.

Subcommittee Reports

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- **Culture and Recreation:** Member Lynch noted that C & R met to get organized and that they have schedule future meetings. He said they will meet with department heads in the next two to three weeks.

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- **Education:** Member Bruschi said the subcommittee is in close contact with the School Committee's Finance Committee. Questions have been submitted to the SC and answers are forthcoming. She said there is a draft report and that they are adding a section which includes all of the school's sources of funding. Member Bruschi noted that assistance will be needed with regard to Minuteman.

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- **General Government:** Member Millane said the seven departments will be combined into two general groups: financial, and administrative. Major issues have been identified and are being addressed.

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- **Public Safety:** Member Libenson said they are meeting with the Chiefs and that attention has been paid to the Fire Department OT budget. He said that there are issues with regard to core staffing questions. Regionalization will be looked at, and Belmont will be compared to other towns.

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- **Public Service:** Member Dash said that meetings are occurring with department heads and that the same issues with regard to deferred maintenance have arisen. He said trash and recycling costs are down. He added that the street light budget will be adjusted downward. He noted that the incinerator site will need to be dealt with and that the

combined facilities with school and town is moving very slowly because of the Town Administrator's staffing changes.

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- Chair Allison reviewed a template for the budget report, using the library as an example. She said a more standardized approach to the report would be useful since subcommittee memberships change from year to year. She reviewed the Section/Status template for the library, noting some of the more interesting data that arose. She requested that the WC members forward questions and comments to her so that they can be pulled together and passed along to future subcommittees.

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- ***BOS Budget Discussions Update***

- The Town Accountant provided this report, as BOS Chair Jones was not at the meeting. Chair Allison asked if the Board is planning to review and revise budget submissions. Ms. Subramanian said the various budgets are presently being reviewed by the Board. On the school side, Rep. Slap said the next iteration for the school budget is in process and that the SC Finance Subcommittee is meeting again on Friday to discuss the budget. She said the SC is reviewing the budget with the public this week.

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- **WC Planning Calendar**

- Chair Allison then reviewed the WC's Planning Calendar. She asked about the TM budget date: is it May 14th? Chair Allison said that this date might be difficult depending on legislative changes to the budget. Member Bruschi said the local aid number could be locked-in in mid-March, and that is the number that is concerning to Belmont. However, if that doesn't happen, the local aid number will be known in late April. This will only be a problem, Bruschi added, if there are local aid changes.

- The WC discussed the potential calendar dates.

- Chair Allison suggested that next week, February 22, the subcommittees could meet during the WC meeting time. The WC will meet again as a group on February 29 with March 7th being held open for subcommittee meetings, as well.

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- ***TM "Hot Wash" and Followup***

- Chair Allison asked the WC what was done well and what could be done better next time with regard to TM? What, if anything, was learned? Member Sarno suggested a more thorough presentation to TM on the Article 2 amendments. Member Manjikian agreed that the WC could have made a stronger case for its amendments. Member Lynch offered that BOS Chair Jones did an excellent job presenting the dual WC/BOS support for the amendment. The WC discussed.

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- ***Public Contributions***

- There were none.

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- ***Announcements/Updates***

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- Chair Allison reminded subcommittee chairs that they should post meetings by Friday in order to meet on Wednesday (due to the Monday holiday).

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- ***Approval of Minutes***

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- The minutes of 1/25/2012 were approved with one abstention.

- The minutes of 2/1/2012 were approved with four abstentions.

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- ***Wrap-Up/Adjournment***

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- Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:07 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary