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**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

**FEBRUARY 12, 2014, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Allison, Baghdady, Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Sarno; BOS Chair Paolillo; School Committee Representative Slap

Town Administrator Kale, Assistant Town Administrator Marshall, Superintendent Kingston, Assistant Superintendent Darius, Finance Director DiCologero, Selectmen Rojas and Jones, SC Chair Graham

Members Absent: Bruschi and Mennis

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Libenson. Chair Paolillo called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:32 as well.

Chair Libenson began by turning to the first item on the agenda.

Initial Budget Presentations – School and Municipal Budgets

Town Budget Overview

Mr. Kale noted that while this is a balanced budget, the budget process continues to evolve. He noted that crafting the FY15 budget began last fall and has been collaborative with both town and school departments.

The total budget is \$94,868,500, which is an increase of 3.4%. Most of the revenue (80%) comes from property taxes. The town and school allocations are \$46,248,000 and \$46,156,000, respectively. Mr. Kale said there may be more money available from the state, once the House and Senate submit their budgets in the Spring.

Mr. Kale reviewed the major changes in revenue and expenditure assumptions as well as the FY15 expenditures by function. He noted where revenue estimates were adjusted upwards since last November (amounting to a total increase of \$858K). The Minuteman assessment was reduced by \$146K, as a result of fewer Belmont students attending Minuteman. Additional state aid, totaling \$552K, came in as well.

Regarding expenditures, Mr. Kale noted that 49% of the total budget is allocated to the schools. He pointed out that 70% of the budget goes to salary and other benefits for both the school department and the town. He reviewed where the other 30% is expended. The Capital Budget has been allocated \$1.245M to support capital projects.

Mr. Kale noted that \$200K has been allocated to support sidewalk repairs across town.

He reviewed the FY15 revenue assumptions, noting again that 80% of the revenues come from property taxes. Other sources include recreation fees, state aid, ambulance receipts, free cash, building permits, and other taxes.

Mr. Kale then reviewed where money is spent on the pavement management program. He noted that while Belmont did not receive state grant money for Belmont Center, a financing plan will likely be identified, in the near future, for the Belmont Center Reconstruction Plan. The amount needed is \$2.5M.

Mr. Kale reviewed the use of reserves used to balance the FY15 budget. He reviewed where new growth was applied, as well as where free cash was used. He noted that there are additional program priorities that were not able to be funded. He reviewed areas that would be restored, if additional funding is made available. Some examples include: a School Resource Officer, more funding for Capital projects, additional road repairs, and various personnel positions.

WC Discussion

Member Baghdady suggested that free cash not be relied upon for ongoing budget needs. He added that while this is a “good year,” the town clearly needs a free cash policy. Mr. Kale agreed. Member Fallon asked what money would be needed to fund the areas that are not presently funded.

BOS Chair Paolillo stated that the Board intends to meet with the Department Heads later in the month. He said he would like to see additional funding put toward the town’s capital needs and a School Resource Officer. He agreed that a free cash policy is needed.

School Budget Overview

Dr. Kingston said that working with Mr. Kale has afforded a smooth and cooperative process. This budget, he said, continues to be a work in process. Dr. Kingston stated that the budget is balanced, is technical in nature, and conforms with the strategic goals that inform the budget priorities.

He reviewed the primary budget objectives: maintaining Belmont as a Level 1 District, implementing the strategic objectives, meeting the existing contractual commitments. He noted the need to hire 18 FTEs (in FY14) to meet increasing enrollment. These positions will need to be carried forward in FY15.

He then reviewed the technical budget assumptions, including the allocation from the town, Chapter 70, Minuteman levy, grant funding, LABBB credit, athletic based fees, and Capital Endowment money.

Unknown variables, which will impact the budget, include the results of collective bargaining, an unknown increase in enrollment, legislative additions/deletions, and

increases or decreases in federal grants. He noted that the overall budget has increased by 4%, which does exceed 2.5%. This is a concern, he said.

Primary cost drivers include salary obligations (2/3 of the budget), increased student enrollment, and mandated SPED costs (increasing 3-7% a year).

He then reviewed what the available revenue cannot support, e.g., 12 new positions, a School Resource Officer, reduction of any fees, a reduction of class sizes, etc. He reviewed the department's priorities if more funding was made available, e.g., additional staff at the elementary and middle schools, more guidance support, instructional materials, etc.

WC Discussion

Member Fallon asked about infrastructure needs. Dr. Kingston provided a broad overview of the needs, especially the impact of the increased enrollment.

BOS Chair Paolillo adjourned the Board of Selectmen at 8:34 p.m.

Chair Libenson said that while the budget seems manageable, the increased enrollment poses a challenge that will need to be dealt with in the very near future. Dr. Kingston spoke to the overall causes of the increased enrollment.

CPA Projects – Review of Responses Received

Chair Libenson reviewed which projects would be discussed this evening, noting that the **First Time Homebuyer Assistance – \$375,000** and the **Underwood Pool – \$2,000,000** will be addressed when the WC meets again on February 26.

JV Field Irrigation Upgrade – \$8,700: The WC agreed that there is sufficient information to vote on this.

Member Sarno moved: Favorable action on this project.
The motion passed unanimously.

Electrical Upgrade – \$165,000: Member Epstein raised a question concerning this project and asked if the rents could be adjusted to cover the needs. The WC agreed that there is sufficient information to vote on this.

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable action on this project.
The motion passed unanimously.

Daniel Butler School Playground Project (Phase II) – \$66,524: The WC agreed that there is sufficient information to vote on this.

Member Grob moved: Favorable action on this project.

The motion passed unanimously.

Winn Brook Field Renovation – \$100,000: The WC agreed that there is sufficient information to vote on this.

Member Fallon moved: Favorable action on this project.
The motion passed unanimously.

Belmont Community Moving Image Archive – \$12,000: The WC agreed that there is sufficient information to vote on this.

Member Dash moved: Favorable action on this project.
The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Libenson highlighted several overarching CPA project questions. Selectman Rojas provided some information on various 2013/2014 projects. Mr. Kale provided the breakdown of town and state money that constitutes the CPA funding. Member Fallon offered that many of these projects will take more than one year to complete. Selectman Rojas agreed and added that this money is not meant to bond large projects. There is a five-year moratorium on bonding larger projects. Selectman Rojas discussed that the \$2M allocated to the Underwood Pool will go back into the CPA fund if the debt exclusion does not pass (on April 1).

Minutes Approval

The minutes of 1/8/14 were approved with two abstentions.
The minutes of 1/29/14 were approved with no abstentions.

Updates: Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board

Board of Selectmen: Selectman Rojas said that the Board has been focused on the budget and heard the Underwood Pool presentation on Monday evening.

School Committee: SC Rep Slap said that the SC has been focused on the budget and that the collective bargaining process has begun. Dr. Kingston will meet, beginning this spring, with the new Superintendent.

Planning Board: Member Baghdady said that the Planning Board will hold a working session to review zoning and to address the resident's moratorium.

Public Contributions

There were none.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:15 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary