

Town of Belmont  
Capital Budget Committee  
Belmont Town Hall, Room 4  
Thursday Evening, March 1, 2007, 6:30 p.m.

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order about 6:35 p.m. The following members of the Committee were present at the time of the call to order: John Bowe, M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte, Jennifer M. Fallon and Ann Marie Mahoney. Also present were Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator, and Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee. Angelo Firenze joined the meeting during the discussion of the Fire capital budget request. Various other persons who attended parts of the meeting are identified below.

The Committee had the following material before it:

1. Agenda for the meeting prepared by Mark Clark, Secretary.
2. Revised summary spreadsheet, prepared by Barbara Hagg (attached to Agenda).

Additional materials were distributed in the course of various presentations, identified below.

Preliminary Discussion  
(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)

No draft minutes were presented for action and there was no preliminary discussion. Mrs. Brusch invited the Fire Department to begin its discussion immediately.

Fire  
(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)

The Fire Department requests for the FY 2008 Capital Budget were presented by David Frizzell, Chief of the Fire Department. He was assisted by Angus Davison, Assistant Chief of the Fire Department.

The Committee and Chief Frizzell reviewed the remaining balances on previous capital appropriations. During the discussion, the Committee and Chief Frizzell agreed that the balance for "Design Fire Stations" (\$9,544.24) should be shifted to the building committee for the fire stations. The balance for the "Shift Filling Software" (\$643.19) can be reallocated. All other balances related to on-going projects and should remain.

Chief Frizzell and Assistant Chief Davison had with them two new document that they distributed to the Committee. The first was a memo from Chief Frizzell to the Committee, dated February 28, 2007, giving current pricing for the Department's five-year projection of capital budget requests. The second was a color photo of the truck that is the subject matter of the Department's second request.

1. The first request from the Fire Department is for replacement of a 1998 staff vehicle/shift commander's vehicle. In response to a number of questions from members of the Committee, Chief Frizzell explained that the existing 1998 vehicle is now costing more to maintain. A new vehicle would be used as the shift commander's vehicle but the vehicle currently used for that purpose would not be disposed of. It would be reassigned for service. The current shift commander's vehicle is a 2004 Expedition. The Department would most likely purchase another Expedition. There is a 2007 Explorer on order to replace one that was damaged in an accident.

2. Chief Frizzell explained that the 1991 Ford truck which the Department wishes to replace is used primarily to pull the trailer and equipment for trench rescue. Although it has only 60,000 miles of use, it leaks oil and a repair would require removal of the engine at a cost of \$5,000. A replacement vehicle would include a plow and could be used for clearing the new fire

stations and the yards around them. This would facilitate moving Department vehicle's during winter weather. The 1991 Ford Utility truck (which is pictured in one of the documents distributed by Chief Frizzell) was originally obtained by transfer of a used vehicle from the Water Department.

Members of the Committee presented two lines of inquiry regarding this matter. First, is the question whether the rescue services, which is the truck's primary use, can be shared with another town and the second is whether another used vehicle is available among the Town's departments. With regard to the former, Chief Frizzell pointed out that the rescue equipment on the trailer which this truck tows is used for trench rescue and rescue from confined spaces. Many of these rescues pertain to Town employees, particularly water and sewer employees or light department employees who are working in trenches. These rescues are time-sensitive and waiting for other communities to respond is not appropriate. In response to a question from Ms. Fallon, Chief Frizzell reported that Hopkinton had been involved in a successful regionalization of this sort of rescue vehicle but emphasized that it was, in his view, successful because none of the towns involved had any rescue equipment of this sort before they decided to join in a regional arrangement. Mr. Firenze suggested that Mr. Younger contact Lexington to see whether there is a sharing arrangement possible in which the use of a truck could be traded for use of the rescue equipment.

With regard to the idea of replacing the 1991 truck with another used truck, Chief Frizzell explained that the Department of Public Works had a truck, identified as number 9, that it had considered disposing of and donating to the Fire Department. The Department of Public Works has withdrawn this offer, having concluded that it can get another year of use out of number 9 and it would, therefore, not be in the best interest of the Department of Public Works to request a new truck at this time. Mr. Firenze pointed out that such a conclusion might make sense from a department point of view but that it might not make sense from a town-wide point of view. He observed that if the Town is going to buy a new truck, it might better be for the Department of Public Works rather than for the Fire Department.

3. Chief Frizzell explained that the request for the first phase of radio system upgrade is occasioned by the frequent diversion of the ambulance from Mt. Auburn Hospital. Chief Frizzell pointed out that Mt. Auburn has a 50% diversion rate. When diverted, the Belmont ambulance goes to Lahey Clinic, Beth Israel or St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Belmont's radio coverage is not adequate to reach these more remote destinations. Cambridge, which uses Belmont's radio tower for its back-up equipment, has offered to permit Belmont to install equipment on its radio tower at the Court House in East Cambridge.

In response to a question from Mr. Clark, Chief Frizzell explained that this request has nothing to do with the current police request for portable radios. Even though the Police Department and the Fire Department have two independent systems, they can communicate on the same frequency. However, the traffic load becomes a problem if the police and the fire are using the same frequency at all times.

The second phase of this request engendered even more discussion. This second phase, which Chief Frizzell warned would be "expensive", is occasioned by the Federal Communications Commission's mandate that the Town's emergency radio systems move to a narrower broadcast band than current equipment will accommodate. That development will involve the Police Department as well as all other radio systems in Town. The \$67,000 in the Fire Department's five-year forecast for the second phase in 2009 is only the expense for the Fire Department.

The first phase radio request includes not only the tower equipment previously described but also reception equipment for an emergency locator alarm that can be sent with just the press of a button on radios that firefighters carry with them. From this alarm, it is possible to locate firefighters who are in trouble. The new reception equipment would be located at the E911 site

and would activate a secondary channel (the primary channel is already activated) that can be used when the primary channel is not working or when mutual aid personnel from another town are fighting a fire in Belmont.

Before turning to the Department's next request, the Committee turned once again to its second request (a truck to tow the Department's emergency trench rescue trailer). Chief Frizzell reported that the truck to be replaced has no value. It was pointed out that, having the new fire stations, Belmont has space in which to store such a truck if another town (say, Watertown) can be found that has a used truck that it wants stored. Mr. Firenze pointed out that Belmont cannot justify buying a new truck for the Fire Department's use and he once again suggested that the Committee talk with Peter Castanino about the truck which the Department of Public Works decided not to get rid of yet but which the Fire Department would use. The Committee reiterated its request that Mr. Younger contact other towns to see whether an arrangement may be made for a used truck.

(See item 6, below.)

4. The rescue boat currently available in Belmont is over 50 years old and does not meet safety standards or rescue guidelines. A replacement boat would be a Zodiac-style boat with floatation capability at the gaunts because rescuers lean out of the boat into the water when making a rescue. Furthermore, the current boat is a row boat and the request includes a small motor that would make the new boat a motor boat. The current equipment is used once or twice a year. The request is not only for a new boat and motor but also for four additional ice rescue suits. The Chief reported that Belmont current has two suits and should have four, pointing out that ice rescue personnel work in pairs as a matter of personal safety (the Chief commented that in the best of circumstances, the Department would have a set of four suits on each engine in active service.) The Chief also pointed out that there are four bodies of water in Town.

Ms. Fallon remarked that this equipment gets infrequent usage and this matter might be an appropriate one for regionalization. In response, Chief Frizzell stated that a regional approach is often used now because each town has little equipment and it is best to have multiple boats on a rescue scene. He emphasized that Belmont does cooperate with the towns surrounding Spy Pond and with the City of Cambridge. The regionalization that does exist often results in time delays in assembling sufficient equipment.

Mr. Firenze wondered whether Belmont might look at used equipment being turned in for newer equipment. Assistant Chief Davison explained that available used federal equipment is frequently too big to meet the needs of Belmont.

The Chief remarked that there had been little recent training in use of the existing equipment.

5. Assistant Chief Davison explained that the request for new hose appears in both the current operating budget request and the in the capital request. In the past (15 years or so ago), hose was an operating budget item for thousand dollars per year. The most recent hose purchase was in the early 1990's and some hose currently in use is 30 years old. Some hose is beginning to leak but all hose in current active use has met its annual test. The Fire Department uses two types of hose: one type, the so-called "attack hose", is used between the pumper engine and the fire; the other type is used between a hydrant (or other source of water) and the pumper engine. This request relates to attack hose and the purchase (\$23,000) would include the hose cut the length and fitted with the proper couplings.

6. (Even this though requested appropriation is sixth in the Department's priority listing, the Committee actually discussed it with Chief Frizzell after discussing the radio equipment and before discussing the Department's request for a rescue boat.) Watertown has a used ladder truck but no place to store it. Given these circumstances, a sharing arrangement is proposed

between Watertown and Belmont whereby Belmont would store the truck in return for the opportunity to use it. Although Belmont could use a spare ladder truck, the Department would not recommend purchasing one. In response to a question from the Committee, Chief Frizzell explained that the requested appropriation (\$15,000) would be for additional equipment for the truck. The truck will have some equipment on it when it comes to Belmont and Belmont will just fill in missing equipment. This will avoid having to transfer equipment from another truck when this truck is put into actual service. Watertown would retain title to the truck and would probably insure it. On the other hand, Belmont would probably be responsible for maintenance.

At the conclusion of the discussion of the Fire Department's FY08 capital budget request, Mr. Firenze suggested to Chief Frizzell how best the Department's personnel vehicles could be used, reassigned and procured.

#### Community Development (Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

Glenn R. Clancy, Director of the Department of Community Development, presented the Department's capital requests for FY08. Mr. Clancy began by clarifying that a request made in the Department's operating budget is for a color copier that will accommodate 11 x 17 inch paper, not a printer. Mrs. Bruschi suggested that Mr. Clancy ascertain whether another department in Town (for example, the School Department) already has the capability he is seeking.

The Committee and Mr. Clancy next turned to the subject to remaining balances of previous capital appropriations, reviewing the list that Ms. Hagg had previously provided. After a discussion of all of the entries, it appeared that most of the balances can be used by the Department or relate to projects that have not yet been completed. The Clafin Street parking lot project has been completed and \$12,078.42 can be reallocated from that project. Ms. Hagg explained that all of the expenses pertaining to the Wellington Brook Grate project have been paid and \$4,9343 can be reallocated from that project.

All of the Department's requests for FY08 relate to pavement management. The Committee and Mr. Clancy discussed them all as a group. During discussion, which ranged quite broadly over the entire issue and history of trying to maintain the Town's streets, the following points were made. The so-called chapter 90 funds are a source of funding for road work, but not a separate request for a project. The pavement management software currently in use by the Department will not be supported by its vendor. On the other hand, appropriate software is a necessary tool of the Department in its pavement management and new software should be procured as needed from the general pavement management appropriation. A large percentage of what have been termed the "pavement management" appropriations in the past have not gone to actual macadam upon which people actually may drive, instead they have gone for planning, supervision, curbing, sidewalks and police details. Some members of the Committee took the position that these expenses were necessary to achieve actual macadam upon which people can drive. Other members of the Committee observed that it is misleading to count these expenses when describing the amount that the Town is spending on its roads.

Despite the priority numbers shown on the spreadsheet prepared by Ms. Hagg, it became apparent that Mr. Clancy feels that the Pleasant Street project should be completed and the work on Clafin Street should be completed. Members of the Committee and Mr. Clancy indicated that the Trapelo Road project should not be neglected. Only the balance remaining after those items could be put to general pavement management. Mr. Clancy pointed out that there would be no balance remaining after those projects if the appropriation is at the same level as in recent years.

The Committee discussed the fact that the Pavement Management Committee has recently published a report, well received by Board of Selectmen, that recommends \$3.4 million be spent on pavement management in the first year. Mr. Clancy promised to make copies of the report available to the members of the Committee .

The Committee concluded its discussion with Mr. Clancy by considering how appropriate pavement management might be financed in the future. Mr. Clancy emphasized to the Committee the long lead time required by roadwork resulting from the need for planning, bidding, the seasonality of outdoor work, and the frustration of trying to plan without money in hand. Mrs. Bruschi emphasized to Mr. Clancy the importance of not going to the voters for an override when there is a large amount of money on hand and seemingly unspent.

#### Public Works (Item 5 on Committee Agenda)

The Department of Public Works was represented by Peter J. Castanino, its Director, and by Michael A. Santoro, its Assistant Director.

As with all Departments, the Committee began by reviewing with the Department the remaining balances on previous capital appropriations, using the summary previously provided by Ms. Hagg. The dump truck (\$91) can be released. The pick up truck (\$13.24) has been purchased and the balance can also be released. The feasibility study balance (\$6,436) can also be released. The Snow fighter has been refurbished and the balance (\$25.79) can be released. The transaction concerning the snow blades is not yet complete and the balance should be left (\$3,118.80). The balances for side walk construction and playground improvements will be used and should be left. The status of the Cemetery Sewer Tap is unknown and that balance (\$17,000) should be left while the matter is investigated.

The Department had presented its FY08 request in four parts (Highway, Sewer, Water and Parks), and assigned priority numbers within each group. The Committee took up the Highway request first.

1. Mr. Castanino introduced the request for snowfighter conversion by giving a history of the Town's use of snowfighters. In the past, the Town has relied on dedicated snow plow trucks which get very little use during the year but very heavy use during short bursts. Purchase of a new vehicle of this sort would now cost \$185,000. A small truck built up for this purpose would cost \$150,000 and be used for only six months of the year. What is proposed is a pilot program. One of the existing older dump trucks owned by the Town would be retrofitted for service as a snowfighter so that it will last another ten years. If the pilot program is successful, this would be the first of three trucks that would be retrofitted in this manner. This request and the next request are really part of a two-part request because the next request seeks replacement of the truck that would be retrofitted for use as a snowfighter.

2. By retrofitting the existing truck as proposed in the previous request, the Town would avoid the \$185,000 cost of a new snowfighter but would lose the trade-in value on the truck being replaced. Whether retrofitted or not, the dump truck is a candidate for a replacement. The Department would be making the \$91,000 request in any event. The proposed replacement truck will be fitted with a scraper blade mounted between the front and rear axels. These blades provide excellent service in snow plowing because they can be held to the road surface by the weight of the truck.

3 & 4. The Committee had no specific questions about the request for a pick up truck and a Tahoe, except to ascertain that if, authorized, they will be bought through the state bid list and the pick up truck will be fitted with a snow plow.

There was some general discussion of the activities of the Department, and snow plowing in particular. Mr. Firenze suggested that it might be cost efficient for the Town to contract all snow plowing to private vendors. Mr. Castanino reported that, based upon the opinions of Department personnel, replacement of so-called number 9 truck is not as much of a priority as the vehicles that the Department proposes. Mr. Firenze suggested that from the Town's over-all

point of view it might be better to accelerate the replacement of the number 9 truck and transfer it to the Fire Department for use. Mr. Younger suggested that the most cost effective approach might be to spend the \$5,000 needed to repair the existing Fire Department truck (See item 2 under Fire Department.) for use during the next several years. He asked Mr. Castanino to have the D.P.W. mechanic analyze the existing Fire Department truck.

Next, the Committee and Mr. Castanino discussed the requests listed under Parks. This list, particularly the first item (tennis courts), resulted in a great deal of general discussion concerning the Town's mission, how to integrate various priority lists and whether the Town should abandon some programs altogether in order to be able to fund in an adequate manner those programs that it keeps. Among the issues raised during the discussion of the Parks requests were who can decide what programs to discontinue, when does maintenance neglect become a capital item, what activities can be charged back to users, what expenses are appropriate for one-time moneys.

1 . Complete replacement of the tennis courts at Winn Brook, Pequossette and the High School is needed. The School Department is requesting funds for the tennis courts at the High School. This request (\$147,700) is to completely replace one of the other remaining tennis court sets of which there are four. The court at Grove Street is in the worst condition and should be done first. The condition of the courts is so deplorable that they might be closed for safety reasons. An alternative would be to spend \$13,000 each for emergency repairs, mostly cracked filling, and fail to address other problems. Thus the cost of replacing one court and repairing the others would be about \$160,000. Mr. Castanino views that his job is to maintain the assets which the Town owns. It is for others to decide whether any assets should be abandoned or closed. One course of action might be maintain one set of courts and close all others. Mr. Younger needs to coordinate the decision whether some courts should be closed for safety reasons.

2. The Athletic Field Conditioner is a piece of equipment to maintain playing fields and would replace a ten-year old piece of equipment. This piece of equipment grooms, levels, scarifies and screens loam.

3. The chain link fence maintenance program is the first phase in a program that will eventually deal with all athletic fields. The estimated cost for the entire program (four years) is over \$100,000. The project would be outsourced to a private fence company and would involve repair or replacement, as needed. Mrs. Bruschi suggested that this entire project is needed and would be appropriate for one-time moneys; thereafter, a sum (perhaps \$10,000) could be included in each year's operational budget for maintenance.

4. The 14-year old lawn mover would be disposed of. It is not worth keeping as a spare.

5. The proposed new pickup truck is a standard pickup but would be fitted with a plow.

6. The fence request from the Recreational Department is to replace and relocate the softball field fence.

Mr. Castanino briefly addressed requests on the part of the Water and Sewer Divisions. It was noted that both of these operations are financed by user fees. He turned to the Water requests first.

1 . Mr. Castanino reported that the Town is about one-third of the way through the water main replacement program. This program was supposed to be a 30-year program but the annual appropriation (\$647,000 per year) was never increased for inflation. At the rate of the original appropriations, it will take 85 years to finish the program. Mr. Castanino is concerned that the current method of financing this program (current water rates) is causing the burden of financing to be borne by current ratepayers whereas the benefits of a program will be enjoyed by future generations. Current water rates might be stabilized by financing part of this work with a bond

issuance. The Water Commissioners were supportive of such a program and it will be presented to the Selectmen within the month. When it comes time again (after 100 years) to replace water mains, the project will be less expensive than the current program.

2. See number 2 under the Sewer Division, below.
3. The old van would be transferred to the Sewer Division for emergency response to sewer stoppage and other events.
4. The air compressor is mounted on a truck and this appropriation will finance fabrication of the body of a truck to receive the new compressor.

After remarks concerning the Water requests, Mr. Castanino turned to Sewer requests.

1 . The best way to finance the work at the Stony Brook sewerage pumping station is still under discussion. Another aspect of the pumping station project will have to be undertaken next year and will have a severe impact on the sewer rate. Mr. Castanino is working with Ralph Jones to see if this expense can be financed from the sewer bond program available through the MWRA (Massachusetts Water Resources Authority).

2. The total cost of procuring GIS capability is being split with the Water Division. The development of the GIS program is being coordinated with David Petto.

Adjournment  
(Item 6 on Committee Agenda)

Before adjourning the meeting, Mrs. Bruschi and Mr. Younger had over-all announcements and reminders for the Committee. Wm. Kevin Looney, manager of Building Services, will be submitting a revised budget. The next meeting of this Committee will be on March 22 but we will not update Ms. Hagg's summary spreadsheet until after the meeting on that date. Mr. Bowe will have some additional information as a result of a meeting of the Information Technology Advisory Committee. Mr. Younger has been working on development of a level services budget but does not expect that process to result in more than a couple of hundred thousand dollars to be reallocated. Mrs. Bruschi has been asked to look at one-time expenditures that are waiting to be funded and would be appropriate candidates for use of the currently available free cash. This Committee will meet as part of the Capital Planning Group (formerly known as the "Mega Group") at 7:05 p.m. on Monday evening, March 19, 2007, at the Chenery Middle School.

The meeting adjourned at about 10:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark