

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Conference Room 4
Thursday Evening, March 30, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. All the members of the Committee (John Bowe, M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte, Jennifer M. Fallon, Angelo Firenze and Anne Marie Mahoney) were present at the meeting. Also present were Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee, and Thomas Younger, Town Administrator.

In addition to the original department requests for fiscal 2007 capital expenditures and a chart, prepared by Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant summarizing those requests, the Committee had the following material before it:

1. Memo dated 3/28/06 from Lee McCanne regarding the Middle School phone system.
2. Agenda for the meeting on 3/30/06 from Mark Clark.
3. Draft of minutes 3/16/06 from Mark Clark.

Other items, noted below, were distributed in the course of the meeting.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting

(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)

Meeting of 3/16/06

During the discussion of the draft minutes of the meeting of 3/16/06, it was noted that the Fire Chief's name is spelled with an "i" (David L. Frizzel) and that the Director of the Department of Public Works is Peter J. Castanino, not Peter J. Cantanino. With these corrections, the draft minutes of the meeting of 3/16/06 were unanimously accepted as presented.

General Discussion of Pending Requests

(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch and Mr. Firenze reported on the budget schedule expected to the followed this spring by the Town. Budgets will not be presented at the first session of the Annual Town Meeting in April. Rather, budgets will be presented at an adjourned session of the Annual Town Meeting to be called for May 22. They emphasized that budgets must be acted on at an Annual Town Meeting so that the Annual Town Meeting will be kept open through the session on May 22. This means that no action taken during the initial session of the Annual Town Meeting in April will become final until the Annual Town Meeting is dissolved after the May 22 session. For that reason, action which should become effective immediately will be taken at a special town meeting scheduled to take place during the second night of the Annual Town Meeting in April.

Mrs. Brusch reported that, during her review of unspent balances of previous capital appropriations, she had identified an aggregate of about \$160,000 that is available

for reappropriation. The largest component of that total represents money unused on the Claflin Road project, which was completed considerably under estimate. Mrs. Brusch reported that there are remaining two projects she must investigate before completing her review of balances available for reappropriation. Commenting on responses to the worksheet that she had distributed and collected at the Committee's last meeting, Mrs. Brusch reported that she had been unable to discern any helpful consensus regarding pending requests.

In response to a question from Ms. Fallon, Mrs. Brusch and Ms. Hagg explained that the acquisition of accounting software (estimated at \$700,000) would be financed in such a way that the expense of that project would not decrease the amount available for current appropriation in the capital budget for FY2007. There ensued a discussion of the accounting software alternatives available to the Town, including the possibility of having the software managed by Application Source Provider ("ASP"). Under this arrangement, ASP would "host" the software, providing necessary equipment, and have responsibility for upgrades and database managers. This, however, would be an unbondable contract for services, not a purchase of equipment and software. This would then be an entirely operating budget item. Mr. Conte warned that an arrangement with ASP would severely restrict the flexibility that the Town needs in the use of any software. Mr. Firenze asked whether this meant that the Town would have to acquire more support staff (a bigger payroll) in order to use new software that it acquires. Mr. Conte responded that technical support for a non-ASP solutions would be provided by the Town's technical computer staff but that, that responsibility would be less than one full time equivalent. Meanwhile, the existing personnel of town departments would be trained to use the new software.

Ms. Fallon raised the issue of new telephones for the Chenery Middle School which Dr. Lee McCanne, Director of Technology, had investigated. Mr. Bowe wished to know whether any money might be saved by accelerating the conversion of telephones at the Chenery Middle School and combining it with the requested conversion of telephones at the elementary schools. Mrs. Brusch reported that, according to Dr. McCanne, there might be a \$2,000 savings in consultants' fee but otherwise there would be no saving. Ms. Fallon observed that the potential dollar saving was not the only reason that had been put forward for accelerating the Chenery conversion and combining it with the elementary school conversion. She noted that another reason had been the issue of avoiding multiple changes in telephone numbers, introducing uniform numbers for the system all at once, and, thus, avoiding confusion among the public.

The bulk of the meeting was spent by the Committee discussing pending requests for the FY2007 capital budget and voting on them. In doing so, the Committee used the worksheet for FY2007 that Mrs. Brusch had provided at the previous meeting. The Committee proceeded item by item under the first heading ("Capital 2007") on the worksheet and then addressed individual items under the other headings on the worksheet as those items were nominated for funding by individual members of the Committee. The voting on the items under the first heading on the worksheet is summarized in the

chart below. Particular remarks concerning some of those items and remarks concerning particular items under other headings on the worksheet are summarized after the chart.

By consensus, the Committee agreed that if the currently proposed override is not authorized at the town election on April 3, \$1 million of the capital budget would be devoted to roads, leaving about \$1.1 million for all other capital budget requests.

It became apparent that the attitude of some members of the Committee toward a particular request might turn on the issue whether the request was to be funded from the current budget or financed by the Town over time. It also was apparent that many members of the Committee equated financing over time with bonding, but Mr. Conte pointed out that financing over time could be accomplished by leasing and urged that no decision on financing techniques should be made at this time. A consensus quickly developed that by “financing” the Committee did not mean to preclude any favorable technique.

	Summary of Yes votes	Summary of Maybe Votes	Summary of No Votes	Remarks
Color Copier/GIS	6	1	0	
Fiber Network Redundancy	6	1	0	might be financed
Phone system police/fire	6	1	0	
2002 ambulance replace	5	2	0	financed?
Replace 1999 staff vehicle	5	1	0*	
Replace 1996 staff vehicle	2	1	4	
Replace 1998 staff vehicle	0	0	7	
E911 console upgrade	6	1	0	
Burbank masonry	5	2	0	
School System wide envelop study	4	3	0	
Elementary school phones	5	1	1	perhaps financed with Chenery phones.
Middle School energy mgmt	1	3	3	
HS Tennis courts	3	3	1	
White Field House	0	4	3	
HS driveway lighting	5	1	1	

HS driveway paving	0	0	7	
HS translucent panels	0	5	2	
Hwy 1996 pickup replace	5	1	1	
Hwy snowplows	4	3	0	
Hwy refurbish snowfighter	6	0	1	
Town Hall Security Control System	1	0	6	
Town Hall Slate Roof replacement	6	1	0	but only as and when needed
Town Hall main door-	7	0	0	not wooden
Town Hall Stained Glass Windows	7	0	0	only the least expense to assure building tight
Homer security devices	1	0	6	
Town Hall security devices	1	0	6	

While discussing the individual items that are requested for the FY2007 Capital Budget, members of the Committee offered comments on each item. Mr. Clark explained that he feels that no more money should be spent on the White Field House or any other facility on the north side of Concord Avenue until the Town develops a comprehensive plan for all those facilities. There was a lengthy discussion of the White Field House during which the members of the Committee wished to know what the various facilities in the Field House were being used for, could be used for and what their condition is. Eventually, Mr. Bowe agreed to find out answers to the questions raised by members of the Committee. During discussion of the high school driveway lighting request, Mr. Firenze inquired whether some of the needed work could be done by the Electric Light Department. Mr. Younger agreed to explore that question with the Light Department.

Requests for components of a security system for particularly buildings in the Town Hall Complex engendered a great deal of discussion, including discussion of the completion of the Town Hall Complex. Mr. Firenze read a letter from Wm. Kevin Looney, Manager of the Building Services Department, concerning the need for a consultant for the committee of the Town that is considering Town-wide security issues. It was observed that the building committee for the fire stations would provide security for the new fire stations but that it might not be coordinated with a security system for other Town buildings. The suggestion was then made that perhaps a way could be figured out whereby the entire Town could take advantage of the control system being installed in the new fire houses.

Mr. Clark suggested that a sum of money could be allocated to the Building Services Department to be used by the manager as he thinks fit, including the installation of snow guards on the roof of the Homer Building. There was a consensus that snow guards would have to be installed for the Homer Building. Mr. Clark explained that there are insufficient funds left in the budget of the Town Hall Complex Building Committee to accomplish such a project. Mrs. Bruschi explained her position that the Town Hall Complex Building Committee should be responsible for obtaining a supplemental budget from the Town for snow guards on the Homer Building (and the doors on the ground floor of Town Hall), and that if possible those projects should not be funded from the regular capital budget.

During the discussion of the main doors on the ground floor of the Town Hall, a consensus emerged that the Committee would recommend funds for new fiberglass doors, but would not recommend funds for new wooden doors.

Regarding the stained glass windows in the auditorium of the Town Hall, Mr. Firenze suggested that only so much work be done, and only funds be provided, for the goal of keeping the building tight.

Various technology requests lead to a long discussion of the definition of an appropriate expenditure from the capital budget. The view was expressed that most computer expenditures are more appropriate for the operating budget and it was pointed out that an effort had been made in prior years to move computer purchases, particularly replacement purchases, into the operating budget. On the other hand, the view was expressed that it is important to buy what the Town needs and that considerations of budget category are secondary. Mr. Firenze made the point that both the \$111,000 and the \$240,000 request should go back into the operating budgets. Ms. Fallon indicated that the \$240,000 request was for new, non-replacement computers.

One of the issues raised by the need to purchase replacement computers and software on a routine basis is that the expense comes up every few years, such as every four years, and not annually. This makes such an expense difficult to budget in an annual operating budget. Ms. Hagg explained that use of a sinking fund is not legal under Massachusetts law. Ms. Fallon suggested that an amount for technology could be budgeted every year. For three years (for instance), the amount could be used for other technology needs and every four years (for instance), the amount could be used to purchase replacement computers or replacement software licenses, as needed. Mr. Clark remarked that such a program would solve the problem of episodic expenditures within an annual operating budget but could only be accomplished in a stable budgeting atmosphere. A suggestion was also made that funding of an upgrade in the Town's software licensing could be combined with the funding for the new accounting software for the Town since the need for a software upgrade is being driven by the proposal to purchase new accounting software. (The Town is currently running on a Windows 2000 platform and needs to run on a Windows 2003 platform in order to take advantage of the new accounting software.)

Turning from the Town technology requests back to the school technology, Mrs. Brusch explained that amounts previously funded through the capital budget for school technology had been transferred to the operating budget and now the school operating budget contains over \$400,000 for technology, part of the funds for which was available through the capital budget until those funds transferred to the school budget two years ago. Mr. Firenze asked what the technology use in the schools consists of. Mrs. Mahoney observed that technology and technology access is the “books” of the current era and should be treated for budgeting purposes as books are treated. Mr. Clark indicated that in his view the Town and school technology request should be treated similarly, should be funded this year from the capital budget but moved to the operating budget in future years. Ms. Fallon expressed the view that further comprehensive discussion of technology issues in Town is called for. When members of the Committee evinced a readiness have such a discussion right then and there, Mrs. Brusch reminded the Committee of the need to deal with other issues within the responsibility of the Committee.

Regarding Library requests, Mr. Clark stated that he believes that the Town will be using the current main library building for at least the next 15 years and that the parking lot curbing request in granite should be addressed as a capital expenditure, not maintenance. Mr. Firenze feels that exterior issues at the Library should be a Town function and that the Director of the Department of Public Works should be given a fund from which he can maintain the exterior facilities at the Library, like sidewalks, driveways and parking lot curbing as he sees fit. After considerable discussion, a consensus emerged that none of the Library exterior requests should be funded through the capital budget. The Committee asked Mr. Younger to ask the director of the Department of Public Works to fix the roadway behind the Library.

Regarding various fencing requests, Mr. Clark recommended the same solution as Mr. Firenze had recommended with regard to the exterior work at the Library: provide the Director of the Department of Public Works with a fund from which he can make appropriate fence repairs. Others pointed out that a distinction could be made among the fencing requests, distinguishing between maintenance and capital improvements that could be funded from user fees. In the end, there was a consensus that the capital budget should not fund any of the fencing requests.

With regard to the request for funding a reconfiguration of the circulation area within the main library, Mrs. Brusch observed that some action was really needed. She pointed out that the circulation area is now used in ways and considerably more heavily than when the building was originally designed. All books for the inter-library loan program are held here and circulation of the Library’s own collection has increased substantially. In fact, the Belmont Library enjoys the largest per capita circulation the Boston area for a community its size. Ms. Fallon had previously proposed that this project might be one that is a candidate for financing. A consensus developed that the project should be better defined, the cost should be better determined and that the project could be looked at, at a full town meeting for financing. In the meantime, there was a consensus that the project should not be funded from the current capital budget.

The Committee discussed the proposal for a feasibility study concerning the existing Police Station. A consensus developed that the project is an important one but should await the appointment of a new chief of police, who will be responsible for overseeing the project and who should be given an opportunity to shape the project according to his experience. There was also discussion of whether such a feasibility study could be paid for from Kendall funds but no consensus formed around this proposal.

Mr. Firenze suggested that a sum, perhaps as much as \$100,000, be set aside each year for sidewalk work and that this amount should not be considered part of the pavement management program. He believes that sidewalk work is just as important as the pavement management and, indeed, believes that sidewalk construction is a higher priority than anything else among the capital budget requests.

Mr. Bowe reported that Dr. Gerald Missal, Director of Administration and Finance of the School Department, was concerned that two items on the School Department's list of capital requests had not been included on the worksheet for FY2007 capital budget consideration. The particular items that concerned him are the HVAC units for the roof of the high school and the separate maintenance building to replace facilities to be lost when the Wellington Elementary School is torn down. Mrs. Bruschi pointed out that Dr. Missal had indicated that these requests were not for FY2007. She had only included on the worksheet the items that needed to be considered for FY2007.

Planning for Future Meetings *(Continuing Item 3 on Committee Agenda)*

Mr. Younger distributed to members of the Committee copies of the warrants for the Annual Town Meeting and the Special Town Meeting that is to be held in conjunction with the first session of the Annual Meeting. Mrs. Bruschi, using the warrants, indicated the tasks ahead of the Committee. She indicated that she could explain these articles using information she had learned in the course of Warrant Committee discussions. First she addressed the articles on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting. Article 3 (landfill stabilization fund), Article 4 (Waverley Fire Station proceeds), Article 5 (Financial Software Appropriation), Article 6 (Redundant Fiber Network Appropriation) and Article 7 (Supplemental Cemetery Appropriation) will all require opinions from the Capital Budget Committee and will be discussed at the Committee's next meeting (April 6). Ms. Fallon pointed out that with regard to Article 5 (accounting software) the Committee will need to discuss only the financial implications of the acquisition.

Concerning the articles for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Mrs. Bruschi pointed out that Article 5 (GIS bond on Deauthorization), Article 9 (concerning appropriation of the so-called chapter 90 funds) will be taken up at the first session of the Annual Town Meeting and will be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting. Article 11 is the capital budget and will be deferred to the May session of the Annual Town Meeting. Article 12 (water and sewer and storm water services) will be dealt with

at the April session of the Annual Town Meeting and will be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting. Article 14 (Roads Stabilization Fund) is relevant only if the currently pending override vote passes. Article 16 (Disposition of McLean Land for affordable housing), Articles 17 & 18 (letters of intent for the Wellington and high school projects) and Article 35 (disposition of Harvard Lawn Fire Station) all raise issues upon which the Capital Budget Committee must opine at the April session of the Annual Town Meeting.

Mrs. Brusch reminded the Committee that its next meeting would take place April 6 at 6:30. Meetings will be scheduled for April 27 and May 11 at 7:00.

Adjournment

(Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

Upon motion duly made, seconded and adopted, the meeting adjourned at about 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark

Note: Future meeting dates and times were subsequently changed.