

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Wednesday, April 2, 2014
7:00 PM**

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CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:10 p.m. by Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Baghdady and Rojas were present. Town Administrator David Kale was present; Assistant Town Administrator Marshall was not present.

Chair Paolillo reviewed the evening's agenda. He then welcomed the newest Board member: Mr. Sami Baghdady. Chair Paolillo congratulated Mr. Roger Colton on his campaign and congratulated the newly elected Town Meeting members.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

[There were none.]

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Board of Selectmen Re-organization and Vote

The Board moved: To nominate Vice Chair Rojas to the Office of Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To nominate Selectman Baghdady to the Office of Vice Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Selectman Paolillo said it was a pleasure to serve as Chair of the Board for the past two years. Chair Rojas acknowledged Selectman Paolillo for his service and welcomed Selectman Baghdady.

Common Victualler's License

*Business name change from "Take Away 762, LLC" to "My Other Kitchen"
762 Pleasant Street, Belmont*

Restaurant owner, Mr. George Manetas, appeared before the Board regarding the restaurant name change.

The Board moved: To approve the license name change, as noted above.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board took a five-minute recess.

JOINT MEETING: Board of Selectmen with the Warrant Committee – Discussion on Minuteman

Members of the Warrant Committee appeared before the Board to discuss issues relating to Minuteman.

Members present include: Chair Libenson; Members Allison, Baghdady, Brusch, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Sarno, and SC Representative Slap (arrived at 8p.m.)

Members Absent: Dash, Epstein, Grob, and Mennis

Vice Chair Sarno called the WC to order at 7:20 p.m. (Chair Libenson was a few minutes late.)

Minuteman Discussion ~ the Amended Agreement and Budget

Mr. Kevin Mahoney, Assistant Superintendent of Minuteman, and Mr. Jack Weis, Belmont's representative on the Minuteman School Committee, appeared before the Board and the WC to discuss issues pertaining to Minuteman.

Amended Agreement Overview

Member McLaughlin began by suggesting that the town accept the amended agreement as it is an improvement on the existing agreement. He said there are 16 member towns, each with representation on the Minuteman School Committee. He noted that 313 students attend Minuteman from outside of the district, with about 413 from the 16 member towns. The out-of-district students are paying less overall for capital and operating.

Member McLaughlin highlighted the proposed changes to the Regional Agreement:

- capital cost responsibilities
- operating cost apportionment
- debt issuance authorization
- enrollment-weighted School Committee voting
- withdrawal from district
- capital cost obligations for new members to the district

Mr. Weis noted that the proposed changes weren't entirely within Minuteman's control and that the State (DESE) has been mindful of the precedent that some of these changes might set for other regional school systems in the State.

Member McLaughlin said one goal of the agreement was to attract more out-of-district communities to become member towns (e.g. Medford, Watertown). One incentive was that there

is now an option to “opt out” of membership. He then discussed the possibility for Intergovernmental Agreements, which are a potential way for member towns to assess non-member towns for a portion of the capital costs associated with a new building.

Member McLaughlin summarized how the new capital cost allocation formula in the revised Agreement worked and how it could impact Belmont. Chair Paolillo raised the issue of what it will cost Belmont to build a new Minuteman facility. Mr. Weis clarified that the numbers presented in the handouts were illustrative only (to show the relative impact on various towns) and were not intended to telegraph the expected size of any future proposed debt issuance.

Member McLaughlin also summarized the Minuteman School Committee and town votes that would be required to approve various matters (annual budget, debt issuance, withdrawal, etc.), including how the new weighted voting within the Minuteman School Committee would work. He also briefly touched on the building project timeline.

WC Chair Libenson asked about next steps for the proposed amended Agreement. Member McLaughlin said that there is a Warrant Article that will be voted on at May’s ATM to approve the revised Agreement. The amended agreement will need unanimous support from the 16 member towns, but a simple majority from Town Meeting.

Member McLaughlin touched on the issue of the proposed enrollment for the new facility. He said none of the 16 member towns are interested in paying for an 800-student school, especially since at least half of those projected students would not be from the district.

Issues pertaining to the proposed revisions to the Agreement’s capital cost allocation formula were discussed, particularly the component that allocates those costs based on a town’s enrollment and a town’s wealth. Assistant Superintendent Mahoney will provide Member Allison with the assumptions behind the formulaic calculations.

Selectman Paolillo raised concerns about the enticement(s) for non-member towns to join the district agreement. For example, whether Watertown would be responsible to pay a share of the debt for a new facility? If they choose not to join as a member, would the Town be allowed to send kids to the school? The response was that the Town can send kids if they sign the Intergovernmental Agreement and pay a fee. Selectman Paolillo added that the 800-student sized school is not advantageous for Belmont. Assistant Superintendent Mahoney said that all of this is still being worked out.

Chair Rojas asked about the withdrawal process for a member town. The withdrawal process was discussed.

Assistant Superintendent Mahoney said that the Warrant Article regarding the proposed Amendment to Minuteman Regional Vocational High School Regional Agreement cannot be amended on the Town Meeting floor.

Member Bruschi raised several concerns regarding the ability to enforce the amended agreement and the debt responsibility in light of the perceived broken promises made regarding the

Minuteman feasibility study.

Mr. Weis then explained why he voted yes on the proposed amendment to the agreement.

Member McLaughlin stated again that he supports the amended agreement, not because it's a great agreement, but because it's better than the existing agreement. Assistant Superintendent Mahoney said that the amendment to the existing agreement was created, in part, to entice the non-member towns to join the district.

Member Fallon raised the concern about the relationship between the amended agreement and the new facility. The Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen agreed that there are clear fiscal benefits to sending kids to Minuteman as a non-member town.

Warrant Committee Chair Libenson noted that the option to withdraw is a new one which does not exist under the existing agreement. He expounded on this and observed that having that option is valuable.

Mr. Kale noted that if a member town withdraws, it is still responsible for its share of any debt service issued while it was a member. Member McLaughlin pointed out that withdrawing towns relinquish their share of any Minuteman assets, like the facility, but are also relieved of any future obligations for pensions and OPEB. Members of the Warrant Committee expressed interest in an opportunity to explore the data more fully.

Selectman Paolillo said that the assumption must be that no new towns will join the district agreement. Therefore, the question is: does this agreement work better than the old one, given that there is an old facility and there is a proposal on the table to replace it with an 800-student facility?

Member McLaughlin suggested that perhaps Belmont may elect to defer the Town Meeting vote (like the Town of Lincoln) until more information is available. The option to defer the vote was discussed. Selectman Paolillo and others said that Belmont will need legal advice. Member Gammill suggested voting No at ATM (to avoid the deferring confusion) and then voting to approve at some point in the near future. The option of a "No" vote was discussed.

Town Counsel will provide guidance on deferring versus voting at Town Meeting.

Budget Discussion

Warrant Committee Chair Libenson raised the topic of Minuteman's operating costs, which have risen by 5.9%. Assistant Superintendent Mahoney said that technology costs for use in standardized testing contributed to this rise. Also, more personnel were needed to provide student instructional services as well as to improve district wide communication.

Assistant Superintendent Mahoney also addressed the question of why projected capital costs were declining. He explained that some repairs are needed to keep the building running until the renovation/rebuild, but that Minuteman is being careful about those expenses. He also noted that

about one-third of the decline is due to a budget with a smaller proposed contribution to the stabilization reserve account.

Warrant Committee Chair Libenson asked about the per-pupil costs which were increasing according to his calculations. Assistant Superintendent Mahoney provided additional information, noting that SPED and transportation costs are not included in the present calculation.

Member Brusch expressed concern about the budget increases, noting that the public schools are facing similar challenges without adding the personnel. She also suggested that the public meetings on the building sizing matter should not be scheduled in December – but instead hold the meetings either pre-Thanksgiving or in January.

NEXT MEETINGS

Monday, April 7, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, April 22, 2014 at 8:00 a.m.

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn the Warrant Committee at 9:17 p.m.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Kale reported on the following items:

- A Precinct meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m. at the Beech Street Center.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator