

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING April 22-23, 2002

Chairman Brusch called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Members absent : None

Also present: Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Assistant to the Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Town Meeting Member James Fitzgerald (Precinct 6), Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, and Selectman Paul Solomon

Consideration of Special Town Meeting (with 13 members present)

Chairman Brusch passed out the (handout 1) Special Town Meeting "Notes to the Moderator", (handout 2) the Belmont Librarians Association Contract and two spreadsheets (handout 3) by Member McCormick and (handout 4) by Ms. Munro regarding the Librarian's Union rates of pay. Copies of each are on file with the Clerk.

Article 2 Approval of and Appropriation for Librarian's Union Contract

Member McCormick spoke on the contract agreement and the differences of the hourly rates between the two spreadsheets. The Committee reviewed some of the positions and discussed the appropriated money regarding those positions. Member Hofmann asked if this includes closing the branch libraries, and Member McCormick replied this is only retroactive salary for FY2001 and FY02.

- Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted in favor of said action.
- Member McCormick abstained from voting.

Consideration of Other Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles Chairman Brusch also passed out (handout 5) a document including Town Meeting motions for tonight. A copy is on file with the Clerk.

Article 27 Proposal for Required Quarterly Report

Chairman Brusch introduced the Article and stated that the Committee needed a cost parameter in order to vote. Mr. Fitzgerald remarked a 12-page report would cost \$1.56 per resident, which is approximately \$14K per year. It is more expensive than the web page, which would be approximately 50% less. If allowed, he would prefer to have the Quarterly Newsletter and the web page, but he recognized this would cost too much. He estimates 98% of the Town Meeting Members currently have access to the Web. He requested the Warrant Committee's support for this Article. Chairman Brusch asked Mr. Fitzgerald if he is comfortable with the motion even though it does not mention the word "Quarterly?" He replied yes, and noted it was "watered down a bit."

While Member Hilgenberg liked his principle and intent, her concern is that it is currently uncertain if Town Meeting would support an override, she would be hesitant to add another \$14K until there is a sense of what the budget will look like next year. She asked Mr. Fitzgerald to postpone his Article until there is a better idea of the override amount.

Member Clark also agreed it is a good idea, but he doesn't think the printing is the half of it. Someone has to do some editing and document preparation. If this product is really worth sending out, it will take someone some time to write and edit a good product, making sure it makes sense. He suggests to do it right, which we should do, would be more expensive than just the printing and mailing costs. Member Curtis agreed with Member Clark. He thinks if this were going to be put on volunteers, it would create a huge burden on them. He endorses the idea of information going to the Town, but does not want to put the burden on someone.

Member Morley suggested starting out with something smaller. She thinks a majority would be overwhelmed by the 12-page presentation.

Member Schafer is afraid this will cost too much time and money. She recommends just having the minutes from all the Town Committees put on the web site and use the \$4K of additional web site work per year towards those costs. Mr. Fitzgerald responded he would be sympathetic to that. People reading the minutes will have questions, and they will need to have access to people in those Committees. He stated the only proactive information source in this Town, known by him, is the Citizen's Forum. The Committee disagreed and added the League of Women Voters to his list of information sources. He cited Arlington as an example of a web page with minutes posted regularly.

Member Clark asked if our web page has the ability to scan in documents and meeting handouts that are not in a word processor format. Mr. Fitzgerald replied a scanner could be used to bring those documents into a format such as Adobe Acrobat.

Chairman Brusch asked if he was given a choice for a Quarterly Newsletter or a Web Page, then Mr. Fitzgerald acknowledged he would choose the Web Page. She recommended he amend this motion at Town Meeting. Member Clark thinks the original proposal was either too much or too little, but he questioned which budget would it come out of. Chairman Brusch pointed out this Article does not have an appropriation. Member Hilgenberg asked how much the Web Master charges per hour? Mr. Fitzgerald replied, at most, \$20 per hour with an estimated additional five hours of work per week.

Mr. Kleckner informed the Committee the Board of Selectmen support this Article. Selectman Brownsberger noted the language in the Article allows the Town to be brief enough to put as an insert in the Light bill, with pointers such as "For more information, go to Â..." This will drive people back to significant minutes or recent votes in meetings.

Member Curtis likes the idea of putting the minutes on the web page and the insert for the Light bill. He questioned why this has to be legislation instead of allowing the Board of Selectmen to put this as a policy, as was done for Article 18: Amendment to By-Law - Financial Management. Selectman Brownsberger agreed Article 18 will not be put into by-law, just as policy, and he stated the Board of Selectmen would probably support that decision for this Article as well.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated he is fine with pointing people to the web page with an insert from the Light bill. Selectman Solomon would like to see it stay an Article due to the communication aspect that needs to be brought to Town Meeting.

Member Hofmann cannot support this motion, given his concern with the staffing effort necessary to do this. He agrees with the consensus that more information needs to be given out, but he is reluctant to spend money on this concept. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that

each committee would send their minutes to the Web Master, who will work approximately an additional five hours per week.

Member Clark said it sounds like this motion will require the Board of Selectmen to write a letter or a report. He thinks that for one to really comply, it would require someone to be thoughtful and spend some time on this issue. If we go with what has just been outlined to the Committee (i.e., putting a 1 page front-and-back insert into the Light bill), then this motion should be amended. Member Heigham concurred with Member Clark. Member Hilgenberg wants more specifics in who will work on this, what are the costs with all of this and how does it all factor into the budget.

Member Flewelling observed it might make sense to defer this Article to the May Town Meeting. At that point, there will probably be a more definite direction of where Town Meeting will be headed.

Member McCormick suggested the Board of Selectmen get this started initially and see where it goes. He would like to the Board of Selectmen establish this as policy. Selectman Brownsberger told Mr. Fitzgerald the Board of Selectmen would make a commitment create an informative one-page report to put in the Light bills.

Member Hofmann suggested Mr. Fitzgerald either put the Article off until May or postpone it altogether for a while. He concurred everyone is agreeing with the principal of the Article.

- Member Oates made a motion, Member Miller seconded said motion, to request the Board of Selectmen postpone Article 27 until the May session of Town Meeting and the Committee unanimously voted in favor of said motion.

Discussion of FY2003 Budget and Town Meeting

Chairman Brusch discussed what has been done about the Budget Resolutions. She informed the Committee the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support Option B (\$2 million override) because it was "financially and politically sustainable" for the Town. Chairman Brusch observed the Warrant Committee has not discussed two things: what level the Committee will support and what will be included in each level. Chairman Brusch passed out a memo regarding the (handout 6) FY2003 Budget and Resolutions. A copy is on file with the Clerk. She told the Committee she personally had a problem with Option B, the \$2 million override. It may create an even larger problem for the future. She would like Option B to be around \$2½ million or else she will support the \$4 million option.

Selectman Brownsberger stated that even though the Board of Selectmen have decided to support Option B, they are not "married to the idea" of having the override be exactly \$2 million. He would like the Warrant Committee to have a consensus and come up with something the Committee can put into action. Selectman Mahoney thinks the Resolution document should be held back tonight. Her issue is equity. There are still significant cuts on the Town side, but not on the Schools. She is concerned what this does to the Town/School percentages for next year.

Member Schafer has another reason for thinking Option B is too low. She listed what is not to be funded on the School side: capital, textbooks, and maintenance. The \$2 million is not a sustainable number.

Member Clark reminded the Committee these charts in the Options section of the Resolution Document are "ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY." He thinks Option A is entirely hopeless due to the cuts in Capital. Each of Option B and C would require cutting \$700K out of Capital. He favors Option C.

Member Flewelling noted he is on the School Sub-committee and he remarked a lot of people are uncomfortable with the rift between the Schools and the Town. He would like to make the split somewhat equal. It would be better to get the amounts closer to being equal between the two.

Member Hofmann believes Town Meeting Members will think this document is "gospel" no matter how much it is said to be "ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY". He does not support handing the Resolution document out tonight.

Selectman Solomon thinks if the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen can come to agreement, it would be better. However, he does not think the Resolution document can be held longer than Wednesday.

The Committee discussed the levels of detail that should be given to Town Meeting in the Resolution document. Member Hilgenberg made a suggestion of the amount of detail that should be handed out. Member Curtis believes this needs to get out as soon as possible.

Chairman Bruschi informed the Committee the Resolution document would be handed out Wednesday night.

Member Heigham made a motion to recess until 7:30 AM on April 23rd in the Selectmen's Meeting Room and it was unanimously voted to recess the meeting at 7:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell Interim Recording Clerk

The Warrant Committee reconvened at 7:30 AM on Tuesday, April 23, 2002, in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at the Belmont Town Hall.

Members present: Chairman Pat Bruschi, Linda Oates, Mark Clark, Philip Curtis, Patricia Morley, Walter Flewelling, James Heigham, Selectman William Brownsberger, and Kathleen Miller

Also present: Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney and Selectman Paul Solomon

In the absence of the Recording Clerk and the Secretary, the Chairman kept the minutes. The Chairman called the meeting back to order and explained the remaining items on the agenda were to agree upon the amount of the "Option B" resolution and the document to be distributed to the Town Meeting on Wednesday, April 24, 2002. After considerable discussion, it was agreed by consensus that the amount of the Option B resolution would be \$2.4 million. It was also agreed that the content of the material to be distributed to Town Meeting on Wednesday would be modified from that provided in the earlier session of this meeting by eliminating the staffing chart, changing the other chart by placing a dollar figure next to each program item in question, providing a blank column for Option B and editing the text accordingly. Finally, it was agreed that at Wednesday's Town meeting the Chairman would offer a brief explanation for why Option B had gone

from \$2.0 million (previously reported) to \$2.4 million. At 8:45 AM, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Patricia Brusch

Warrant Committee Chairman