

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**  
- **FINAL**  
- **May 13, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**  
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Brusch, Callanan, Epstein, Heigham, Libensen, Lynch, McLaughlin, Paolillo, Smith, Widmer; BOS Chair Leclerc, SC Chair Rittenburg

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- Town Administrator Younger, Town Accountant Hagg

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- Members Absent: Hofmann, Millane

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- The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm by Chair Curtis.

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- Chair Curtis began the meeting by noting that, this week, the State Senate issued its revenue projections, which are less than what the House had issued in April. New taxes, he said, have been proposed to mitigate the revenue losses. However, Belmont could lose \$370K if there are no additional state revenues. We will wait until “the dust settles” before exploring the impact of the possible losses on the FY10 budget.

- ***Discussion of Town-School Split Scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>***  
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- Chair Curtis said that the “budget split” conversation will be held next week: May 20<sup>th</sup>. He said he wants to have a fact-based and reasoned discussion. A public discussion, Curtis continued, allows people to share their views. Since the WC recommends the split to TM, the split discussion needs to happen here. Member Widmer agreed and added that there have been “100 moving pieces this year that continue to move.” We need to pull all the pieces together as best as we can before June 1 and offer our best judgment for the June 1<sup>st</sup> TM. Member Callanan said while she is not opposed to having the split conversation, she feels that a significant portion of the population has felt it wasn’t heard this year as a result of not having been heard at the Saturday morning meetings. SC Chair Rittenburg noted that many residents want to have the split conversation and that it would be more productive to have it at a WC meeting. Member McLaughlin asked: what is the split based on? Chair Curtis said that the WC takes a budget that works and looks at the percentages used by the school and town. What happened in the past is a useful starting point. The schools, he added, have netted \$1.7M in additional revenue that was unanticipated. That in itself changes the split. Belmont allowed 100% of that to go straight to schools, where other communities did not.

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- ***School Department Budget***  
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- Member Brusch: There have been a lot of moving pieces this year – e.g., the stimulus money (which is up in the air and changes day to day), as well as the increased user fees (which has also been fluid). Those two pieces will fund things, but we will not go into that part of the budget right now. We will discuss the allocation of the \$37,649,573 which represents a dollar decrease in available funding from FY09. Gifts and donations (from the PTAs, for example) will need to be quantified some time this year.

- The schools are presently 18 teachers down. Some will be restored with stimulus funding. Supplies, text books, and instructional materials are also down. SPED is not touched, as it is mandated. There is \$300K in attrition savings that is already accounted for in the budget. The WC may be seeing reserve-fund transfer requests in the fall, as this attrition money has in the past been accessible to the schools (in the fall) and that is not the case this year.

- Member Brusch continued: Custodian and maintenance is the same and some fuel savings has been realized. \$349K savings in health insurance has been realized and the LABBB consortium has issued its second rebate check in a row, of which 100% was applied to the budget. There is not likely to be another LABBB rebate soon. If the stimulus money comes though, 14 of the 18 positions are anticipated to be restored. Member Widmer asked when the stimulus part of the budget would be discussed? SC Chair Rittenburg replied that this will happen when the guidelines are known.

- The WC then discussed the nature of this funding – e.g., that the federal government has issued stimulus guidelines which the state must implement. Member Widmer raised the point that Belmont thought it was getting two years of stimulus funding, but it is now getting one year only: FY10. This is because the state used some of the funding to plug budget gaps in FY09. There is effectively only one year of stimulus money.

- Regarding user fees, Brusch continued, the activities are broken down into categories. For example, the instrumental music program will now cost \$230 for a child. User fees will be discussed in detail at the May 26 SC meeting. Member Libenson asked: what is the plan for the library aides? SC Chair Rittenburg replied that the SC would like to not lock the libraries, but at this point, they are without staff. Member Epstein asked what will happen if there are not enough fees collected for a program to be restored. Do you hire a drama club coach only then to let him/her go if there are not enough families willing to pay the user fees? Rittenburg replied that the SC is still working on that and will present more information at its May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- Member Heigham asked that Member Widmer explain again about stimulus funding being spent in FY09. Member Widmer: State tax revenue experienced a huge drop in April, leaving an FY09 shortfall. The state's reserves are already being depleted at a rapid rate: reserves are down by 50%, which affects the credit rating and the state's ability to get short-term loans. The state saw money for FY11 and advanced it from FY11 into FY09 – it took FY11 stimulus money and funded the FY09 budget gap. This

money can only be spent once. The total expected stimulus of \$2.7M has been cut almost in half.

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- Chair Curtis: The BOS and the SC agreed to not go for an override this year. Had it been known that almost \$1M in stimulus funding would disappear, they might have held a different opinion. We stopped some leaks this year, he said, it is clear we won't be able stop the leaks next year.

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- ***Tentative Capital Budget (CB)***  
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- Member Brusch: The CB is divided: It is contained within the town's operating budget and is roughly \$2.1M. Of that, \$1.2 is allocated to roads. The remainder (\$700K) is for all the other capital needs of the town. The CB was cut this year, but the roads portion was not cut. We wanted to stick to the intent of the 2001 override. However, the BOS changed what roads money will cover since the override of last June failed. Pavement (arterials and collectors) only will be covered. The roads will only get worse as time goes on and many residential roads will turn to dirt eventually, e.g. Oakley Road. [Brusch explained that the roads money sits in the roads account and becomes available on July 1<sup>st</sup>. At that time, it goes out for bids. The money that is sitting there now is already allocated.] The CB requests were down and Brusch thanked the IT Department, the Fire Department, and the Building Department. \$4.1M in (non-roads) requests came through and the CB had \$700K to spend.

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- Member Brusch reviewed how the \$700K will be spent. She also reviewed the items that were requested, but not funded. This is concerning, she said, because it is important to maintain the assets we have. She said she would like the CB to be funded at \$3M per year and she wants the WC to keep this in mind when talking about overrides next year.

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- ***Minutes***  
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- The minutes of April 22 and May 6 were approved with 3 abstentions from absent members on May 6.

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- ***Other***  
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- Next week: the town/school split will be discussed. Chair Curtis said that the WC could send out the budget and report together to TM after next week's meeting.

- Member Heigham moved that the WC adjourn at 9:20 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
- WC Recording Secretary