

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Monday, May 18, 2009
7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Board was called to order in Open Session at 6:50 pm by Chair Leclerc in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Jones and Firenze were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Chair Leclerc suspended the meeting for 10 minutes so the microphones could be set up. At 7:00 pm Chair Leclerc called the meeting to order again.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Proclamation for Graham Keeth, Boy Scout Troop 304

Mr. Graham Keeth, of Boy Scout Troop 304, appeared before the Board to receive a Proclamation acknowledging his achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout.

The Board moved: To acknowledge Graham Keeth's Eagle Scout Proclamation.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Chair Leclerc read the Proclamation.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were none.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT (*continued*)

Dunkin Donuts – Outdoor Seating

The manager of the Dunkin Donuts at 52 Church Street appeared before the Board to discuss his request for outdoor seating on the sidewalk. Selectman Firenze recused himself from the discussion but stated that the town should have clear-cut guidelines on outdoor seating. The proposal is for six tables, each with two chairs. Chair Leclerc asked a number of questions pertaining to the tables, e.g., cleanliness of the tables, trash removal. Mr. Younger has drafted a set of guidelines and procedures pertaining to outdoor seating. The Board will review these guidelines as will various town departments: Health, Community Development, Police, and Fire. Mr. Younger noted

that the goal is to develop a town-wide policy on outdoor seating by the next Board meeting and make a decision on this request at that time.

Grove Street Enhanced Traffic Control Signage

Mr. Glenn Clancy, Town Engineer, appeared before the Board to discuss the Grove Street Enhanced Traffic Control Signage proposal. He is recommending this new signage on behalf of the Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC would like to place these signs in order to lessen the traffic in and around Grove and Belmont Streets during the morning and evening rush hour times. Mr. Clancy reviewed the details. The proposal is for a six-month trial, he said.

The Board moved: To accept this six-month experiment to control traffic as proposed by Mr. Clancy.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Chairman's Report:

- There is a potential \$370K local aid decrease for the FY10 budget as a result of less revenue estimated at the state level. Tax increases may alleviate the shortfall. Selectman Firenze noted that since free cash was set aside for this purpose, if necessary, it could be used to close the gap. Selectman Jones said it was premature to make any decisions at this time. Mr. Younger added that this shortfall (\$370K) would be seen this summer unless a tax increase (at the state level) is approved.
- Gov. Patrick is using stimulus money originally allocated for the FY11 budget to plug holes in the FY09 budget. We will need to look for more revenue and/or make deeper cuts in FY11.

Water and Sewer Rates

Mr. Castanino and Mr. Clancy appeared before the Board to request approval of the FY10 sewer rates. Mr. Castanino reviewed the MWRA charges. The Water Advisory Board voted to increase water rates by 2.5%. Selectman Firenze asked if this increase would cover costs. Mr. Castanino replied that it would. Selectman Firenze said he was uncomfortable with this increase.

Regarding sewer rates, Mr. Castanino said he has worked with Mr. Clancy in this area. The sewer rate increase is recommended at 7%. Selectman Jones noted that the sewer rates are higher because the town is borrowing money to address water flow issues in the Winn Brook area, sewer capital needs, and Wellington water quality issues. The Board discussed the "pay as you go" and borrowing issues.

The Board moved: To approve the 2.5% water increase and to approve the 7% sewer rate recommendation.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Government Structure Committee (GSC)

Dr. Paul Solomon, Committee Chair, and Mr. Bob McLaughlin of the Government Structure Committee, appeared before the Board to present the Structure Committee's final report. Dr. Solomon reviewed the committee members, its goal, how long the GSC has been meeting, and the Final Recommendations.

The Final Recommendations include strengthening the role of the Town Administrator by allowing him/her more authority and control in several areas – including appointing most permanent committee members. The GSC believes that this would allow the Board of Selectmen to be more effective and be a stronger policy board. The GSC also recommended that the Police Chief should have the same appointing authority as the Fire Chief.

Regarding Town Meeting, the GSC recommends that TM be reduced from 288 to 216 members over a period of three election cycles. A minimum number of votes would be required for election to TM. The GSC also recommends that a Town Meeting Member Association be considered.

Regarding Elected Officials, the GSC did not recommend any changes.

The GSC recommends that the Board of Selectmen appoint a five member Light Board which would end the current practice of the Selectmen serving as the Light Board. The formation of the new advisory board is contingent upon a “memorandum of understanding” which outlines the role and responsibilities of the Light Board. Selectman Jones explained in more detail about the “memorandum of understanding”, e.g., a board that makes the light department run efficiently and is accountable to rate payers.

Recall Provision: the GSC recommends the need to establish a by-law to have a recall provision of elected officials. Mr. McLaughlin said he was shocked that there was no recall provision in this town. Regarding the Light Board, he said you should have people who understand electricity issues (kilowatts, etc.), and as for the TM reduction, McLaughlin said, the strong will survive and the town will have a better a TM. More people would run for positions if the town was run like a business by giving the TA more authority, he added.

Chair Leclerc stated that he agreed with the GSC on their final recommendations but asked for his Board members to weigh in on the recommendation whereby the Board of Selectmen would not be the Light Board. Selectman Jones said that the Board of Selectmen really doesn't know in detail how the Light Board spends its money. Chair Leclerc added that he doesn't have time to dig deeply into the technical Light Board issues. Selectman Jones noted that the Board of Selectmen can spell out in the “memorandum of understanding” what is important to the Board, e.g., conservation. Member Firenze said that, if the Light Board issues seem too complex, advisors are

available to advise the Board of Selectmen. He thinks it is appropriate for the Board of Selectmen to remain the Light Board.

Dr. Solomon asked if the Board was in favor of the recommendations with the exception of the Light Board. Board members said yes and Selectman Jones cautioned that the GSC and the Board will need to consult with all of the bodies impacted and meet with them and hear their concerns.

The Board and the GSC representatives then discussed Town Counsel's role in implementing these changes and the timeline for bringing these changes to TM.

Town Hall (TH) Facility Operation Discussion

Chair Leclerc said that this discussion was created with the goal of saving the town money and that a great many people believe that Belmont has more space than is needed.

Mr. Kevin Looney, Facilities Manager, and his assistant, Mr. Justin Poirier, appeared before the Board to discuss the operations costs of Town Hall as well as the other facilities in town. Mr. Looney passed out a handout detailing the costs of maintaining facilities. He reviewed both the fixed costs (utilities, service contracts, inspections) and the variable costs (call-in repairs, improvements, and capital improvements). The Board reviewed with Mr. Looney the fixed, variable, and building maintenance costs of the buildings in town (fire stations, police department, Town Hall, Homer, DPW, etc.). Selectman Firenze asked what the total number of people working in the building was relative to its size. For example, Town Hall has about 12 full-time employees and the cost per square foot is staggering. Mr. Looney will get back to the Board with information pertaining to employee numbers. Chair Leclerc asked Mr. Looney if the town had more building capacity than it needs. Mr. Looney replied that this was difficult to assess, but that it (Town Hall) was not a cheap building to run.

Mr. Younger noted that Mr. Looney has provided the cost numbers. Where do we go from here? Younger asked. If we close Town Hall, a relocation plan will cost money. Chair Leclerc said he would like to see various options, only one of which might be closing Town Hall.

From the audience, Mr. Michael Smith, Co-Chair of the Historic District Commission, read a statement saying that the Town Hall building is used by more than employees, it is used by the residents of this town. Town Hall, he read, is the most recognizable and significant building in this town. He noted that money that has been invested in the complex. He urged the Board to protect this building.

Selectman Firenze concluded this discussion by asking those present to not assume that the Board doesn't appreciate this building. We are asking the question: how can we make better use of these buildings? We are in the process of gathering information to help answer that question.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- Summer Schedule – Mr. Younger is proposing a Monday through Thursday work week with 8am-4pm hours and a half-hour lunch. On Friday, work hours would be from 8pm-1pm with no lunch. This would be the same number of hours per week as currently. Closing on Friday afternoons could save in energy up to \$1,700. The unions and department heads are fine with it, he said, and he would like to implement this starting the first week of June. Selectman Firenze noted that, while \$1,700 is a decent savings, he is uncomfortable with the town not being available on Friday afternoons, and getting lunch to a half hour doesn't work. He said he is concerned about the public's perception. Selectman Jones said he is fine with it. Chair Leclerc said he supports this proposal with reservation and would be willing to extend his support on an experimentation basis only.
- *The Board moved:* To support the summer schedule as outlined above on a provisional basis only.
The motion passed (2-1).
- Senior Center - The furniture has been advertised to bid. The Board discussed various issues related to the Senior Center generator.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Approval of Board of Selectmen Minutes – May 4, 2009

The Board moved: To accept the Minutes of May 4, 2009.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

ACTION BY WRITING

Licenses: A. Sacca, Dick's Place, Waverley Collectibles, and Yellow Cab of Belmont

The Board moved: To approve the renewal licenses of the above-named establishments: A. Sacca, Dick's Place, Waverley Collectibles, and Yellow Cab of Belmont.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

OTHER

Chair Leclerc other:

- Mr. Conti spoke to the parking complaint of a Trapelo Road resident. He does not want cars in front of his house all day. Selectman Firenze said he would rather support town residents than support those who travel here and park in

Belmont all day to commute into Boston. Chair Leclerc said that permit parking ought to be explored. Mr. Conti said permit parking has been explored. Chair Leclerc charged Mr. Conti to look into this.

- 45 Sycamore Street – Chair Leclerc asked Mr. Younger to pursue this property with the Public Health Department.

Schedule BOS Meetings and Office Hours from 7/1/09 – 12/31/09

This topic was tabled.

Executive Session

The Board moved: To enter into Executive Session at 9:41 to discuss the value of real property and security. The Board will not be returning to Open Session. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

(During executive session, no substantive motions were made. The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:29 pm.)

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator