

**THE MINUTES
OF THE
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 25, 2003**

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:37 PM.

Members absent: W. Flewelling, L. McCormick, and S. Stratford

Also present: Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, School Committee Chair Ralph Jones, Kathy Miller (attended for Scott Stratford), Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, and Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *Town of Belmont Comparative Financial Statements for the Eleven Months Ending 5/31/03 and 5/31/02*
2. *Highway Department Reconciliation of Accounts*
3. *June 25, 2003 email from Assistant Town Administrator Munro to the Warrant Committee regarding Budget Transfer amounts*
4. *Final FY 2004 State Aid Amount June 20, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner*

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the May 28, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes of May 28, 2003.*

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the June 4, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes of June 4, 2003.*

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the June 11, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes of June 11, 2003.*

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the June 16, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of June 16, 2003.*

Reserve Fund Transfers

Buildings and Grounds

Town Accountant Hagg mentioned the original request has been dropped from \$60K to \$40K. She added the Board of Selectmen approved all the transfer requests on this evening's agenda (*Handout 3*).

Member Brusch pointed out a portion of the transfer request (\$3,612) is for softball overtime that the Recreation Department agreed to cover, but the Buildings and Grounds Department is covering instead because the employee is actually in Buildings and Grounds and Recreation was unable to cover it in their budget.

- *Member Brush made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to transfer \$40K from the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund to the Buildings Department Budget.*

Highway Department – Snow Removal Account

Town Accountant Hagg reviewed the Highway Spreadsheet (*Handout 2*).

Mr. Jones also mentioned the School Department has a \$50K surplus in Health Insurance that will be coming back to the Town.

Town Accountant Hagg reminded the Committee regarding the law on the snow account is that you have to appropriate what you appropriated the prior year in order to put the deficit on the Recap Sheet. We have appropriated more than that, so we are covered.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to transfer \$98,809 from the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund to the Highway Department Snow Removal Budget.*

Legal

Town Accountant Hagg reviewed the Legal Services transfer request (distributed at a prior meeting) and the reasons for the “extraordinary expenses” related to labor negotiations.

Member Heigham asked what the total amount expended is and the breakdown between Town Counsel and Labor Counsel. The Committee discussed some Town Counsel and other legal expenses that were included with Town Counsel because they were not considered Labor Counsel costs. Selectman Brownsberger mentioned the Town is going to review how they manage legal costs in order to maintain a much stronger reign on those figures in the future.

The Committee discussed different costs pertaining to the Legal Services. Settlements and counsel fees are included in this account. Member Heigham is “troubled” with including settlements and investigations included in a lump Legal Services account.

Member Curtis remarked about Attorney Crowe's total billing to the Town. He thinks it is a lot of money, and asked what his hourly rate is for the Town. Town Administrator

Kleckner said he believes the rate is \$150-\$175/hour. He added there were three labor relation cases Attorney Crowe specifically worked on.

Member Hofmann is concerned that each year there seems to be extraordinary cases each year and that maybe we need to step back and review our budgeting and costs on this account.

Member Brusch commented on how this account was budgeted in the past. She asked why some Kendall legal costs were coming out of the Legal account. Town Administrator Kleckner answered that it not necessarily about the fire, but the insurance company is subrogating the case, and some Department Heads involved have been deposed.

Member Morley mentioned the Legal account budget has increased from prior year. Member Brusch reminded the Committee there will be increased legal fees in FY04 due to the two Building Committees who do not budget legal costs.

- *Member Brush made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to transfer \$61K from the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund to the Legal Services Budget.*

Professional Services

Town Administrator Kleckner said one project isolated were the expenses related to the Fire Station Project and some environmental services.

- *Member Brush made a motion, Member Heigham seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to transfer \$25K from the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund to Professional Services in the Board of Selectmen's Budget.*

Member Hobbs asked if there was a way to capitalize those Fire Station costs and borrow them with the Fire Station Project. Town Accountant Hagg said that she would check on that. Member Hobbs would like to make the Reserve Fund Transfer approval conditional to the extent that we can get those moneys reimbursed from the project bond proceeds. Town Accountant Hagg said she couldn't reimburse expenses from a prior year.

It was asked where the Recreation Department stood since their Reserve Fund Transfer request was denied last week. Town Accountant Hagg said we are going to not charge the Recreation Department for their health insurance this year and use that money to cover their shortfall. The health insurance for the Recreation Department would come from the General Health Insurance account, which has surplus money due to Unicare tailings.

Member Kobus asked if it was a "punishment" since they are not sharing the responsibility financially. She knows it was voted down on principle. Town Accountant Hagg said it could be argued either way. Member Tillotson said the Recreation Department would be doing monthly budget review meetings. Member Hofmann thinks

they have gotten the message, and now it is up to them to act on that. Chairman Widmer asked who would chair these monthly meetings. Member Brusch said that Recreation Chair Lee Barber would be discussing that with her early next month.

FY 2004 State Aid

Town Administrator Kleckner discussed the ending result of FY04's final State Aid (*Handout 4*). The Committee discussed the Minuteman State Aid numbers and payment schedule. Member Schafer said we still do not know what the answer is yet.

Member Brusch added we budgeted the whole \$164K for Assessment increase, with \$114K of that being budgeted into the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund.

Nominating Committee

Member Hobbs is the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Sub Committee to Review Warrant Committee Process

Chairman Widmer wants to review the whole process, mainly the timing, by which the Warrant Committee makes our recommendations and write-ups so that we are not playing catch up as we did this year. He asked Vice Chairman White, Member Schafer and himself to review this issue and get back to the Committee in early fall. Selectman Brownsberger volunteered to be on that Subcommittee.

Chairman Widmer said we would come back with some ideas and recommendations in the first meeting in September.

Structural Change Projects

Member Brusch gave the new ideas to the Committee in order to gain interest for creating subcommittees:

- Idea of the non-profit properties – what they cost us as a Town (i.e., Belmont Day School and even churches, if the Warrant Committee wants to bring the idea out that far)

Chairman Widmer thinks it is worth understanding the issue. Member Oates asked what is the ultimate goal for this issue. Chairman Widmer answered to possibly get more revenue to the Town.

Members Hobbs, Brusch, Schafer, and Callanan will volunteer on this issue.

- Energy savings in buildings

Member Brusch thinks Vision 21 is already working on this issue. Selectman Brownsberger mentioned Selectman Solomon is heading up that issue. Member

Hofmann will be the liaison between the Warrant Committee and the Vision 21 Committee.

- Regionalization of 911 (and other regionalization, i.e., Fire Department services)

Selectman Brownsberger would be “delighted” for someone on the Committee to help him pursue this issue. He would like a quality analysis to see if it will or will not work.

- Transactions on the website – paying bills

Town Administrator Kleckner said this is part of our major goal with the Town’s website. Selectman Brownsberger added three different groups are pushing this issue forward already. Member Tillotson is interested in the trade off between providing those services and municipal employee efficiency.

Treasurer Freiner sees the electronic transaction ability as a major convenience for residents that cannot get to Town Hall during business hours. There is not a whole lot of processing efficiency as she has seen yet.

- Competitively bidding the Electric Light

Selectman Brownsberger said that is already being handled by the committee Town Moderator Hall is appointing.

- Outsourcing the payroll function

Treasurer Freiner and Town Administrator Kleckner have explored this issue in very much detail. Treasurer Freiner added that when it is time to look at the Systems and Software package again, then we should review the outsourcing issue again.

- Fire Department staffing (similar to the Police Department staffing issue from this year)

Vice Chairman White and Mr. Jones will be working on this issue.

- Creating a Department of Human Services - consolidation of: Recreation, Youth, Council on Aging, and Health

Member Bruschi has heard a subset of people mention the Schools and Recreation Department. Mr. Jones would like the opportunity to consider this suggestion. The Committee continued to discuss this issue further. Member Kobus cited reasons why she does not agree with this suggestion. Member Hofmann thinks we should look at the Schools and the Recreation Department since it is similar to what the Board of Selectmen and School Committee are already talking about.

The Committee came to consensus on the need to review the asset management and responsibility for maintenance, repairs, and entrepreneurial-ness of the Schools and Recreation Department.

Member Heigham is very “dubious” about any formal consolidation of another department with the Schools.

Member Kobus, Member Tillotson, Member Hofmann, School Committee Member Kathy Miller, and one or two Recreation Commissioners will work on this issue.

- Pension Obligation Bonds

Chairman Widmer will work with Treasurer Freiner on this issue.

- Reviewing all fees

Member Brusch thinks the Town already does that in some way. She mentioned Concord formally reviews their fees bi-annually, and they informally review them each year. Chairman Widmer thinks that in some way we should begin to address that as well. Town Administrator Kleckner said this could be done as part of the budget process.

Members Oates and Heigham will work on this issue.

Member Brusch added that Town Moderator Hall has already appointed Member Schafer to the COA Building Project and Member Oates to the Fire Station Project.

Topic Subcommittee

Asset Management	Members Hofmann, Tillotson, Kobus, School Committee member Kathy Miller, and 1 or 2 Recreation Commissioners
Non-profit	Members Hobbs, Schafer, Brusch, and Callanan
Fees	Members Heigham and Oates
Fire Dept. Staffing	Vice Chairman White and School Committee member Ralph Jones
Pension Obligation Bonds	Chairman Widmer and Treasurer Freiner
Energy Savings	Member Hofmann and the Vision 21 Committee
Regionalization of 911	Selectman Brownsberger

Capital Planning Process

Selectman Brownsberger talked of the set of projects, terms, and basic plan of what the Town is trying to do. We need to define the framework of how to present this to the voters. We need to have a group to discuss this so that in the fall, we can bring this to the Mega-group and ultimately to the voters.

Member Brusch volunteered Member Hobbs in dealing with presenting the legal aspects of these projects. Selectman Brownsberger said this group would decide what the structure is for the major capital projects. Member Hobbs recommended Town Moderator Hall would have good input on this issue.

Other

Town Administrator Kleckner said by June 30th the Town has to give some indication on what they will do post-FY05 solid waste disposal. There will be a contract for 4 years and 9 months with Wheelabrator, which will bring us to the end of FY10. The service agreement will be executed in early fall, but will begin as the NESWC contract ends.

Chairman Widmer requested it would be helpful for the Committee to have a chance to react in the process, especially since it has a large financial impact.

Member Hofmann made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk