

MINUTES
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2006
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Questions from Town Residents

Cross Street resident Don Mercier asked if the Board had reviewed what he submitted regarding affordable housing. Chairman Solomon said the materials should be forwarded to the Housing Trust. The Town Administrator will refer Mr. Mercier's letter and data to them as quickly as possible and request a response as quickly as possible. Also, Selectman Brownsberger will follow up with a phone call to them. Mr. Mercier will be notified of their response. The Board agreed to put a general meeting with the Housing Trust on the agenda for one of its summer meetings and Mr. Mercier will also be notified of that meeting.

Action by Appointment

Discussion of Verizon Caller IDs for Businesses, Fire and Police Departments

Acting Police Chief Richard Lane and Fire Chief David Frizzell appeared before the Board. Chief Frizzell explained that through our service provider, Caller ID is not available to commercial customers such as the Town. As a result, police and fire officers get no information from their phones for a non-911 call. Also, the departments are not sending out proper Caller ID, because everything is routed through the Homer Building. Chief Lane explained that this means calls from a town phone show up as 19 Moore Street regardless of where it is actually coming from, such as the rink.

The Board moved: to formally request that Verizon provide full Caller ID service to the Town as soon as possible.

The motion was passed unanimously (3-0).

Athletic Field Committee

Athletic Field Committee Chair Lee Barber appeared before the Board. Mr. Barber reported that the 6-member temporary committee is currently idle. It worked on a big project by Route 2, to put in a field where the old ice rink was, which was unsuccessful. The Committee was charged to make recommendations on fields to be redeveloped or renovated. The Committee did a study of the incinerator property – the Committee thought it could hold a privately leased driving range which would produce some revenue for the Town, but the study questioned whether the property was large enough. Mr. Barber said he still thinks it's a viable idea. Some of the baseball infields need to be reconditioned and some of the fences that have been cut need to be repaired. Of the 6 members of the Committee, probably half would want to stay on if the Committee is asked to take on new tasks.

Selectman Firenze said the driving range idea is worth looking into. Selectman Brownsberger noted the Committee's original mission was to look at the lack of field space. The artificial football field has had a big impact on this and he doesn't hear people complaining about lack of space as much as before. But he does think studying a driving range would be appropriate, though there will be competing proposals for use of that property. Selectman Firenze said the Committee could also look at other recreational uses.

Selectman Brownsberger added that the capping process is going to take a long time. Ultimately the Selectmen and the Town Meeting will have to decide what to do with the land after public input.

The Board agreed to charge the Committee to study the possibility of a driving range or other recreational use on the land and to report back to the Board by the end of September, when a decision will be made on whether the Committee should continue further. If not enough Committee members want to continue, this can be an informal project for Mr. Barber.

Committee Appointments

There was discussion of the Conservation Commission and whether to appoint an additional associate member. The Board asked Mr. Younger to check with the Committee chair to see whether they are all set or would like additional membership and get an answer in time for the July 17 meeting.

Cultural Council: The Council felt it would be good to have a musician as a member. Sarah Freiberg has agreed to serve.

The Board moved: to appoint Sarah Freiberg to the Cultural Council.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Selectman Firenze suggested that Barbara Owens, who had served previously, should be asked if she would serve in this capacity if she is eligible.

The Board moved: to appoint Barbara Owens to the Cultural Council pending her eligibility and acceptance.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Recreation Commission: Chairman Solomon suggested Betsy Lipson who has evaluated recreation programs around the country. Selectman Firenze said that Neal Fay, a long time Belmont resident, has also expressed an interest. He has been active as a sports coach and league coordinator. Selectman Brownsberger said Lee Slap is a corporate attorney and has served on non-profit boards. He will understand the fiduciary role of the Commission and would be the only lawyer on the Commission.

It was noted there are three strong candidates for two open slots – the commission is limited to 9 members. Selectman Brownsberger and Chairman Solomon said it would be good to maintain strong female representation on this commission. Selectman Firenze said if there were no women on the Commission currently he would agree, but doesn't think the distinction between 5-4 and 6-3 is significant, so does not feel the need to make a decision on that basis.

Chairman Solomon raised the idea of creating a non-statutory associate membership on the Commission. The Board was not enthusiastic.

The Board moved: to appoint Neal Fay to the Recreation Commission.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: to appoint Betsy Lipson to the Recreation Commission.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board asked Selectman Brownsberger to see if Mr. Slap would be willing to serve the Town in another capacity.

Youth Commission: Selectman Firenze said Laurie Carlson has been a teacher in Belmont for many years and has a child in the school system. Chairman Solomon nominated Caroline Lindstrom, a young lifelong resident of Belmont who had expressed an interest previously in serving.

The Board moved: to appoint Laurie Carlson and Caroline Lindstrom to the Youth Commission.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board noted it still needs one more member for the Cultural Council and would like a recommendation from the Chair. It also needs to make appointments to the Pavement Management Committee. These appointments will be finalized on July 17.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported that the Town is reviving the adopt-a-delta program and will model it on what other communities have had success with. One major party has already expressed an interest. He also noted that together with the Treasurer he has drafted a procedure to collect unpaid ambulance bills. There would be a certain number of billing notifications, customers would be put on a payment plan, and finally if the bills remain unpaid they would be sent to a collection agency, and only after that would the Town make a decision to write them off. Bills less than \$150 or for deceased parties would be written off before beginning the collections process. The Town will review the outstanding debts monthly and make these decisions.

Selectman Firenze asked what would be the time frame after which final action will be taken? Mr. Younger replied that general practice is to refer to collection agency after 160 days from the first past due notice, and final action would be taken 90 days later.

Mr. Younger said he is looking at options for a formal betterments policy, which the Town does not currently have. On coalition bargaining, the Town's letters to the unions have gone out and are awaiting responses.

Mr. Younger presented data on what some other communities have in place as far as term limits for committee members. Statewide there is a wide range – some communities have them, some don't. There was discussion. Mr. Conti will check Belmont's Town Reports going back 9 years, 12 years, and 15 years to see how many current committee members have served longer than those amounts of time.

Mr. Younger said there will be a presentation on the GIS project at the Board's August 7 meeting.

On Woodfall Road, Selectman Firenze said he recently e-mailed the country club but has not heard back.

Town Administrator's Evaluation Process

Chairman Solomon has drafted a process based on the one previously in place. This will be Mr. Younger's first evaluation in Belmont. The Board indicated it is comfortable with the process as drafted. Mr. Younger has also had the chance to vet the document.

By July 10, the Selectmen will submit their evaluations, and Mr. Younger will submit his self-evaluation by July 8 so the Board can refer to it in writing theirs. During the week of the 17th, Chairman Solomon will distribute his summary of the evaluations. The formal

review will take place in an open meeting of the Board and the date of this meeting will be decided on July 17.

Action by Writing

Ambulance Billing Write-Off

The Board moved: to approve the write off of \$74,000 in unpaid ambulance bills going back to 2002.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Sand, Gravel and Loam Contracts

The Board moved: to approve the contracts.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Cooperative Fuel Bid

The Board moved: to approve the recommendations.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Striping on Concord Avenue at Leonard Street

DPW is requesting to make Concord Avenue two lanes at the intersection coming down the hill into Leonard Street to formalize what is already happening in practice. This is a safety issue.

The Board moved: to approve the re-striping of Concord Avenue at Leonard Street as proposed.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

A. Signature of MUNIS Contract

The Board moved: To sign the contract for the Town's financial software.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0). Chairman Solomon signed the contract on behalf of the Board.

Bituminous patching and concrete contract

The Board moved: to approve the DPW director's recommendation for these contracts.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Tree service contract

The Board moved: to approve the DPW director's recommendation to re-appoint Asplundh Tree Service in this capacity.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Other

There was discussion of a location in town (Thayer and Davis) where there is an overgrown gravel sidewalk. Mr. Younger will investigate.

Selectman Firenze said he and Mr. Younger are meeting with O'Neill representatives regarding the Town's claim on the Memorandum of Agreement to try to resolve the issue.

There was discussion of different ideas for moving forward with negotiations to re-develop the DeMilia property on Pleasant Street.

There was discussion of zero-based budgeting and the process of defining "core" activities. Mr. Younger shared with the board Warrant Committee member Jim Heigham's summary of what municipal functions are mandated by state law. He also reported on Somerville's newly adopted procedures to assign specific costs to each function.

Selectman Firenze suggested that he and the Warrant Committee and Capital Budget Committee chairs or their designees and, at their option, a school committee member come up with a draft of what would constitute core services and circulate that for comment. The Board agreed.

The Board took a 5 minute recess.

There was discussion of items for a fall Town meeting. The Town will hopefully have more state aid to appropriate by then.

Action by Appointment

Discussion of Town Administrator / Selectmen's Goals

Objective 1: Develop new sources of revenue

PILOT programs – only two properties would probably qualify. The Town Administrator is looking at how other towns structure this, but it is not going to be a major source of

revenue for the Town. The Board agreed to leave further study on this issue to other groups.

Triennially review fees – Certain fees will need to be handled by Town Meeting in the fall so this will stay on the FY07 goals list.

Disposition of town land – A review found two salable parcels but they would only be attractive to neighboring property owners. Selectman Firenze suggested the Town send a letter to abutters of town-owned small parcels to inquire whether any would have interest in acquiring the land. This item will stay on the list.

Collection of ambulance bills – done

Create balanced budget – automatically carries over to next year's goals list

Tax mitigation for seniors – carries over to FY07 goals, will require legislative action

Objective 2: Develop, maintain and implement a plan for controlling health care costs

Review options to lower healthcare costs – carries over to FY07

Review regionalization of health services – this cannot move forward outside of collective bargaining and will be left to other groups

Objective 3: Develop and maintain regional opportunities for the Town

Legislation has been filed to make regionalization of services and purchasing easier – these will be combined as one item. Expanded use of purchasing opportunities has been accomplished.

Review public transportation planning: Selectman Firenze suggested looking at a public-private partnership that might provide intratown public transport (Waverly-Cushing-Belmont Center). This was agreed.

Objective 4: Redefine the Town's Community Development, Economic Development, Engineering and Planning Functions

A Planning Director was hired in FY06. Also, a Development Team has been created to review all aspects of proposed developments to streamline the process. The Town has implemented new permitting software. The permitting process is working better – a routine building permit can often be obtained in one day. A Pavement Management Committee is being established to define the road construction program. The Town is expecting comments on the new draft Open Space Plan by July 30.

Purecoat re-use – The Purecoat Committee will report back to the Board by the end of July.

Objectives 5-8

This was deferred to be discussed at the Board's next two meetings. The Board discussed starting meetings earlier to make sure there is sufficient time for this.

Action by Writing

Non-Union Wage Increase for FY07

The Board moved: to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing bargaining with non-union employees and not to return to open session.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0). The Board entered executive session at 10:20 PM.

(No substantive motions were made during executive session. The Board adjourned at 10:43 PM.)

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator