

**THE MINUTES  
OF THE  
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 4, 2003**

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:36 PM.

Members absent: J. Heigham

Also present: Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, Co-Chair of ITAC John Bowe, and School Director of Technology Lee McCanne, Light Department General Manager Timothy L. McCarthy, Co-chair of ITAC Jonathan Green, Youth Commission Chair Noreen Millane, Water Superintendent Gerard Schultz, Water Commissioners Frank French, Joseph Green, and Richard Kobayashi

*Handout(s) given out tonight:*

1. *Information Technology Advisory Committee June 4, 2003 presentation distributed by Mr. Bowe*
2. *ITAC Views on IT Systems Management Functions distributed by Mr. Bowe*
3. *FY2004 MWRA Loan Utilization and Meter Modernization memo dated June 4, 2003*
4. *Revenue Estimates June 3, 2003 letter from the Board of Assessors*
5. *5a - Board of Selectmen Budget Recommendations June 3, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner (coupled with his March 26, 2003 memo as Handout 5b)*
6. *Final FY 2004 Budget Recommendations May 30, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner*
7. *Capital Budget Committee Report dated June 2003*
8. *Municipal Vehicle Use May 27, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner*
9. *Fact Sheet on Council on Aging Programs and Activities distributed by Barbara Miranda*
10. *Information Technology Management Proposal for the Town of Belmont*
11. *Public Library and Veterans Subcommittee Reports*

***Technology Discussion***

Chairman Widmer introduced John Bowe, School Committee liaison member of the Information Technology Advisory Committee. He gave (*Handouts 1 and 2*) an abbreviated presentation similar to the presentation to the Board of Selectmen earlier this spring.

There were some positive findings in their IT evaluation process listed in the handouts. Most departments are moderately well equipped. There were also some areas of concern addressed in the evaluation. Mr. Bowe said ITAC recommended addressing the accounting issue and needing a centralized IT management function.

Chairman Widmer asked Mr. Bowe for the essence of their recommendation regarding the centralized IT management. Chairman Widmer also asked where we stack up compared to other Towns. Mr. Bowe described some surrounding town's IT departments and how they function within their Town departments. Some things the Town misses by not having this role are not utilizing the tools we currently have and having the individual departments doing their own IT planning and purchasing.

Member Stratford mentioned there is a lot of support for this position here tonight. He wanted more information about the considerable IT risk and the impact of Comcast, Broadband, and other technology entrants in Belmont. Mr. Bowe mentioned some frustrations with residents wanting to purchase Recreation tags online. There is no one to coordinate this function. Some of the ITAC is concerned about the security of the network, but Mr. McCanne added that a recent IT audit had positive results.

Member Oates asked if there were a law that mandates security within the Town/Schools. Mr. McCanne mentioned there are various regulations around school records and child Internet protection that are tied to federal funding/grants, in which the Town is already compliant. Member Stratford asked if the security audit was for the Town-wide or just School Department in scope. Mr. McCanne mentioned the School side was completed, but with the Town offices moving recently, they have not been completed. His concern is the ambitiousness of the students and their ability to "crack into" the Town/School network.

Member McCormick asked if someone could quantify how much the Town would save with having this position filled. Mr. McCanne answered the Town needs to have one centralized person who is able to have long-range thought for the Town.

Member Tillotson inquired what down time is experienced with troubleshooting issues with only a ½ time employee currently working with the Town. Mr. McCanne mentioned there are about 130 Town computers (about 300 overall). Selectman Solomon said there are some long-term savings to think about in the future.

Member Morley is hoping this position could work with departments in assessing their software/technical needs. Mr. McCanne said that it is essential for this person to have that skill and know which products that are best for departments.

Member Stratford mentioned there is a proposal on the table for this position to have some direction from Mr. McCanne. Also, this person would be involved with the support structure and have a town-wide vision.

Mr. Green added the ITAC has voted unanimously to support the proposal regarding this Technology position.

### ***MWRA Loan Program***

Water Commissioner Chair Frank French briefly mentioned the Water Commission's unanimous vote in support of this Program. Mr. Kobayashi said the Water Commission is now asking a specific amount to borrow for this Program instead of just authorization to borrow as in *Handout 3*.

Member Kobus asked if they are proposing the \$650K once or is the Water Commission looking to borrow each year. Mr. Kobayashi thinks it is appropriate to defer that decision to the "bodies that will succeed us" since the consolidation of Public Works for FY04.

The Committee discussed this Program with the Water Commissioners and Superintendent Schultz.

Vice Chairman White asked for the benefits of completing the Meter Modernization Program earlier than originally anticipated. The principal benefit to completing the program early is that citizens of the Town would be able to receive monthly water/sewer bills based on actual reading of meters. It would also be better cash flow to the Town.

Member McCormick asked about the Water Department's cash flow and the effect on the Town's cash needs. Mr. Kobayashi deferred to Treasurer Freiner. She said they have never had to borrow short-term cash for the Water Department. The cash flow benefits are going to be "a wash." There may be a one-time cash flow benefit, but because the bills would still be sent just as often, it would still be on a regular cycle. Her concern is that residents could get behind with their quarterly water bills, and it does open it up for combined billing with the Light Department.

Member Bruschi mentioned this vote could wait to next week's Warrant Committee meeting. She asked if we have a wet spring/summer and our revenue projection is higher than actual, would the expenditures be adjusted by doing less in another area of the Department, such as Water Main Replacement or Meter Modernization? Mr. Kobayashi said in the past couple of years, the Department has developed a surplus to cushion those deficiencies.

### ***FY04 Budget Discussion***

Chairman Widmer asked the Warrant Committee to hold Monday June 16<sup>th</sup> prior to Town Meeting open for a meeting if it deems necessary.

Chairman Widmer said he asked the Assessors to update their revenue estimates. Their response is in *Handout 4*. Town Administrator Kleckner used those increased estimates in his Board of Selectmen Budget Recommendations June 3<sup>rd</sup> memo to the Board of Selectmen (*Handout 5a*).

Chairman Widmer said the State Aid number is conservative and still in discussions at the State level. Member Kobus asked about the Overlay Surplus account. Town Administrator Kleckner said that account is for abatements and tax exemptions. Town Accountant Hagg added that in order for people to come for an abatement, they have to pay their taxes. If the Assessors turn them down, they need to set aside about \$10K in Overlay for when the case goes to trial. When the case goes to court, and the Town wins, the Surplus of \$10K comes back to the Town as Overlay Surplus.

Chairman Widmer reviewed the May 30<sup>th</sup> memo from Town Administrator Kleckner (*Handout 6*), and which the Board of Selectmen voted on June 2. He asked the Committee to review the memos and raise any issues still in question.

Member Schafer asked about the difference in the numbers from Town Administrator Kleckner's June 3 memo (*Handout 5a*) from an earlier version. Town Accountant Hagg broke down the difference resulting mainly due to the \$100K Technology increase, spread across a few departments, voted on by the Board of Selectmen on June 2.

Mr. McCarthy spoke of the \$100K increase in the Light Department's payment in lieu of taxes to be paid in December 2003. Member Brusch recommended the amount stay in the IT budget instead being allocated to the School and other departments. Member Curtis said he is comfortable with the IT proposal of the \$100K being allocated as the Board of Selectmen voted on earlier.

Member McCormick agreed with Member Curtis in that we are spending too much time discussing \$15K in the scope of a \$70 million total budget.

Member Stratford said he would like to get this position right. The Town's budget figure for the Schools should remain at the \$29,655,000 for now.

Vice Chairman White put back on the table the idea of a full-time Youth Coordinator. He is not comfortable with lowering the level and having that position part-time. Member Oates said she had spoke with two members of the Youth Commission and they agree to have a Youth Coordinator ½ time for FY04 recognizing the Town's fiscal constraints. Selectman Solomon said he spoke with the Youth Commission Chair David Alper, and he said if the Town did increase the Youth Coordinator position, he would like two part-time Coordinators instead.

Ms. Millane, the Youth Commission Chair, said they are far along with hiring a part-time person. If they could get two part-time positions, it would be the best thing right now.

Member Hofmann would still like to make the appeal for the Highway staff person to come back into the FY04 Budget. Selectman Brownsberger said the bottom line is that we received a revenue increase in our estimates of \$430K. Of that, \$164K was allocated for the Minuteman Assessment increase. We need to keep in mind that in FY05, State Aid will be flattened again. We expect to be in the position of losing additional positions in that year, so any positions we make for this year, will go away next.

Member Hofmann again stated his support for the Highway staff person in keeping the staffing level the same as last year.

Member Stratford is uncomfortable at hearing Minuteman is the Belmont Public School's responsibility. He went on to say the School Department has no say how the Minuteman money should be used.

Member Schafer reminded the Committee of her comments last week to "budget slimly" for departments and put those additional funds in the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund. She proposed we put \$50K in the Minuteman Assessment account and \$114K in the Reserve Fund, so the whole \$164K would not be stuck in Minuteman.

Member Hobbs has not heard any cost-benefits regarding the IT position. She wants to make sure someone has a marketing plan for it.

Member McCormick also mentioned his concern about the IT person. He looks at this addition as two less patrolpersons. It is just the wrong time now.

Member Curtis said that moving us to the place to conduct Town business online and force Departments to use their technology would be hard to quantify but it is very important.

Member Brusch supports all of these additions. She appreciates the Youth Commission is not interested in a full-time person but two part-timers.

Chairman Widmer got a general sense of where the majority is in each of these areas:

- \$50K to Minuteman and \$114 to Reserve Fund (unanimous),
- the IT position (11 for and 5 against),
- an additional \$22K into Youth Commission for an additional part-time Coordinator coming from roads (14 for and 2 against), and
- \$45K for the Highway Department laborer coming from roads (5 for and 11 against).

Selectman Brownsberger commented on the level of spending on roads. The analysis on road spending says our roads are in very poor condition. At \$1.2 million per year in the Capital Budget, it is not making progress. A more reasonable estimate would be \$1.5 to \$1.8 million per year. He asked the Committee to think about the levels we are getting by with as the Committee is voting to add more positions to the Budget.

Ms. Millane said the Youth Commission Director's salary is a reduction of FY03's Budgeted amount, not an increase to the FY04 Budget for the additional ½ time person. Chairman Widmer agreed. Member Brusch feels very strongly that the transfer of a full-time to a part-time person in the Youth Commission was wrong to start. She thinks the additional \$22K for a second Youth Commission person is a good investment.

- *Member Flewelling made a motion, Member Oates seconded said motion and the Warrant Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Board of Selectmen's Budget voted on June 2, 2003 with the changes of moving \$22K from Roads to the Youth Commission, allotting \$50K in additional Minuteman and \$114K to the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund, and taking the \$23K from Education and putting it into the Town's IT Budget.*

Selectman Brownsberger said it is the sense of the Selectmen that they will accept the Warrant Committee's recommended budget.

### ***Other***

Chairman Widmer mentioned that June 25<sup>th</sup> would be the last Warrant Committee meeting for the fiscal year.

### ***FY04 Capital Budget Discussion (Handout 7)***

Member Brusch reviewed the amounts in the Capital Budget \$1.013 million for General Fund, excluding pavement management, \$1,105,453 for pavement management from General Fund, and \$1,239,835 for pavement management including Chapter 90 (per the "Summary of FY04 Departmental Capital Requests as of May 29, 2003").

The Committee reviewed a few issues from Handout 7. The Warrant Committee will be voting on the Senior Center and Fire Station issues on June 11<sup>th</sup>. The Capital Budget Committee will be voting on those issues on June 12<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chairman White asked if the Vehicle Subcommittee would like to comment on the Municipal Vehicle Use May 27<sup>th</sup> memo (*Handout 8*). Member Oates reviewed Town Administrator Kleckner's proposal to the Board of Selectmen. She added that ultimately it is a work in progress. Member Brusch thanked Town Administrator Kleckner for his work on this hard issue.

Member Morley clarified if travel allowances would be eliminated for FY04. Town Administrator Kleckner responded it is cut by \$2,500 for FY04 already, and all the travel allowances would be moved to the Town Accountant's budget under a mileage reimbursement account. Selectman Solomon is not convinced that the use of vehicles going home is cleared up with this policy. He has heard one very good argument for one person, but the whole topic needs to be discussed.

Member Flewelling made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk