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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2005
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

Call to Order

The Board of Selectmen convened in open session at 7:04 pm. All members were present. Assistant Town Administrator Conti was also present. The Board of Selectmen noted that Town Administrator Younger is at a conference but will be back next week.

Questions from Town Residents

Action by Appointment

Discussion of Dustan Library Gift

Members of the Board of Library Trustees announced that the Belmont Library Foundation has met a challenge grant from the estate of Jane Dustan and qualified for a \$250,000 gift from her estate for the Senior Center building project by raising an equal amount. Mr. Kenneth Fish, the executor of the Jane Grey Dustan estate also lauded Ms. Dustan's life and support for programs that benefit children. He read the proclamation issued previously by the Board when the children's room at the library was dedicated and named for Ms. Dustan.

The Board moved: to re-adopt the words of the dedication of the Children's room of the library in Jane Grey Dustan's honor.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Discussion of Pleasant Street Reconstruction Project

Community Development Director Glenn Clancy and Roads Corporation representatives Charles Sabella and Rich Kaiser updated the Board of Selectmen on the Pleasant Street reconstruction project.

Mr. Sabella stated that the project is 15% complete – work is being done in the area between Concord Avenue and Trapelo Road. The target date for completion is late November 2006. Roads Corporation will know in the next few weeks whether the rock composition which was found during excavation and which is delaying the drainage work, will cause any delay in this timetable.

The Board of Selectmen inquired about the Olmsted piece of the project (the driveway for McLean Hospital) and was told it has received preliminary approval from MassHighway. Mr. Clancy stated that he is working with McLean Hospital to provide MassHighway with evidence that mitigation funding for this piece will be available.

The Board of Selectmen asked if the old MWRA water main needs to be replaced. Mr. Clancy said that is up to the MWRA which keeps tabs on it. The Selectmen and Mr. Clancy agreed they are eager to see the work expand to the rest of Pleasant Street.

Pleasant Street Resident Art Wolfson appeared before the Board of Selectmen to express his concern over certain details in the design that he is not seeing being implemented, for example on the specifications for the stone wall. Mr. Clancy said if Mr. Wolfson can document his concerns, he would be happy to look into them.

Discussion of Trapelo Road Concept

Traffic Advisory Committee Chair Mary Jo Frisoli, BSC Group members Charlie Kalaskas, Mary Beth Murphy and Peter Briere, along with Glenn Clancy participated in this discussion with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Clancy stated that his intent tonight is to get the Board's blessing on a concept plan to be submitted to MassHighway for project review to get on the TIP for state funding. The BSC Group was hired to facilitate this. The concept plan is designed to accommodate bicycles as well as the current traffic flows. Nothing in this concept plan is cast in stone. This is strictly to demonstrate to MassHighway that a viable concept exists that the BSC Group can get behind.

Ms. Frisoli discussed the process and the criteria that the TAC went through in hiring the BSC Group to consult and noted that the Committee held four public hearings over the summer to make sure everyone's view would be heard.

The Board of Selectmen asked about the tie-in between the zoning and business planning aspect of the project and the roads aspect. Ms. Frisoli indicated that Andy McClurg attended some of the meetings as a liaison from the Planning Board and submitted an initial design that formed the starting point for this design. The BSC Group was given a zoning map so that it could take that aspect into account. Mr. Clancy stated that it is his hope that the Planning Board will be looking at zoning and business uses as he is looking at traffic engineering.

The Board of Selectmen asked if the design would change dramatically if the zoning use in any one piece were to change. Mr. Kalaskas stated that the land use was very important in creating the design for an area. Ms. Frisoli pointed out that the design also incorporated future elements like the Waverley Trail and Pequotette playground.

The Board of Selectmen asked about preserving the trackless trolley. Mr. Clancy explained that they intend to sit down with the MBTA to discuss related issues.

The BSC Group made a slide presentation of the design narrated by Mr. Kalauskas.

Mr. Kalauskas explained that the MassHighway project review will be this fall, then in the spring the MPO will put together the TIP. Then the design process must be completed so that project construction can be planned for 2009. He discussed traffic volumes and speed along the different sections of the corridor. He noted where the crash rates were higher than the statewide average indicating safety issues to address. He touched on the benefits that the completed project will realize for business, residents and the Town and showed some “before and after” models.

Ms. Frisoli pointed out there is state money for façade improvements for businesses. Mr. Clancy stated that this is something that the new Planning Director will look into.

Mr. Kalauskas stated that a lot of Andy McClurg’s suggestions were incorporated in the design. There were some sections where it was impossible to keep his four-lane design and still accommodate the bikeways. In most of these areas, a lane was eliminated.

Mr. Kalauskas stated that it is a two construction season project.

The Board moved: to approve the Trapelo Road concept with the understanding that there would be opportunity for input going forward.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Discussion of New Senior Center Funding

Senior Center Building Committee Chair Karen Pressey appeared before the Board of Selectmen.

The Board of Selectmen stated that this matter has become more urgent because of the possible ending of the lease for the current Senior Center.

Ms. Pressey stated that the Committee had voted unanimously to ask the Board of Selectmen to call a public vote on a debt exclusion for full funding of the Senior Center for the week of November 14. The rapidly increasing costs of construction as well as the uncertain fate of the current Senior Center necessitate that the timetable for the project be expedited.

Council On Aging (COA) Chair Neil Hagerty stated that a lot of fundraising activity is underway and that this momentum cannot be lost. This is the culmination of

thirty years of work by the Belmont Senior Citizens. The fundraising is dependent on political support for the project. The COA supports this project enthusiastically.

Ms. Pressey explained that if this passes, the design can be prepared over the winter to start construction in the spring. If the voting gets postponed, next year's construction season will be lost.

The Board of Selectmen noted that a warrant for the election would have to be submitted to the Town Clerk by October 7 to meet that date (Nov. 14th week). The Selectmen also noted that while they had thought to have Town Meeting vote to designate the money from the Woodfall Road sale which must be used for capital projects for the Senior Center, the Warrant Committee voted strongly not to do so, recalling that a commitment had been made earlier that all capital projects would have a town-wide vote. The expectation is that the Capital Budget committee will agree.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that the costs of construction are rising exponentially, but expressed concern about the amount to ask for in a debt exclusion.

Ms. Pressey stated that the total expected cost of the Senior Center project is now up to \$6 million based on construction in March 2006 and a new estimate will be needed at the end of next week for a firm number. The final number will be between \$6 and \$7 million under this schedule.

The Selectmen noted the sale of the Woodfall Road property would conservatively net about \$3 to \$3.5 million. They said that they hope to get \$2 million for the Senior Center from private fundraising with about \$800,000 raised already. However, if a debt exclusion for the full amount passes, no one will give any more money. But waiting would be offset by rising construction costs. The question was raised as to whether to pursue a debt exclusion for the full \$6.5 million or for the difference between that total and what can be privately raised.

The Board of Selectmen asked if the Warrant Committee or Capital Budget Committee would support designating the Woodfall Road proceeds for the Senior Center after a successful town-wide vote for a \$3 million debt exclusion. Pat Bruschi said there would not be support for using all the Woodfall Road money, but maybe some of it.

It was noted that in other towns the fundraising has picked up after the Town has made its commitment with the understanding that every dollar raised will mitigate the debt exclusion.

Ms. Pressey stated October could be declared a giving month and the amount raised could influence the vote.

The Selectmen noted that the debt exclusion would be presented not in a vacuum but in the context of all capital projects planned. They have prioritized these projects and the Senior Center is top of the list.

The Board moved: that the Selectmen set Monday, November 14 for a vote for a debt exclusion for the Senior Center for the full amount, but that only the amount that exceeds what can be raised from private fundraising will be spent.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board of Selectmen noted that the Woodfall land swap agreement with the Belmont Country Club will be ready for Town Meeting to vote on.

Assistant Town Administrator Conti was asked to verify if the warrant articles would be ready for the Warrant Committee meeting on October 5 and assure that the warrant for Town Meeting as a whole would be readied by the Town Clerk.

Discussion with Belmont Center Planning Group

Belmont Center Planning Group (BCPG) Chair Vickie Alani and members of the group appeared before the Board of Selectmen for introduction.

Ms. Alani stated this is the group's 17th meeting since the beginning of the summer. Ms. Alani provided a summary of the Group's report and she summarized the steps of the process and the plans for a "charrette" to collect public input and suggestions in brainstorming sessions followed by some professional design assistance.

The Selectmen discussed the subject of the re-use of the Central Fire Station in the short term within this long-term plan and its intention that some of the requirements for its re-use will be stated in the request for proposals (RFP) for the station. The Board of Selectmen confirmed that the facility will not be retained for public purposes and will be sold for redevelopment, a commitment made when the issue of a debt exclusion for the fire stations was put to the voters. It is the Board's intention to sell the property as soon as possible.

Mr. Roy Papalia stated that a number of studies have been done on what the public wants to see in the center, and suggested that new public input about re-use ideas at this point is not really needed to go forward with the fire station RFP.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that the BCPG will be part of the RFP process. The Selectmen also noted that the fire station will not be vacated until approximately a year from now, but the Town should move forward with the sale of the building. There is a draft RFP in progress which should be reviewed by the BCPG before Town Meeting. The Board agreed that Town Meeting should be informed about the BCPG participating in the RFP proposals reviewing process.

There was discussion of how specific the warrant article should be about the nature of the RFP. It was agreed that a few lines from the RFP outlining the possible uses of the site should go before Town Meeting.

The Board moved: firstly, to endorse the BCPG's planning process; second, to request that the BCPG define the financial component to be incorporated into the budget process; third, that the BCPG review the draft RFP for the fire station and give some input about what the RFP review process might include; fourth, to request recommendations from the BCPG for additional short-term measures; finally, to direct the Town Administrator to find the BCPG's requested short-term monies (between \$4,500 and \$6,500) dollars.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board of Selectmen thanked the Group for its work and praised its accomplishments.

Re-evaluation of the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee

Solid Waste / Recycling Committee Co-Chair Ken Siskind appeared before the Board of Selectmen and reviewed the history of the Committee. Over the last few years, people have dropped off the Committee and it has not met as regularly, but there are still things for it to do. Studying the concept of a corrugated cardboard recycling drop-off is one example. There is a fixed cost for recycling and a tonnage cost for solid waste so every ton that gets diverted saves the Town money. The Committee still issues recycling tips for the week. If there are people willing to take it over, it would be valuable to continue this Committee.

The Board of Selectmen discussed the idea of a transfer station as opposed to curbside recycling and trash pickup.

The Board moved: to ask the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee to evaluate its mandate and recommend a new one, and further that it come back before the Board of Selectmen by the end of the year with a recommendation.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Discussion of Committee Appointments (Recreation and Human Rights)

The Human Rights Committee has not received a resignation yet. The individual is in the process of reconsidering. A possible decision on an appointment to this committee will be put on the agenda for the Board's Oct. 5 meeting by the Town Administrator's Office.

Recreation Commission appointment – The Town Administrator’s office will get the list and resumes of people who have expressed interest in the Commission as soon as possible and an appointment to the Recreation Commission will be put on the agenda for the October 5 meeting by the Town Administrator’s Office.

The Board of Selectmen discussed its priorities for the Recreation Commission appointment, including doing a better job taking care of the Town’s assets (the skating rink, the pool), taking a fiduciary approach to the Town’s assets, and adding people with children who would participate in the Department’s programs. It was agreed the Board should look at the Commission as a whole and judge what qualities need greater representation. The idea was raised to see about getting a member of the Warrant Committee on the Recreation Commission.

Other

The next Board of Selectmen’s Meeting is scheduled for Saturday October 1 at 2 PM. Assistant Town Administrator Conti will check with Town Administrator Younger to see if this can be moved to the morning – 8 or 8:30AM. There will be no meeting next Monday or the following Monday, but there will be a meeting on Wednesday, October 5 at 5:30PM.

The Board of Selectmen asked Mr. Conti to clarify whether the proposed security system for the Town Hall Complex will include the Town Hall building. He will also get a copy of the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s Handbook for Massachusetts Selectmen for Selectman Firenze.

There was discussion of the bike path project and various ways the Town can promote and facilitate bicycle use. Mr. Conti will follow up on the proposed lease of the MBTA property for the bike path and the status of issues concerning the Cambridge portion of the project.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 PM.

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator