



**Minutes of the  
Town of Belmont  
Warrant Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, January 24, 2024  
7:30pm**

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 25, 2024  
TIME: 8:51 AM

To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

**Call to Order:** Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. There were 15 voting members present

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Melissa Morley	Remote
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Remote	Lynn Peterson Read	Yes
William Anderson	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Tom Caputo	Absent	Marie Warner	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Remote	Jack Weis	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Absent
Deepak Garg	Yes	Meghan Moriarty, Ex-officio, School Committee	Yes
Anne Helgen	Remote		
Staff		Others	
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Chris Doyle, Comprehensive Capital Budget Comm.	Remote
Jay Marcotte, DPW Director	Remote		
Jennifer Hewitt, ATA & Finance Director	Remote		

**1. Continued Discussion on FY25 Budget and Override**

Mr. Lubien explained that this is a continuation of the budget override discussions from the previous meeting regarding the possible override amounts of \$7,500,000 or \$8,400,000. He advised that the Select Board is expected to take a position on the recommended override amount at their meeting on Tuesday, January 30, 2024.

He then reviewed some of the information that would be discussed at the meeting.

Capital Needs: Ms. Doyle spoke about the history of the CCBC's request that \$500,000 from any override being dedicated to building infrastructure and other capital projects. She then spoke about the various capital needs in town and that the Select Board seemed to be looking at only \$250,000 for capital projects. She reviewed some of the actions that have been taken to organize around planning for capital needs including the Capital Stabilization Fund. She also expressed concern that the modeling program created by Tom Caputo did not really address capital needs.

Ms. Doyle explained that the Select Board seems to be planning to use the override capital funds only for sidewalks, while the CCBC is looking at buildings. She pointed out that the town will be receiving about \$260,000 from the Fair Share Funds through Chapter 90 (Pavement & Sidewalks) and suggested that those funds be used for sidewalks and use the other funds for building improvements. She then provided an update on the potential cost for Chenery boilers (up by about \$100,000).

Ms. Garvin explained why the recommendation for \$250,000 for sidewalks is being made:

- Sidewalks are very deteriorated, and the regular complaints the town receives about people falling.
- The current budget of \$225,000 each year only allows the town to "triage" sidewalks.
- The cost of cement has increased significantly.
- The Sidewalk Assessment Plan should allow the town to plan appropriately, rather than triage.
- Sidewalks are becoming a public safety issue.
- It is unknown if the increased Chapter 90 funds are one-time or annual.
- Investment initiatives that cannot be done due to funding (such as bike lanes, crosswalk improvements, etc.).
- The uses and investments of Discretionary Funds.

There were questions and discussions about the various capital needs and planning for them.

Mr. Marcotte that the goal is to repair/maintain at least a mile of sidewalk per year (asphalt sidewalk with granite curbing). He then explained the process and costs used to do this.

Ms. Hewitt said she feels it's important to have some of the override dedicated to capital, but that it's better to dedicate one-time funding sources to capital. She went on to explain that her team will be looking for one-time funding opportunities.

Ms. Doyle said the CCBC would support either choice for override capital funds, and talked about other possible ways to fund capital projects.

There was further discussion about the sidewalks as well as trees and the issue of when a resident falls.

School Committee Update: Ms. Moriarty provided an update on the School Committee's budget discussions. Click [HERE](#) to watch the video of the School Committee meeting. She explained that Dr. Geiser had presented a budget based on a successful override of \$8,400,000. She spoke about the input the School Committee had received regarding the budget, and that the budget Dr. Geiser presented addressed the cost of out-of-district placements by improving in-district Special Education programming, and updating the curriculum used in the district. She pointed out that this override amount would allow the district to address future costs by taking care of current problems. Ms. Moriarty said that she thinks the district has been reactive, and that a systematic change would be beneficial.

Ms. Moriarty said that there was pretty unanimous support for Dr. Geiser's budget.

There were some questions and discussion about the Schools budget.

State Aid: Ms. Hewitt reviewed the local aid amounts that were announced that day:

<b>Belmont Local Aid Amounts</b>							
	<i>FY2023 Actual</i>	<i>FY2024 Cherry Sheet</i>	<i>FY2025 Projected</i>	<i>FY2025 H.2</i>	<i>Variance - Projected</i>	<i>Variance - FY2024</i>	<i>% Growth - FY24 to 25</i>
Chapter 70	10,158,889	11,784,535	11,919,685	11,920,165	480	135,630	1.15%
UGGA	2,615,549	2,699,247	2,753,232	2,780,224	26,992	80,977	3.00%
<b>Combined</b>	<b>12,774,438</b>	<b>14,483,782</b>	<b>14,672,917</b>	<b>14,700,389</b>	<b>27,472</b>	<b>216,607</b>	<b>1.50%</b>
		1,709,344	189,135				
		13.4%	1.3%				

There are two main areas: Chapter 70 (to offset education costs), and Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) which will go up 3% this year (rather than the normal 2%). There is a net increase of \$27,472 over what was projected although this is considered to be essentially flat to the projection.

Override Discussion: Mr. Lubien reviewed where there is general consensus on the Warrant Committee (Free Cash, an override is needed to meet the need of the residents, etc.) and spoke about where the Warrant Committee can weigh in.

There was a discussion of the override amount, how to educate the residents about it, next steps, needs vs. wants, the need for an override, the catastrophic results of no override, and the override amounts that Warrant Committee members support and why.

How the Warrant Committee should provide feedback to the Select Board was discussed. Mr. Lubien summarized the Committee's discussions:

- A sizeable override is needed.
- \$7,500,000 is a solid, baseline number for the minimum override.
- Beyond that, it is the Select Board's call as the Warrant Committee has concerns about what will pass.

Mr. Weiss asked that the Committee get a strong commitment from the town to achieve the milestones that would be needed for financial recovery. This was discussed as well as asking the Select Board to consider the optics/perception of a higher override amount.

There was further discussion of the override recommendation of \$8,400,000 and next steps.

#### **Liaison & Subcommittee Reports:**

- A. Library Building Committee: Mr. McLaughlin reported that the old library is closed and there was a decommissioning ceremony, and provided an update of the building project.
- B. Select Board/Town Administrator: Ms. Garvin reported on the schedule to decide on an override amount, when the budget will be released, and presentation by the Superintendent and Ms. Garvin.

**Next Meetings:** January 31, 2024, February 14, 2024, and February 28, 2024 although Mr. Lubien discussed possibly cancelling the January 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. There was a discussion of meeting dates and conflicts.

#### **Approve Minutes:**

##### December 20, 2023 Budget Summit 3:

*Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2023 Warrant Committee Joint Meeting with the Select Board, School Committee & Capital Budget Committee meeting. Mr. Rickter seconded, and the motion passed 14-0-1 by a roll call vote with Mr. Garg abstaining.*

December 21, 2023: The meeting was on a Thursday, not a Wednesday as shown in the header.

*Mr. Anderson moved to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2023 Subcommittee meeting. Ms. Croy seconded, and the motion passed 10-0-5 by a roll call vote with Mr. Garg, Ms. Helgen, Mr. McEachern, Ms. Cowing, and Ms. Morley abstaining.*

**Other Business** - None

**Public Comment** - None

#### **Adjournment**

*Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Mr. Anderson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny  
Recording Secretary