

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES JUN 18 PM 2:11
MAY 23, 2018, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

Present: Chairman Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle (arrived 7:44 pm), Fallon, Helgen, Libenson, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber (arrived 7:38 pm), Weis, Selectman Dash.

Members Absent: Lisanke, Slap, School Committee Rep. Burgess-Cox.

Also attending: Town Administrator Garvin

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m. by Chairman Epstein.

I. Discussion and Vote on Articles for Town Meeting Part B

ARTICLE 22: Capital Expenditures

The Article requests \$2,004,181 in discretionary capital spending and \$1,898,300 in other capital spending.

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 21: Chapter 90 Highway

The Article requests \$542,443 to spend Chapter 90 road monies received from the state.

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 16: Enterprise Funds

A) Water Enterprise (total of \$7,086,032):

B) Sewer Enterprise (total of \$9,326,880):

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 16: MWRA Appropriation Phase III

The Article requests \$3,852,000 for water main replacement. The expenditure is funded by the water rates.

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 23: DPW and BPD Capital Appropriation (\$7.4 million)

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 15: Salaries of Elected Officials

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 18: Revolving Funds

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 24: Spousal Benefit

Chairman Epstein pointed out that the identical proposal was made last year and that the WC voted unfavorable action. Member Lubien said the impact on the unfunded pension liability was \$187K but there may be some basis to question this actuarial estimate. The benefit affects three individuals who are spouses of employees hired before 1997. There are potentially 14 others who are not reflected in the actuarial estimate.

The Article was passed by a vote of 10 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention.

ARTICLE 25: COLA Base:

No vote was taken.

ARTICLE 14: Landfill Stabilization

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 20: OPEB Contribution

The Article was passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 19: FY19 Budget

The Article was passed unanimously.

II. Review of Q3 Financials

Town Administrator Garvin reviewed the Q3 reports. Property tax collections were tracking above last year, probably reflecting prepayments last December. Otherwise revenues and expenses were tracking as expected.

There is an expected deficit in the school budget that will be covered with circuit breaker money.

III. Discussion of Warrant Committee Procedures and Future Projects

The WC discussed closer cooperation in the future with the Planning Board, the CPC, the Capital Budget Committee, and other committees to improve the capital budget process, particularly for large projects.

Member Crowley raised the issue of a broader town policy towards IT. Member Schreiber indicated the importance of this topic. Member Helgen thought it may be helpful to include the IT Advisory Committee in any initiative.

Member Fallon was concerned about ability to fund future capital projects given that there will be little additional borrowing capacity if DPW/police station project goes forward.

Regarding the debt exclusion vote in November, Chairman Epstein thought the WC could perform a useful service by explaining to the town why the effective MSBA reimbursement rate is expected to be about 26%. He was concerned that residents may be confused why MSBA rates as high as 40% have been mentioned and that it would be good to clarify the issue to address potential fears of project mismanagement.

Member McLaughlin stated it was also important to explain to the town what alternatives there were if the new school was not approved. Member Schreiber indicated this question was the responsibility of the School Dept. but that the WC could possibly work with them to help educate the public. Among the issues are capacity, the physical condition of the building, the state of the science labs, and security.

Member Weis emphasized exploring the financial costs if the school project were not approved.

Chairman Epstein said that in view of the time urgency he and Member Schreiber would approach Superintendent Phelan to get his thoughts on a useful course of action for the WC.

Regarding nomination of officers for next year, Chairman Epstein did not want to use a nominating committee because of the Open Meeting Law complications that arose last fall. His major concern was not having candidates willing to serve and proposed polling the membership at the last meeting in June to see if for each position at least one person was willing to be considered. If there was no volunteer, the Chairman would then lobby individuals over the summer to encourage at least one person to step forward.

Members Libenson thought it was preferable to use a nominating committee even with the OML requirements.

Chairman Epstein thought that with the knowledge that at least one candidate would be available for each position, then during the first meeting of the fall the interested members could put themselves up for nomination and there could be a general discussion and vote, similar to how other committees in town select officers.

Chairman Epstein then moved to the format of the Warrant Committee report. He felt that the report has become too unwieldy and does not receive much attention from TMMs. There is not enough time to prepare a document with graphics that might be more accessible to TMMs. He intends to propose a radical simplification of the report.

Member Doyle thought it would be useful to reconsider the budget format itself in conjunction with a redesign of the Warrant Committee report.

Member Crowley thought that the report duplicates much of the information from the town budget notebook. Chairman Epstein agreed and said it was important to try to streamline the presentation more effectively.

IV. Updates from Liaisons

Selectman Dash reported that they considered the supplemental budget requests. The BOS does not intend to put forward any of them.

Motion to adjourn at 9:44 PM.

Submitted by Roy J. Epstein.