

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

FINAL

MAY 13, 2015, 7:30 P.M.

CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

2015 JUL -2 PM 3:09

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, McLaughlin, Mennis, Sarno, Schreiber, Starzec; BOS Chair Baghdady; School Committee Rep. Slap

Town Administrator Kale

Members Absent: DeStefano and Manjikian

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Libenson.

Chair Libenson began by thanking the WC for their hard work on the WC report. He then distributed several handouts that pertained to the evening's agenda.

Capital Budget: Discussion

Capital Budget Committee (CBC) Chair Anne Marie Mahoney appeared before the WC to discuss the FY16 Capital Budget. She said that public safety was again a top priority this year. She noted that the bonding mechanisms as well as the impact of the passed override will be explained.

CBC Chair Mahoney then reviewed items funded from the Capital Budget. The first item discussed by the WC was the \$45K allotted for the Library feasibility study (to be matched by \$45K from the Library Trustee's own budget). Several WC members asked if the issue of a new/renovated library had not already been vetted several times over the years. The question was raised: What would be different this time around? The feasibility study is expected to consider new options for an "in place" renovation/addition.

CBC Chair Mahoney then reviewed other funded items. She explained the Building Envelope project, as it pertained to the Butler School (\$150K). Two intersections would receive traffic mitigation improvements (Washington/Sharpe curbing, and a raised intersection at Lexington/Sycamore). She then noted that \$100K was allotted for a Community Path Feasibility Study. The feasibility study was briefly discussed. Member Helgen noted that \$100K is a lot to spend if the path is ultimately too expensive for the town. BOS Chair Baghdady explained the rationale for funding the study, given that state funds are available for a bike path.

CBC Chair Mahoney then turned to Chapter 90 funds, override funding, the one-time \$386K from the state, and bonding proposals. Concerning the high school fire alarm system, she explained that this item is both necessary and expensive (\$1.2M). She

further explained how the new fire alarm system will be funded via bonding across FY16 and FY17. Mr. Kale filled in some of the budget details. Member McLaughlin asked about the MSBA potentially funding part of this if the high school should get approved for renovation in the near future. (The answer was no, given that a new building is too far down the road.)

The Police Department's portable radios and the allocation for roads/sidewalks were then discussed.

TM Financial Warrant Articles: Discussion

ARTICLE 15: AUTHORIZATION FOR "UP FRONT" FUNDS FOR CHAPTER 90 HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

"That the Town be authorized to construct, reconstruct, resurface or repair all or portions of various Town Ways and to authorize the expenditure of **\$801,398** as may be received from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2015 and expended under the provisions of Chapter 90 of the Massachusetts General Laws."

Member Epstein moved: Favorable action on Article 15.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 16: APPROPRIATION OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

"A.) That **\$1,818,365** be appropriated for the purchase of Public Safety Equipment, Site Improvements, Public Works Equipment, Equipment for Town Facilities, and consulting services in connection therewith, to construct public ways, and for Building and Facility and Public Works Construction; and for Major Maintenance and Alterations (including design work) as follows, said sum to be raised by general tax and expended under the direction of the Board of Selectmen.

"B) That **\$1,086,350** be appropriated for the purchase of materials and installation of radio transmission equipment, Joint Public Safety Communications Center equipment and portable radios and to meet this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is hereby authorized to borrow and issue bonds and to take any other action necessary and incidental thereto."

Member Fallon moved: Favorable action on Article 16, both A and B.
The motion passed unanimously.

"C) That **\$1,055,000** be appropriated for the design and purchase of equipment, materials and installation of a replacement fire alarm system at Belmont High School and to meet this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is hereby authorized to borrow and issue bonds and to take any other action necessary and incidental thereto."

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable action on Article 16, part C.
The motion passed unanimously.

“D) That \$1,549,000 be appropriated for road paving projects, said sum to be raised and expended under the direction of the Board of Selectmen.”

Member Dash moved: Favorable action on Article 16, part D.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 11: ENTERPRISE FUNDS FOR WATER AND SEWER AND STORMWATER SERVICES

“That **\$6,286,246** be appropriated from the account classified as “Water Enterprise Fund” pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 53F½ of the General Laws for water service; said sum to be expended under the direction of the Board of Selectmen and said appropriation to be funded by a transfer of **\$528,000** from Water Retained Earnings and **\$5,758,246** from Water Revenues.”

Mr. Kale explained Article 11. The WC briefly discussed the two motions under Article 11.

Member Gammill moved: Favorable action on both sections of Article 11.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 10: SALARIES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

Town Moderator	\$ 200	
Chairman of the Board of Selectmen	\$ 5,000	
Selectman (2)	\$ 4,500	(each)
Town Clerk	\$88,016	
Town Treasurer	\$97,494	
Chairman of the Board of Assessors	\$ 3,030	
Assessor (2)	\$ 2,200	(each)

Member Dash explained Article 10.

Member Dash moved: Favorable action on Article 10.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 12: FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET APPROPRIATION

The individual motions were raised separately.

“A) That under General Government, **\$4,434,566** be raised and appropriated.”

Member Dash moved: To approve section A of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“D) That under Public Safety **\$12,817,290** be raised and appropriated.”

Member Helgen moved: To approve section D of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“E) That under Belmont Public Schools **\$49,660,070** be raised and appropriated. Member Sarno said that he will vote against the school budget. He said that he did not support the override and is opposing the budget because a great deal of the money is going toward salaries. This, he said, is a concern. If this growth continues, it will put pressure on the school budget. He said his no vote is a warning bell - reflecting a concern for future school budgets.”

Member Gammill moved: To approve section E of Article 12.

The discussion continued. Member Gammill raised the topic of the deferred maintenance that is occurring within the school system. It was also noted that the “step and lane” salary increase model is unsustainable.

Member Fallon agreed with the “step and lane” comments but noted that this is not just a Belmont issue, but rather will require statewide changes. Another model will need to be implemented across the state.

The motion passed with 13 in favor and 1 opposed.

“F) That under Minuteman Regional School **\$831,525** be raised and appropriated.”

Member McLaughlin moved: To approve section F of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“G) That under Public Services **\$9,896,229** be raised and appropriated.”

Member Epstein moved: To approve section G of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“H) That under Human Services, **\$3,072,192** be raised and appropriated.”

Member McLaughlin moved: To approve section H of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“B) That under Employee Benefits, **\$6,502,635** be raised and appropriated for Retirement expenses.”

Member Mennis moved: To approve section B of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“C) That under Employee Benefits, **\$2,777,375** be raised and appropriated for Other Reserves, including Health, Insurance and Salary Reserve.”

Member Dash moved: To approve section C of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

“I) That under Debt and Interest on Debt **\$4,400,919** be raised and appropriated.”

Member McLaughlin moved: To approve section I of Article 12.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 13: TRANSFER FUNDS TO STABILIZATION FUND

“That the Town raise and appropriate to the General Stabilization Fund the sum of **\$1,674,069.**”

Chair Libenson explained that a stabilization fund will be established to hold the unspent override money (\$1.67M). This funding will be used for FY18 or beyond. BOS Chair Baghdady noted that establishing the stabilization fund is consistent with the Board’s discourse during the override discussions, leading up to the town vote.

Member Schreiber moved: Favorable action on Article 13.

Discussion: Member Gammill explained that he will vote no on this. He estimated that this article will increase the tax rate by 24 cents for \$1,000 of assessed value, or about \$200 for the median single family home. He notes that the FY16 budget will take advantage of \$2.8M, or about 62%, of the \$4.5M override, that this article requires a two-thirds approval, and that the override passed by a 55%-45% margin. Member Epstein noted that the override did in fact pass by a decent margin. Representative Slap agreed with Member Epstein and added that the stabilization fund will offer needed budget stability going forward.

The motion passed with 12 in favor and 2 opposed.

ARTICLE 14: AUTHORIZATION TO TRANSFER BALANCES

“That **\$3,297,325** be transferred from the following available funds to meet a portion of the FY2016 operating budget expenses in such sums as listed below:

- a) **\$235,000** from fund balance in Abatement and Exemption Surplus Account
- b) **\$650,000** from Belmont Municipal Light Department to offset the tax rate
- c) **\$1,750,000** from Unreserved Fund Balance
- d) **\$90,000** from Parking Meters Receipts
- e) **\$163,000** from Water Revenue for indirect costs
- f) **\$130,000** from Sewer Revenue for indirect costs
- g) **\$125,000** from Capital Endowment Fund for various capital expenditures
- h) **\$154,325** from Capital Projects Fund for various capital expenditures”

Mr. Kale explained Article 14.

Member Fallon moved: Favorable action on Article 14.
The motion passed unanimously.

WC Report: Finalize and Vote

Chair Libenson thanked the WC for their tremendous work on the report. Slight edits (to the report) were discussed.

Member McLaughlin moved: To approve and adopt the WC Final Report as edited and to authorize the Chair to make non-substantive changes, as necessary.
The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Postponed.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Planning Board, and Minuteman

Board of Selectmen: BOS Chair Baghdady reported that the BOS has been ironing out the details of the PGA tournament, which will include the closure of Winter Street.

School Committee: SC Rep Slap reported that the SC will formally request a reserve fund transfer of the WC at the May 27 meeting.

Minuteman: Member McLaughlin noted that of the three alternatives, the “preferred alternative” will be voted on by the Building Committee and then referred to the Minuteman School Committee on May 19th.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:36 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary