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**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
FINAL**

**MARCH 26, 2014, 7:30 P.M.  
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Vice Chair Sarno; Members Allison, Baghdady, Brusch, Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, and Mennis

Town Administrator Kale

Members Absent: Chair Libenson, BOS Chair Paolillo, and SC Rep. Slap

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Vice Chair Sarno.

Vice Chair Sarno began by reviewing the evening's agenda. He then turned to the first item on the agenda.

***CPA Discussion and Vote: Underwood Pool and First Time Home Buyer Assistance Project***

Vice Chair Sarno reminded the WC to focus on costs, fiscal impact, and economic impact.

**First Time Home Buyer Assistance Project (\$375K)**

Member Allison shared her analysis of the First Time Home Buyer Assistance Project. She began with First Time Buyer Subsidy Program and reviewed the key assumptions. The next area she focused on was maintenance and upkeep of property. She reviewed utility payments and mortgage payments, noting that there is no money left for maintenance. Regarding taxes, while these owners will pay less, other residents will pay more.

She then shared the impact on school analysis (an exercise similar to that which was explored for Cushing Village). She said the impact is roughly \$4,400 per 2-bedroom unit.

Member Dash offered that he has not seen issues with regard to upkeep or maintenance, especially in a condo situation. He said that as a public policy matter, he won't take the school impact data into consideration. He said some of these "costs" are the costs of keeping Belmont diverse. He said he supports this program and has seen it work smoothly in other communities.

Member Gammill said that he would like to assess other types of affordable housing proposals. He said the benefits of the \$375K are mostly future-based. He said he is leaning on not supporting this proposal, but is open to supporting a potential proposal,

down the road. Member McLaughlin said that this proposal does nothing toward the 10% 40B requirement. He said this amount of money is not reflective of Belmont's most pressing needs. He said he would vote against it.

Member Epstein said that taxing the entire town to benefit a very few, is fundamentally unfair. He said Belmont is already a very diverse town, and that a substantial share of the money will likely be given to people who already live in Belmont, which does not increase diversity. He said that future rising income could allow the first owner to move and rent the property at market rate. He said he would vote no.

Member Grob said she will vote in favor and that since there is no long-term plan in place, it will be difficult to assess the future planning of affordable housing. Vice Chair Sarno agreed that a long-term plan for would be useful.

Member Allison clarified that the 10% requirement (of CPA funding going toward affordable housing) has been met with the electrical upgrade funded last cycle.

Vice Chair Sarno reviewed some affordable housing data regarding other communities.

*Member McLaughlin moved:* Unfavorable action on the First Time Home Buyer Assistance Project (\$375K).

The motion passed with 9 in favor, 3 opposed, and one abstention.

### **Underwood Pool (\$2M)**

Member Sarno noted that many questions have surfaced since the WC last met and discussed this issue.

Member Allison reviewed her questions, which dealt with the impact on operating costs, capital costs, the data around the demand (was it biased?) for two pools, and a distributional impact question. Member Dash provided some analysis gleaned from several sources to address these questions.

Pool Building Committee Chair Anne Paulson approached the table to provide information on the new pool use. She used "pool usage" data gleaned from other communities who had built a new pool.

Member Allison spoke to the \$48 per year per household figure. She noted that citizens will pay about \$130K a year to finance the adult pool, which she assumed added \$1M to the cost of the project. She said the adult swimmers would be subsidized over a \$1,000 a year. Member Fallon said that the deeper pool cannot be characterized as an "adult pool." Many teens and pre-teens will be in the deep-end as well, she said.

Member Helgen provided additional data on costs to run a pool; she noted that the pool is a net revenue generator. She said that with a new pool, additional programming is also possible. It is possible that user fees could exceed pool expenses. Member Allison noted

that the pool was a net revenue contributor only with respect to direct costs born by the Recreation Department, which excluded maintenance costs included in the DPW budget. She also noted that the analysis did not include debt and interest charges. Member Bruschi concurred with Member Fallon that the deep end will have many kids in it, and she said that she didn't understand the \$1M figure.

Member Epstein said that it is difficult to describe how awful the condition of the current pool is. However, he said he is against the proposal as it stands. He said there has not been sufficient time to discuss all the related issues. He said that a delay may allow for a better design. He would like to see a new pool built without a debt exclusion by using outright CPA funds. He will likely vote no tonight with the hope of voting for another proposal in the future.

Member Gammill said the WC needs to vote on this proposal, based on the debt exclusion passing on April 1. The WC agreed.

Member McLaughlin said that Belmont has chosen for 100 years to support a pool. It would be a great loss to the town, he said, to not have a pool. This pool is already smaller than the original pool. He said that the Building Committee has provided full answers to all the questions raised. He intends to vote to support the pool proposal.

Member Baghdady said he will support the pool as it is an important community amenity. He said there are design concerns and he hopes the Building Committee continues to meet to address the concerns. Member Sarno said that he does have concerns about the size of the pool vis a vis the pool usage. The survey responders were self-selected pool users. He reviewed membership numbers, and said that the pool memberships could actually decrease. This proposal, he said, supports a pool that is bigger than it needs to be. He said he has concerns given that the cost is \$900K over its original estimate.

Member Manjikian said that he had concerns about the amount of the contingency budget (~\$320K) and that any of a number of items may exhaust that budget. He asked if the pool design had modeled a storm water system for a 20- or 50- or 100-year storm event. Member Dash addressed this concern and Mr. Joel Mooney, from the Pool Building Committee, approached the table and provided additional information. On-site storm water management was discussed. Regarding the water table, Mr. Mooney said that this pool will be correctly designed, while the current pool is not. Member Manjikian asked what assurances were there that the new pool would not encounter the same failures of the existing pool 3, 5, 10 years out. Member Manjikian re-phrased his question to ask if there was a 5%, 1%, or 0% chance of failure – i.e., in the form of water infiltration – given that the pool was being built atop water (a “wet area”). Mr. Mooney responded that there would be a 0% chance of failure with respect to water infiltration. He listed the many experts who will oversee the pool's construction and added that the pool should not fail in the future.

Member Dash noted that the proposed pool is smaller, but has more usable space, and will meet the needs of the community.

*Member Brusch moved:* Favorable action on the Underwood Pool (\$2M), if the April 1 debt exclusion passes and the CPA project is put before TM. The motion passed with 12 in favor, 1 opposed, and 0 abstained.

### ***Discussion: Free Cash***

Vice Chair Sarno informed the WC that Member Brusch and Member Helgen have been analyzing free cash with the Town Administrator's office. Member Helgen reviewed data pertaining to free cash amounts and uses since FY09. The data illuminated the various sources of free cash. She reviewed free cash balances and revenue numbers. The revenue generated from vacancies was highlighted, as was the fluctuations in the snow removal budget. Issues of debt service, interest, and legal fees were raised.

Member Helgen said that a free cash policy will need to work in concert with the town's reserve policy. A strong reserve position will be important, given that we will need to bond projects in the future. Ambulance revenue will need to be analyzed in more detail going forward.

Member Brusch added that Treasurer Carman will go back 10 years to look at free cash. Free cash will become a bigger piece of the reserve policy since the \$3M in Kendall insurance money is diminishing.

### ***Update: Subcommittee Reports***

**Human Services:** Subcommittee Chair Grob informed the WC that the HS subcommittee has met and is progressing.

**Education:** Subcommittee Chair Sarno noted that the subcommittee has met several times and has also met with the SC's Finance Subcommittee. Questions have been put forward and the subcommittee is awaiting answers. Meetings will continue in April.

**General Government:** Subcommittee Chair Dash informed the WC that meetings with the departments were held and a draft report is being circulated.

**Public Safety:** Subcommittee Chair Manjikian informed the WC that the PS subcommittee has met and is making progress with the departments.

**Public Works:** Subcommittee Chair Epstein informed the WC that the PW subcommittee has met with department heads.

**Capital Budget Committee:** Member Brusch said that the CBC has been meeting with department heads to hear their capital requests. She said the amount of money to distribute is \$750K. She said the library has requested money to repair the elevator (\$75K). Facility Director Boyle was instrumental in reducing the elevator estimate.

**Minuteman:** Member McLaughlin noted that there is a joint BOS/WC/Minuteman meeting next week, Wednesday, April 2, in the BOS meeting room. He said the new building and the amended agreement will be discussed.

### ***Approval of Minutes***

The reviews of the minutes of 2/12/14 and 2/26/14 were postponed.

### ***Updates: Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board, and Minuteman***

**Board of Selectmen:** Mr. Kale said there are zoning article updates that will be distributed for the WC's review.

**Planning Board:** Member Baghdady said that public hearings have been held on the kennel, medical marijuana, demolition delay, and the "as-built" plans. He said that perhaps a presentation to the WC would be useful.

### ***Next Meetings***

Wed. April 2 – Joint meeting with BOS in BOS meeting room

Wed. April 9 – WC meeting

### ***Adjournment***

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:37 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
WC Recording Secretary