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**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
FINAL**

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

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Allison, Brusch, Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen, Manjikian, Mennis (arrived at 8:55), Sarno; Selectman Paolillo; School Committee Chair Slap

Town Administrator Kale

Dr. Kingston (Superintendent), Mr. Tony DiCologero (School Finance Director), Mr. Mike Battista (Planning Board Chair), Mr. Jeffrey Wheeler (Office of Community Development)

Members Absent: Grob and McLaughlin

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

Chair Libenson began by noting that the agenda will be adjusted slightly and that the WC will begin with the School Q3 Report.

***Reserve Fund Transfer (RFT) Request – School Department***

Dr. Kingston informed the WC that the School Department is facing a \$220K deficit (for FY14) as a result of the substantial and unpredicted increase in student enrollment. Mr. DiCologero reported that the School Department has instituted a supply spending freeze, which means only the most essential items will be purchased. Facilities spending will be limited, as well. Dr. Kingston added that the actual fiscal impact of the soaring enrollment is closer to \$500K, but that the School Department has mitigated that amount to some extent already. Mr. DiCologero explained how the mitigation has occurred and how the enrollment numbers will impact the budget in FY15.

Chair Libenson explained the criteria for a RFT request. Mr. Kale offered that the current balance of the Reserve Fund is \$400K.

Member Fallon asked about the enrollment prediction process. Dr. Kingston replied that about 85 students were projected for this year and 170 arrived. That number, he said, is troubling. For the upcoming year, 115 students are anticipated. He said there is neither funding nor space to add additional staff to deal with significant additional enrollment.

Member Sarno asked if any additional staff had been hired (other than the 17 that were already hired to address enrollment). Dr. Kingston replied no.

Chair Libenson noted that the Education Subcommittee will need to study the request

and, upon doing so, will offer a recommendation to the WC. After that happens, the WC will take a vote on this request.

Mr. Kale, in answer to a question, informed the WC that the DPW will need to make a RFT request as well.

### ***Article 14 Discussion – Citizen's Petition***

Chair Libenson introduced Planning Board Chair Mr. Mike Battista and Mr. Jeffrey Wheeler, from the Office of Community Development, to the WC. Chair Libenson noted that this article has been put off until June and therefore the WC will probably not vote on it this evening.

Mr. Wheeler distributed several handouts. He then reviewed lot sizes, frontage dimensions, and zoning principles in the General Residence districts. He also provided demolition data from January 2007 to December 2013. He noted that all of the "builds" were two-family dwellings and some of these lots would no longer be two-family-buildable under the rules of this article. PB Chair Battista said that the new approach is more desirable to neighbors and more desirable from a zoning perspective. More single-family homes will be built as a result of this article. He added that this article aligns Belmont with the state standards and also gives the town some necessary control over the size of the home, relative to both the lot size and to the character of the neighborhood, etc.

Member Fallon expressed concern that this article requires that the building of all two-family homes will now need a special permit – why is that necessary, she asked? PB Chair Battista said that Town Counsel suggested the article be consistent across town. He said that this offers the town some control over the building process. Mr. Wheeler spoke to the lot size requirements.

Mr. Wheeler explained the part of the article that pertained to the placement of ventilation equipment. He said the noise and vibration is extremely bothersome when the lots are very close together. The existing compressors are grandfathered in, but new construction will be impacted.

### **Fiscal Impact Analysis**

Member Allison offered a "fiscal impact" analysis pertaining to Article 14. She noted that the framework is identical to that used in assessing the fiscal impact of Cushing Village. She explained the basics of the key assumptions, including the application of "long run variable costs."

She presented the long run variable cost numbers for municipal services and for the School Department, noting that the per-household costs for municipal services (approximately \$2,000) and per-student costs (\$11,116) were higher than those used in the Cushing Village analysis because the calculations had been updated from FY13 to



FY14. She said refining the student counts will be very important.

The WC reviewed the data and asked clarifying questions.

Chair Libenson summarized: In tearing down a single family home and building a large two family home, while the property taxes double, the education expenses increase five-fold – and other costs (municipal) double. Member Allison further noted that, with current assumptions about school-age children, the 30-year fiscal loss to the Town would be approximately \$166,368 per conversion.

### **Economic Impact Analysis**

Member Allison offered that the Planning Board is currently pursuing the economic impact of the article. The PB will respond to Mr. Savas' letter and any other citizen concern.

Mr. Battista said that the moratorium on single-family tear-downs replaced with two-family dwellings (which passed at TM last June) runs out soon and that this was the impetus for Article 14. This article, he reiterated, offers the town some necessary control over what the developers build. The two-family homes built have often been behemoth in style and completely out of scale with the existing neighborhood.

### ***Q3 Financial Update – Town Budgets including Revolving Funds***

#### **Revenue**

Mr. Kale distributed handouts. He began by noting that the revenue assumptions for FY14 were correct and that the FY14 assumptions helped to inform the FY15 assumptions. He reviewed the revenue line items, comparing the projections to the actuals. He then reviewed the Ambulance receipts, noting that the revenues were conservatively estimated and that the targeted number will be met, in spite of a change in providing services to Watertown. He then reviewed revenue generated from various fees, e.g., Town Clerk, rentals, Library, Cemetery, and Recreation programs. He also reviewed license and permit revenues as well as earnings on investments, outstanding taxes, and state funding.

#### **Expenditures**

Mr. Kale reviewed the list of expenditures, noting that they are also on track. He said that some vacancies have been filled though and there will be no salary savings in these areas going forward.

#### **DPW Reserve Fund Transfer**

Mr. Kale informed the WC that the DPW is \$410K over on its snow removal budget. He said that the DPW will ask the WC for a Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$200K

to offset this amount. He will seek to make up the additional \$210K internally (i.e., within the DPW budget). There is some anticipated savings (\$133K) in the trash removal contract that can be put toward the \$210K.

The WC discussed the issue of managing the snow removal account – specifically, that some years it is over-spent and some years it is under-spent. The WC seemed to agree that it did not want to curtail the necessary activities of the DPW department. Member Brusch explained the history of the funding of the snow and ice account. She noted that the account is under-funded so as not to inflate the floor.

Chair Libenson reviewed how the RFT request will be processed. The DPW Subcommittee will need to study the DPW's request and, upon doing so, will offer a recommendation to the WC. After that happens, the WC will take a vote on this request.

The WC discussed that, with both RFT requests in front of them, the Reserve Fund will be completely depleted, and additional unforeseen requests would need to go through Town Meeting (with the money taken from free cash). Selectman Paolillo suggested that TM be requested to "free up" some free cash (\$100K) to replenish the Reserve Fund in the event that emergency funding is required in late June. The logistics of this were explored, e.g., holding a Special TM within the June meeting.

### **Revolving Funds**

Mr. Kale reviewed the Revolving Fund accounts, e.g., COA, Art Gallery, Rock Meadow, Stormwater, etc. Mr. Kale noted that an additional \$10K would be needed to balance out the COA revolving fund to reflect the increased activity.

*Member Brusch moved:* To accept the Town Administrator's recommendation to increase the COA revolving fund to \$90K (from \$80K) for FY14.  
The motion passed unanimously.

### ***Amendments to May TM Articles, as needed***

#### **Article 15: CPA Projects**

Chair Libenson noted that Article 15 has within it two motions. The WC will need to vote on the motions, and can do so in one motion.

*Member Brusch moved:* To approve both motions within Article 15, as written.  
The motion passed unanimously.

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

The minutes of April 2, 2014 (joint meeting with BOS) were approved with two abstentions.

The minutes of April 9, 2014 were approved with three abstentions.

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

Updates were not provided at this time.

***Public Contributions***

There were none.

***Adjournment***

Member Bruschi moved to adjourn at 9:34 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
WC Recording Secretary