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Minutes

Town of Belmont

APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 3/18/2019

Joint Meeting: Board of Selectmen and School Committee

Beech Street Center, Multipurpose Room

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

7:00pm

CALL TO ORDER:

This was a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen hosted by the School Committee. Susan Burgess-Cox (Chair, School Committee) first called the School Committee to order and addressed several School Committee agenda items. She then invited the Board of Selectmen to call its meeting to order. The Board of Selectmen meeting was called to order at 7:12pm by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Mark Paolillo and Selectmen Tom Caputo were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

[None.]

ACTION BY CONSENT:

Skating Rink Request for Proposal (RFP) Discussion and Possible Vote

Glenn Clancy (Director, Community Development) gave a presentation reviewing the state of the existing skating rink, discussing pros/cons of the two potential sites being considered for a new rink (former incinerator site and current High School (HS) campus), and explaining the notion of, and steps constituting, a public-private partnership (PPP), which was being considered for the rink project. The full set of slides were posted on the Office of Community Development website.

[S. Burgess-Cox first opened the discussion for the School Committee and Board of Selectmen.]

M. Paolillo asked where specifically the new rink would be located on the High School campus. T. Caputo explained that the Belmont High School Building Committee (BHSBC) had left the space west of Harris Field as flexible, to potentially accommodate a new rink; there were expectations for field space and parking in this area as well, issues that would need to be considered in any RFP for the rink.

Jill Norton (School Committee) asked if a new rink on the HS site would include expanded locker room facilities that could be used by other sports teams. T. Caputo confirmed that this was a potential benefit, but the details would need to be worked out with the developer through the RFP process.

A. Dash asked whether the incinerator site would be needed for storage during the new High School construction, and if this would potentially conflict with development/construction of a rink at the site. G. Clancy stated that there was potentially a conflict, but he was still working to get further details regarding the capping timeline.

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10:12:10 AM

Andrea Prestwich (School Committee) asked whether the building would revert back to the Town once the time specified in the PPP agreement (e.g., 30 years) had passed. G. Clancy stated that it would depend on the specific details of the agreement/lease worked out with the developer. A. Dash noted the Town might not want the building after such a time had passed.

Kate Bowen (School Committee) asked if adding field space at the incinerator site was an option – if the rink were to go at the HS site it might reduce field space there. A. Dash explained that playing fields were not one of the remaining five options. G. Clancy added that playing fields had been considered, but it was determined that the costs were too high.

John Phelan (Belmont Schools Superintendent) expressed his appreciation for the patience of Belmont Youth Hockey in pursuing a new rink, given that the current rink was failing. He pointed out that the group had consulted with the BHSBC at the start of the planning process, expressing their desires for a new facility. With respect to the potential impact on field space, there would need to be further consultation with the BHSBC; he noted the School Committee had voted this past fall to be open to considering a new rink. He thought a new rink would benefit student athletes and the Town in general.

[S. Burgess-Cox opened the discussion to the public.]

- *Aaron Butler (Resident)*: Asked about the possibility of keeping the rink public, and building a basic structure with just one sheet to replace the current one. He had seen designs proposed online which to him were much more elaborate than necessary. This way the Town could keep the asset and charge fees to recoup costs.
 - o J. Phelan stated that this was an option. Estimates he had seen were the cost would be \$6-8m.
 - o G. Clancy mentioned the burden on taxpayers from multiple projects in Town, including the large project of rebuilding the HS. M. Paolillo agreed, and said that PPP made sense if it was structured in the right way so that the Town maintains access for programs.
- *Pat Murphy*: Asked about the timelines for construction at each of the sites. G. Clancy said the incinerator would take 4-5 years due to the capping process, which included review/approval by DEP. The HS site would take less time, relevant factors being negotiation of the PPP and then construction. P. Murphy viewed a shorter timeline as a pro for the HS site, as he saw the current rink as prone to failure in the near future.
- *Courtney Eldridge*: Asked what the cons were of a PPP approach.
 - o M. Paolillo explained one of the cons was that the Town does not own the building. However, his understanding was that Belmont Youth Hockey was looking for a commitment from the Town, and therefore the agreement could be negotiated to provide benefits to the Town, which would mitigate this con.
 - o A. Dash pointed out that in putting forth the RFP, there had to be some benefit to the developer otherwise the potential was that no one would respond.
- *Daniel Merolla*: Followed on the previous question by asking for further details on the PPP, such as how a developer would make money, what would they ask for, etc.
 - o A. Dash explained that, in general, the revenue would come from use of the rink during times when it is not being used by the Town. Revenue could also come from a food facility, skate rental, etc. While Belmont Youth Hockey had expressed interest in the project,

there were currently no specific details on a potential arrangement. The Town would need to specify its needs first and include in the RFP which would be open to all bidders.

- o K. Bowen said that other stakeholders in Town, such as the Recreation Department, should also be consulted prior to an RFP to assess their needs as well.

J. Phelan raised that a potential downside of constructing the rink on the HS campus was having two construction projects ongoing at the same time, and that this may impact the use of fields during the construction period.

- *Sarah Lemieux (Town Meeting Member P3):* Asked two financial questions: 1) cost to maintain current rink, 2) would there be an expectation of increased revenue from more people signing up for activities at a new rink. Jay Marcotte (Director, DPW) fielded the questions: 1) current amount is \$68k towards maintenance (not including plowing, only interior) plus \$55k for utilities; 2) he would expect increased participation, as well as possibly additional revenue if the rink was open throughout the year.

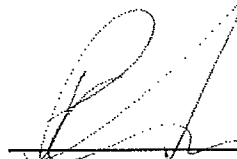
S. Lemieux stressed that the current rink was an active safety concern for users. She advocated for the HS site for the new rink, due to its walkability. Finally, she pointed out that a new rink would benefit all ages in Town, and not just the hockey community as it was used for public skating and other uses.

- *Denise Stein:* With respect to the PPP process, she thought it made more sense to first outline a desired program of activities, which could then be used to select the site; or pursue these steps in parallel. In general, was supportive of a PPP for the new rink.
- *Azra Nelson (Town Meeting Member P5):* Considered the possibility of 1.5 sheets at the current HS site to be quite ambitious, and wondered about the impact on field space. J. Phelan agreed that the trade-off with field space, and also concerns about additional traffic at the site, would need to be resolved if the HS site was chosen. A. Nelson questioned whether there would be sufficient parking spots for the new school, given its increased size.
- *Jane Otte:* Thought the incinerator site was more suitable for a rink. Expressed concern about the loss of field space, especially given the addition of two grades to the new school. She cited examples of other towns/cities building structures on former dump sites, suggesting that it should be feasible.
- *Dante Muzzioli:* Applauded Belmont Youth Hockey in their efforts pushing for a new rink. Expressed disappointment that the Town did not feel responsible to provide a rink, and thought that a public rink option had not been sufficiently explored. Was supportive of a rink at the HS site, but only if additional parking and space did not significantly take away from field space.
- *Anne Paulsen:* Reiterated concern over the potential loss of field space, and specifically tennis courts. Suggested taking a poll of residents to see if there was support for rebuilding a smaller version of the rink (similar to current building) which would be owned by the Town. She expressed concern that it would be hard to restrict a developer (e.g., how late the rink will be open).
- *Dan McLaughlin:* Was supportive of a PPP. He consider the current state of the rink to be an embarrassment to the Town. In his view, the only pro for the incinerator site was to not impact field space, however this issue could be worked around. A new rink would keep real estate values high and provide an amenity to the Town. Highlighted the benefit of the HS site as being accessible via the proposed underpass project at Alexander Ave.

- *John Patrick Murphy*: Suggested to look into a 99 year lease as a different approach versus an RFP. Stated that he was concerned about what would happen if a child got injured at the current rink, and had tried to arrange a private meeting with the School Committee to discuss this matter.
 - o S. Burgess-Cox explained that, by law, as the School Committee is a public entity and elected body, discussions with the School Committee were necessarily public. Anyone is free to attend the public meetings and raise issues with the School Committee.
- Emma O'Donovan: Played on the varsity hockey team since Grade 7 and was currently on the team. She thought the rink should stay at the current site. It was convenient to finish class and be able to walk over to the rink for practice; moving the rink away from the school would push back the schedule an hour or more.
- *Mike Grant*: Was appreciative of the adults in Belmont who lead recreation programs for the kids on a volunteer basis. In view of that, he hoped that the Board and Committee would oversee an expedient process to get a new rink built.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn. (Vote passed 3-0)


Respectfully Submitted,

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator