

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Friday, March 4, 2011
8:30 AM**

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 8:34 a.m. by Chair Jones in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Firenze and Paolillo were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger was present.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

[There were none.]

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Town Administrator (TA) Review

Chair Jones began by noting that the purpose of the review is to ensure that the Town Administrator (TA) is meeting goals and objectives. The TA is supposed to conduct a self-evaluation each spring, and the Board is supposed to conduct its evaluation each spring, as well. However, the TA review was last done in 2007. Chair Jones said that he would like to do the review on an annual basis going forward.

Chair Jones reviewed the rating scale. Scores were given on a scale of 1-5, with a 1 signifying "needs improvement" and a 5 signifying "outstanding". On the section entitled "Personal Characteristics, Fairness, Ethical Behavior" Mr. Younger received all 4s and 5s. Under "Professionalism" (knowledge, furthering education, etc.), he received a mix of 3s and 4. Under "Public Relations and Communications", he received a mix of 3s and 2s. Mr. Younger said he thinks he works well with the press and he noted that the Town's website receives awards for the information it provides there. He noted that he is meeting with Mr. Dave Petto, IT Director, to improve the website's communications. He further noted that he attends every public function that he is asked to attend. The Board of Selectman is usually the face of the community, not the Town Administrator, he added.

Selectman Firenze replied that while the residents are fully aware of what is going on across town, Mr. Younger could be more proactive in getting the information out there. Selectman

Paolillo said that, while the Board could perhaps do a better job of being the face of the town, the TA needs to do a better job as well. Mr. Younger provided two examples (the

snow ban and the water emergency) in which the information got out effectively to the residents of the town.

Under the section “Board Support and Relations with the Board” the average scores were 3s with some 2s. The Board is kept informed, said Chair Jones, but there is a sense that improvement is needed around providing knowledge on certain policy issues. The Board would like Mr. Younger to be more proactive in this area. Mr. Younger noted that there are many directions from which requests on policy are coming in – Department Heads, Committees throughout town, residents -(e.g. Mr. Roger Colton), etc.

Selectman Paolillo agreed, and suggested this area (policy) may need to be streamlined in general – the Chief of the Fire Department (for example) is meeting with the CBC, the WC, the Town Administrator, and the Selectmen. Who, he asked, is giving the department heads directives? Selectman Firenze suggested establishing guidelines specifying who maintains contact with whom. The Board then discussed the role of the WC vis-a-vis department heads and the giving of directives.

Chair Jones said that he would like to see the Town Administrator position similar to the school superintendent position – whereby everything goes through him. The strength of the TA position has been an issue for many years in Belmont. Mr. Younger noted that a lot of his time is being spent responding to emails from residents, department heads, and committee members. The expectation, he said, is that emails will receive an immediate response. Selectman Firenze suggested an automatic email response saying “we received your email and will get back in N days”. The Board discussed the onslaught of emails received.

Mr. Younger also noted that WC requests and responses to those requests take up a lot of his time, as do labor contracts, grievances, department head issues, and community outreach. Chair Jones reflected on this and suggested that perhaps there is not time in the TA’s day to be proactive and to set priorities. Selectman Firenze noted that there are over 60 committees throughout town which generate a lot of work for the TA and the Board. He would like to revisit this area. Mr. Younger noted that there are areas where some work has been done well internally (without a committee). He noted the overlay district in Cushing Square, and recently, the alcohol license, as examples of areas where the work was better when kept internally as opposed to a committee handling it. The Board discussed balancing community input and expertise against the work that is generated and the productivity, goals, and focus of a committee.

Under “Staff Leadership and Supervision” the scores were in the 2-4 range. The highest scores went to labor contract and employee relations. The scores on “Delegation and Department Head Leadership and Support” were more mixed. Mr. Younger responded that more focus on certain issues with department heads is needed, but he said leadership is difficult to provide to department heads that do not report to him, for example, the COA. Selectman Firenze suggested that Mr. Younger just declare that they report to him. Behave as if you were the authority, he advised. Mr. Younger said it is difficult in the long-term, and that there are legal issues that apply to the question of authority. The

Board discussed that department heads have appointing authority, and noted that this is challenging in light of the TA trying to manage the department heads. Chair Jones noted that the Warrant Article will need to be strengthened to address some of these issues.

Under “Financial Management” there were a broad range of responses. Chair Jones focused on the budget process. Selectman Firenze said that the process is messy throughout town as it involves the WC, the town accountant, the Board of Selectman, and TM. This needs to be streamlined, he said. Selectman Paolillo agreed that the WC should not be developing the budget, that budget development should come from the Board of Selectmen. This is what the Board is *elected* to do. He continued: the WC can provide input, but the Board should take a leadership role on the budget. The Assistant TA position should take back budget duties and guidelines. Chair Jones said that the WC is not driving the budget process this year. They are simply presenting the available revenue and level service budgets to TM. However, the Board will need to dig deep into the school budget, he said, to get a better understanding of the numbers there. The Board discussed the budget process for this year.

Regarding “Town Operations,” scores reflect that the TA meets expectations. Exceptions to this are working with department heads on innovative ways to deliver services. The TA has done good work on regionalization, but there is a lot more that could be done in this area. Chair Jones recommended forming a town employee committee to see what could be done faster and cheaper.

Under “Planning and Organization,” Chair Jones said that this is an area that needs improvement on long-range strategic planning. This harkens back to the issue of the TA being less proactive and more reactive. Mr. Younger said long-term planning often takes a back seat to handling the hot issues that are pressing, e.g., he is constantly putting out fires. Chair Jones said we need to give the public the sense that we have a long-term plan to reduce costs and deliver services.

Selectman Firenze observed that this evaluation reflects lower scores than the last time it was done in 2007. This, he said, is probably due to the fact that the Board’s expectations have grown around budget process, strategic planning for more efficiency, and leadership to department heads. Chair Jones suggested that Mr. Younger craft a response to the review.

Discussion of Assistant Town Administrator (ATA) Position

Mr. Younger suggested that the budget analyst, Mr. Glenn Castro, assist him in temporarily in preparing for TM. Selectman Firenze said he is concerned that the ATA and Accountant will have the same role(s) with regard to the budget preparation. The Board discussed the Accountant’s position with relation to the budget, and the desire of the Board to shift her present budgetary duties to the ATA. Selectman Firenze noted that her compensation may need to be adjusted. Selectman Paolillo suggested that the position also include some more enhanced communications duties. The Board discussed the ATA role. Selectman Firenze asked: do we need an ATA role? Selectman Paolillo

replied that we need someone who could drive the budgetary process. The TA role needs to be strengthened and a strong ATA will help to do this. Selectman Firenze requested to know what the previous ATA did and/or what he *should* have been doing. Mr. Younger replied that the present group of ATA applicants possess strong financial backgrounds. Ms. Crimmins will see who is still available from the present pool of applicants.

The Board will meet again on Tuesday, March 22 at 8:00 a.m. to further discuss some of the items discussed today.

Fire Department Overtime Budget

Fire Chief Frizzell and Assistant Chief Angus Davison [?] appeared before the Board to discuss the Fire Department overtime budget. Chief Frizzell noted that more money is needed as a result of overtime funds getting depleted. He explained that there have been personnel shortages and medical issues which have resulted in spending more than expected in overtime. There are two unplanned vacancies and several employees who are injured (both on duty and off duty). The Chief has met with Mr. Younger to review the expenses and see what was needed in the budget. He reviewed the timeline of those he has met with in making this issue known. The Accountant contacted the Treasurer to stop overtime payment, and the Chief feels this was not appropriate. The Chief is requesting a reserve-fund transfer in light of the fact that the Treasurer has been directed to stop paying overtime. Therefore there is an urgency around the funding.

Mr. Younger reviewed the requests that will come before the Board and WC for reserve fund transfers: snow \$424K, and school SPED issue will be just over \$200K. He recommends a special TM to handle these requests, as they will deplete the reserve fund account. Chair Jones noted that the WC does not intend to approve the school's request, but he agreed that the snow request could go before a special TM.

The Chief reviewed ways the department will try to circumvent overtime pay. He said if the reserve funds are not granted, the ambulance will be taken out of service. The ambulance also generates funds for the department. Ambulance revenue is expected to come in. The next step (if the overtime account transfer is not granted) will be to reduce engines and fire apparatus, which will impact mutual aid.

The Board discussed the mutual aid impact, and the impact to the FY12 budget. The Chief said that FY12 should be better, as some employees will return July 1 and therefore less overtime would be needed. He is concerned about the mutual aid impact as Watertown and Arlington are looking to reduce their staff, as well. The Board discussed the increase of ambulance fees and the revenue that the increase will raise to impact the overall budget.

The Board moved: To approve the reserve fund transfer request (\$144K) by the fire department to the Warrant Committee.

Selectman Firenze said he is inclined to not approve this request as there is a need to show departments that they have to learn to live within their budgets. Selectman Paolillo noted that these are issues that could not be managed or foreseen. Chair Jones said that it shows the town that there are serious consequences to exceeding a budget. Mr. Younger said he would agree, but that this is a safety issue and there could be an impact to the town in not funding overtime (lawsuit?). Selectman Paolillo said he is also very concerned about the impact on public safety by taking an ambulance out.

The motion passed (2-1).

Chair Jones said he will present this to the WC as discussed here.

The Board discussed the depletion of the reserve fund account.

Selectman Firenze Other:

- ***Signs over the Bridge.*** The Board voted long ago that no signs may be placed at this location, for safety reasons. This family (who has a sign there now) then asked the MBTA and they agreed to put a sign up for the returning veteran. Selectman Firenze said he is concerned about the safety and zoning issue, as well as the precedent that this sets. What does the Board want to do, he asked? Selectman Paolillo said he would like to put a sign up for this veteran in another place. The Board discussed delineating another place for signs. Selectman Firenze said that, if the MBTA has control over the bridge (and the signs that are hung there), then they ought to be cleaning and fixing the bridge as well. Mr. Younger will contact the veteran's family and suggest that the sign be placed in another location.

Budget Wrap Up

The Board discussed the budget process going forward. The Board agreed that they will host meetings regarding the FY12 budget moving forward.

Light Board

The Board then discussed holding periodic Light Board meetings. Mr. Younger will look into scheduling monthly Light Board meetings on the second Board meeting of the month at 6:00 p.m.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

—
Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator

