

MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
MEETING OF “MEGA GROUP”
including
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
WARRANT COMMITTEE
CAPITAL BUDGET COMMITTEE
PERMANENT BUILDING COMMITTEE

SELECTMEN’S MEETING ROOM
Tuesday, October 19, 2010
7:30 PM

Note: the “Mega Group” is a convening of the groups noted, with other parties. Each group was separately called to order.

Attendees from the Board of Selectmen (BOS): Chair Ralph Jones, Angelo Firenze, Mark Paolillo

Attendees from Warrant Committee (WC): Chair Liz Allison, Michael Libensen, Bill Lynch, Adam Dash, Kim Becker, Ann Rittenburg, Pat Brusch

Attendees from Permanent Building Committee (PBC): Chair Pat Brusch, Bob McLaughlin, Joel Mooney, Stephen Sala, Bill Lovallo, Bill Shea

Attendees from Capital Budget Committee (CBC): Chair Pat Brusch , Ann Rittenburg, Mark Paolillo

BOS Chair Jones called the Mega meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

Chair Jones also called Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

Chair Brusch called the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to order at 7:32 pm.

Chair Allison called the Warrant Committee (WC) to order at 7:32 pm.

1. Introduction and Brief History of Mega Group

BOS Chair Jones said that the Mega group dates back to 2000 in response to a request by the CBC regarding how to prioritize major building projects across town. The Board of Selectmen called a meeting to address the lack of coordination across various projects. The CBC wanted to identify projects, identify the sources of revenue, establish a timeline, and set priorities. The immediacy of the time-table was triggered by ADA compliance issues at the Town Hall complex.

2. Identification of all proposed projects

BOS Chair Jones reviewed a list of potential projects and potential project sites, noting specifically the following projects: the BHS science wing, the Public Works yard, the pool, the rink, the Library, the police station, and the field house. He said he hopes this

group can develop a plan for those projects that remain, including the identification of funding sources.

3. Is availability of land a critical issue? I.e., should we discuss the Capital Projects Overview Committee (CPOC) plan for the northern side of Concord Ave., and should decisions on land-use be a priority?

BOS Chair Jones mentioned the proposal of moving the Library across the street to the North side of Concord Ave. and moving the police station to the Library's current spot. Should we move forward on this template, he asked? Selectman Firenze added that the incinerator site is town property that could be used as well. SC Chair Rittenburg commented that the Comprehensive Plan put forth by the Planning Board actually has taken the 2008 CPOC report to the next step in maximizing opportunities for Belmont's fiscal sustainability. CPOC Chair McLaughlin asked about the Library's impact on reducing the size of the school campus if it were moved across Concord Avenue: would this endanger the likelihood of state aid? Mr. Conti offered to follow up with Town Counsel to get an answer to this question. SC Chair Rittenburg stated that the athletic field resolution is necessary in order to move forward with the plan to move the Library across the street.

PBC Member Mr. Mooney advised the group to look at all of these projects as a whole, and to be mindful of the infrastructure in this area. Claypit Pond flooding is a risk when development on Concord Ave. is considered.

The group discussed various issues relating to the projects outlined by BOS Chair Jones, including: how to best utilize the Pure Coat site (could that be the Library site or the site of a new substation?), what to do with the town yard (which is in deplorable condition), the area on Pleasant Street (owned by the DeMilia sisters), and the costs of some of these projects (all in the multi-million dollar range).

Selectman Firenze said that each of these projects require various other pieces to fall into place. A decision will need to be made with a specific sequence. We can't afford to do all of these projects at once. We must identify a process for moving forward. The cost of these projects will need to be phased in with other projects. Treasurer Carman added that the Chenery debt will be paid off in 5 years, and we also have debt from the Senior Center, Town Hall, the Homer Building, and the Fire Stations. He said he has created a spreadsheet for various projects with the fiscal impact on taxpayers. There is never a good time for a Capital project, he said, but these issues are not going away. He agreed that the town needs to lay out a plan and decide what the next steps will be with a mindful eye and the tax impact. Carman also added that potential revenues to offset costs need to be considered.

Selectman Firenze asked: What amount of tax increase can residents sustain? SC Chair Rittenburg reframed the question: How much deterioration can they handle? She added that by March 2012, the BHS may lose its accreditation if the science wing is not dealt with. Selectman

Paolillo noted that a plan must be created as these buildings will eventually fail. Mr. Mooney suggested that a master plan be created, one that envisions the future of Belmont and takes into consideration how big the projects need to be, the impact, the pacing and sequence of projects, the likely challenges, and what project is linked to what other project.

BOS Chair Jones asked the group to envision moving the Library across the street, moving the Police station into the present Library site, creating a BHS science wing in the parking lot, expanding the playing fields, moving the light department with the substation, and putting the DPW where light department is now. Regarding the rink and pool, he said those may have to be dealt with on emergency basis. Lovallo added that the town could reach out to a broker to develop the incinerator site.

4. How shall we decide on priorities for projects? What criteria should be applied?

Mr. Shubin, a Library Board trustee, said that the Library Board would like to take advantage of a grant application in which the state could fund up to 50% of a new library. This requires that the architect get started soon to create the plan, but the architect would need to know the site of the new building. BOS Chair Jones reiterated that the site across the street makes the most sense. CPOC Chair McLaughlin said that the SC has veto power of this site, as it impacts land and fields that are under their control. SC Chair Rittenburg outlined three concerns that would need to be addressed: 1) the Accreditation issue, 2) the legal opinion about MSBA, and 3) the replacement and relocation of the impacted fields. She also noted that this site for a new Library has an impact on students, staff, traffic, parking, and school department resources.

5. Scheduling Next Meeting

BOS Chair Jones noted that the group would meet again on Thursday, December 9 at 7:30 pm.

The Board of Selectmen was moved to adjourn by Chair Jones at 9:12 pm.

The Warrant Committee was moved to adjourn by Chair Allison at 9:12 pm.

The Permanent Building Committee moved to adjourn by Chair Brusch at 9:12 pm.

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator