

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Wednesday, January 5, 2011
8:00 AM**

CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 8:13 am by Chair Jones in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Firenze and Paolillo were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were present.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

FY12 Departmental Budget Discussion - Fire

The Board met with Fire Chief Dave Frizzell and Assistant Fire Chief Angus Davison to discuss goals for the FY12 budget and beyond.

Chief Frizzell explained that the core mission of the Fire Department is to save lives by extinguishing fires and most importantly by preventing them from spreading. A secondary mission is to prevent fires from starting. Other supportive missions include rescue services (medical calls/extrications/assistance) and service calls (flooded basements, etc.)

The department's activities are divided into four functions or programs – Fire prevention, fire suppression, EMS, and service calls. Administratively, department resources and personnel are categorized as administration, fire suppression, or EMS. The Chief explained that most fire prevention work is being done “on the margin” as part of fire suppression activity, which makes it difficult to accurately report on fire prevention as a separate category.

The Chief presented the department's 2012 strategic plan and discussed its four main goals:

1. Ensure that call response meets the recognized standard. NFPA 1710 requires 17 personnel on scene. Belmont is currently staffing a minimum of 11. In order to reach the standard, Belmont must either a) add \$2.4 million in personnel, b) reach agreement with neighbor communities for automatic aid, or c) regionalize fire services
2. Restore staffing. The Department hopes to use fund from increased hospital transport revenue to fill 2 vacant positions.

3. Enhance rescue services. The Department wants to begin offering advanced life support (ALS) services using the 6 paramedics already on staff, 2 to be hired through attrition and 2 to be restored. This would require issuing an RFP for a firm to help set up a Comprehensive EMS Service.

The Board expressed interest in adding a .5 FTE Grants and Contracts Administrator to the Town Administrator's Office to oversee this and other RFPs across Town government and assure that they are handled in a standardized way.

The Board agreed it could support the provision of ALS services if it is regionalized, but not by Belmont alone. Selectman Paolillo said his understanding is that Watertown is very interested in this.

4. Increase revenue. Restructuring ambulance fees could potentially generate an additional \$300,000 in revenue annually. It is estimated that ALS services could bring in another \$200,000 per year.

Planning forward, the department is working on personnel development and succession planning. The Board noted the importance of succession planning for all Town departments.

Overall, the number of calls to the department has remained roughly flat since 2008.

For FY12, the department's level services budget request is \$5.15 million which is about a 1% increase from FY11. This would allow the department to maintain the status quo of 54 uniformed officers. The level funding budget would be \$5.09 million which would require a reduction in supplies and maintenance items but would not affect staffing. The difference between the two budgets is less than \$50,000.

So far in FY11, the department has expended 80% of its overtime budget due to sickness/injury, line of duty injuries, an unforeseen retirement and a resignation. Medical expenses have also been significant.

The department has had the same number of vehicles for a number of years.

There was a discussion of the possibility of charging for service calls and the practical difficulties in doing so.

FY12 Departmental Budget Discussion – Joint Police/Fire

Police Chief Rich McLaughlin, Assistant Chief Richie Lane, and E-911 Coordinator Dan MacAuley joined the meeting. The Board held a joint discussion about the possibility of regionalized E-911 dispatching.

FY12 Departmental Budget Discussion –Police

Chief McLaughlin began by summarizing some of the department's accomplishments over the past year. The police have re-instituted the popular Community Policing program, Child Safety Seat program, held a self-defense program, and the Citizens Police Academy. The department conducted a citizens' survey, participated in a regional anti-domestic violence program, and rolled out an enhanced website for the department including crime data and the emergency notification system.

There was discussion of the North East Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC), which Belmont is a member of, as an example of successful regionalization. Through NEMLEC, Belmont has access to special services the Town could not otherwise afford such as bomb-sniffing dogs, a handwriting expert, and a dive team. These services are provided free of charge in response to unforeseen events. Belmont pays dues to support NEMLEC as a member.

The Department is divided into 7 divisions: Patrol, Detectives, Traffic (including parking officers and crossing guards), Records, Communications, Technical Services, and Administration. Including special auxiliaries and volunteers, there are 111 personnel. 46 of these are budgeted uniformed officers. Because of injuries, military service and officers in training, there are only 35 officers on active duty currently.

In the Communications division, one of the FTEs is paid for by a state grant of about \$50,000. The department also receives a grant for training of about \$5-6,000.

The department receives about 21,000 calls for service annually.

The department has requested a level services budget of \$6,319,631 and a level funding budget of \$6,178,000 for a difference of about \$140,000 or 2.3%. The level services budget would allow for the restoration of the School Resource Officer (SRO) and a traffic officer. It was noted that both the police and the School Department feel that the SRO is a valuable and positive addition that helps to prevent many incidents, but the schools have not made funding for the position a priority in their budget. The Board expressed support for the SRO position as providing a great deal of value and service for comparatively little expense.

Looking ahead, the department anticipates that new housing developments may increase the demand for services and necessitate the addition of patrol officers.

It was noted that in Belmont, crossing guards are paid for through the police budget. In other communities, the schools pay for the crossing guards.

There was discussion of the continuing problem with lateral transfers of officers to larger communities such as Cambridge. Belmont pays to train new officers, and when they become experienced and valuable, Cambridge hires them away.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:02 pm.

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator