

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

2015 APR -6 PM 2:17

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Monday, February 17, 2015
6:00 PM**

**APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 4-6-2015**

CALL TO ORDER

A joint meeting of the Board and the School Committee (SC) was called to order in open session at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Rojas in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Baghdady and Paolillo were present. Town Administrator David Kale and Assistant Town Administrator Marshall were also present.

School Department/Committee Members present: Superintendent Phelan, Mr. Tony DiCologero, SC Chair Slap, Ms. Laurie Graham, and Ms. Anne Lougée

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

[There were none.]

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Joint Meeting with School Committee

FY16 Budget Review – Town Government

Mr. Kale reviewed highlights of the FY16 budget. He noted that the budget process has been underway for several months and that the Financial Task Force (FTF) has been meeting as well. Department Heads were charged to develop a "present level service" budget.

FY16 expenditures by function were reviewed. The largest portion of the budget is for the schools. He reviewed the other categories of public safety, pension, healthcare, public service, general government.

Mr. Kale noted that the State budget will be submitted at the end of March. It then has to go through the legislative process before it is finalized.

Property taxes are the biggest portion of the Town revenue – 80%. He reviewed other areas that contribute to the revenue picture such as state aid, building permits, free cash, ambulance receipts.

The total submitted budget is \$96,981,000. This is a budget balanced to the currently projected available revenue. Total school budget is \$47,457,000 and the total town budget is \$32,957,847.

03/08/99A
Mr. Kale then reviewed the use of reserves to balance the budget as well as the program priorities should funding become available.

Concerning next steps, updates will be received from the Governor's budget, from the FTF, and new growth numbers will be updated.

School Budget Presentation

Superintendent Phelan began by highlighting the budget goals: maintain staffing levels that are commensurate to increased enrollment, maintaining the Level 1 distinction, maintaining high quality instruction, and continuing with professional development.

Challenges are due to increasing enrollment, which impacts instruction as well as the social/emotional needs of the children. He then reviewed the specific enrollment numbers. By 2019, it is expected that there will be 725 additional students in the system since 2009. Many of these students are ELL students (English Language Learners). It is mandated that these students receive ELL services/instruction. Out-of-district placements are another cost driver as 97 students are costing the system an average of \$65K a year for tuition.

Mr. Phelan then reviewed the current (FY15) fiscal deficit: \$500,000. He noted the measures that have been taken to address the deficit, e.g., budget freezes, LABBB credits, state circuit breaker funds. All one-time funds have been exhausted.

Mr. Phelan outlined efficiency and collaboration efforts as well as per pupil costs. Belmont spends 12% less on per pupil costs than the State average.

Mr. Phelan stated that he fully supports the FTF recommendation's concerning the budget deficit drivers, increased enrollment, and space needs. A three-year plan was developed which includes adding additional staff to address enrollment. He reviewed the specific details of the staffing needs, noting that many of the additions are to provide state mandated services.

Concerning available revenue, the first priority is to pay the current bills,, mandated expenses and contractual obligations. The identified FY16 shortfall is \$1.7M. He reviewed a long list of cuts that would need to happen given the \$1.7M shortfall.

Summary

The Board discussed that the town needs to restructure the way it does business. The FTF report offers not only an operational override recommendation, but also insights into how structural reform can happen.

Audience Comments

Mr. Mark Leflave, BHS Science teacher, noted that the increasing class sizes are adversely impacting the way teachers teach and the way they assess students.

Ms. Johanna Swift, TMM Precinct 4, noted that many important things have been lost over the years, so that this is not a truly level-funded budget. The fees charged to families are not insignificant.

Ms. Deb McDevitt, resident and BHS history teacher, offered more context into the impact of the increased class size.

Ms. Anne Mahon, TMM 4, spoke in support of teachers and home values in Belmont.

Ms. Dori Pulizzi, CMS Grade 5 teacher, spoke about the increased enrollment and noted that the student/teacher ratios are too high. She also noted that there have been cuts over the years for computer lab and the grade 5 foreign language program.

Mr. Greg Mennis, WC member, said he is concerned about the strain on the system.

Mr. Andy MacAulay, CMS teacher, spoke to the quality of the system and then the concern of increased enrollment.

SC Chair Slap said she supports the full override recommendation. Selectman Paolillo noted that the override amount includes capital infrastructure support for capital needs, pavement management.

SC Member Graham spoke to the huge private investment that comes from parents. A limit may have been reached from parents' perspective.

Chair Rojas spoke about how the \$4.5M number was determined. He noted that if there is any money remaining, this will go into a stabilization fund.

Selectman Baghdady reiterated the reasons and justification for the \$4.5M number for the override.

The Board moved: To approve that a ballot question be placed on the ballot on April 7, 2015 and that the Town of Belmont be allowed to assess an additional \$4.5M in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of supplementing the capital budget and the town and school operating budgets for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board took a brief recess at 7:32 p.m.

NEXT MEETINGS

Monday,	February 23, 2015 at 7:00 pm
Thursday,	March 12, 2015 at 8:00 am (budget presentations from Department Heads)
Thursday,	March 12, 2015 at 7:00 pm (Precinct Meeting at Beech Street Center)
Tuesday,	March 17, 2015 at 8:00 am (budget presentations from Department Heads)
Monday,	March 30, at 7:00 pm (Precinct Meeting at Beech Street Center)

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT (*continued*)

Executive Session

The Board moved: To enter into executive session at 7:42 p.m. to discuss strategy sessions with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the Chair so declares. The Board will not return to open session.

A roll call vote was taken: Chair Rojas said aye, Selectman Baghdady and Paolillo also said aye and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator