

Aug 31, 2023

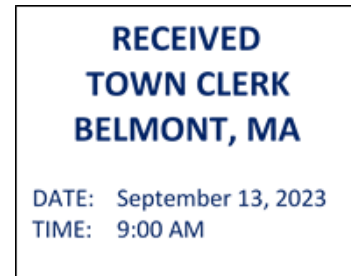
Attendees: Paul Roberts, Charles Smart, Jim Berets, Kristin Nelson-Patel, Daniel Ellard

7:39pm Paul calls the meeting to order

IR = Incident

MIIA = Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association

The first order of business is to review the July minutes.



7:49 pm: The minutes from the July meeting were adopted. Kristin Nelson-Patel agreed to send a text email to itac-admin as well as google doc for Charles Smart.

The big item on the agenda is the cyber IR plan.

Paul Roberts reached out to Patrice Garvin's office to discuss how to move forward with the cyber IR plan. Patrice Garvin replied that the town of Belmont had received a \$22,000

MIIA grant that the town administration wants to put toward cyber security. Charles Smart mentioned that this sounds separate from the big \$120,000 state grant application we discussed last month, and that he recalled the application would be due soon in the fall.

Paul Roberts relayed that he had emailed his contacts Meg Speranze and Stephanie Helm at the Mass Cyber Center to ask about other grants. He will follow up to see if there are any more leads. Paul Roberts asked ITAC members to do some more googling to look for grant sources.

Paul Roberts noted that the \$22000 is broadly scoped in Patrice Garvin's email, to be spent on "cyber security"—she did not specifically mention the IR plan. Whether that money is to be allocated for that specific purpose remains uncertain.

There was a round of introductions when Matt Kuzmeskas joined the ITAC meeting at 8pm.

Matt Kuzmeskas is the new head of IT for BPS. He came from a position as Technology Director at Holyoke, MA.

He said he started his career as a math teacher, served in Teach for America on the border, and also started charter schools.

Matt Kuzmeskas asked about who's not at this meeting. Paul Roberts listed the other names and explained which town board appointed each of us.

Paul Roberts introduced ITAC as an internal consultancy around Belmont for Information Technology and Information Security. We are a resource for our nominating committees but also any interests around town who want help or advice around Information Technology and

Security issues. We can help to assess different options, help connect the town to vendors, explore and report on areas of interest if a little research is needed where resources are low in departments, to assist with starting to explore topics and options. One recent interaction was with the school on assessing the airdrop harassment events in assemblies. ITAC proposed mobile forensics resources and set up a meeting with the former BPS IT Director and a pro bono information security forensics firm. That firm explained ways the town could be ready for events like the airdrop events and possibly catch the perpetrator, to deter potential perpetrators from attempting that again.

Charles Smart added an introduction to some deep history of how ITAC was formed and has been helpful to Belmont. ITAC are not the consultants that do the work, but knowledgeable volunteers who can help the town decide what the work should be and lay out options for who might be able to do it. Charles Smart transitioned to explain the current push that ITAC is making to encourage the town to select an appropriate consultant to build a cyber incident response plan, due to the potential threat of ransomware attacks and other kinds of intrusions and denials of service.

Dave Ellard also mentioned some events ITAC members have run to help the Belmont be aware of information security hygiene and prepared to block or resist the more common scams and identity theft threats that people can fall prey to.

Paul Roberts mentioned that the BPS Superintendant is planning to come to a future ITAC meeting with other town officials, and is also interested in working toward a comprehensive whole-of-town incident response plan. Paul Roberts offered ITAC's help to Matt Kuzmeskas with things his department needs in the vein of support that had been described.

Matt Kuzmeskas invited ITAC to reach out and stop by his office for a tour of the systems, describing the work underway to get the new systems set up in the new middle school. Dan Ellard offered that ITAC would be willing to preserve his time by coming for that tour as a group.

Paul Roberts also brought up the school chrome book expense and right-to-repair issues and offered to help strategize what to do about that, adding that Belmont should watch out for issues around student data privacy and subscription-based software as they consider how to architect solutions. Matt Kuzmeskas mentioned that he is going to talk with the Superintendant about an agreement for families and students to sign clarifying the responsibilities of the school, the families, and the students. Matt Kuzmeskas agreed that one of the biggest issues his department faces is the money the district spends on repairing chrome books. Paul Roberts mentioned that Belmont is a town where many of the students have their own laptop, so resources could be focused more on those who really need it. Matt Kuzmeskas mentioned that a lot of students and teachers use their own laptops and never even power up the school provided ones—viewing them as a backup system. Jim Berets asked about policy around downloading school materials and software onto personal devices. Matt Kuzmeskas said he is as yet unaware of such a policy. Paul Roberts mentioned that ITAC could help research and analyze options to address this issue as well.

On the cyber incident response plan, Paul Roberts brought up that he also had spoken with the new BPS superintendent about the cyber incident response plan and that she seemed very open to the idea of getting involved in it.

Matt Kuzmeskas thanked ITAC for inviting him to the meeting. ITAC thanked him for coming. Matt Kuzmeskas left the zoom.

Paul Roberts reported on a meeting he had with Craig Spinale, the General Manager of the Belmont Municipal Light Department. Robin Tillberg was also part of that thread. They agreed that ITAC could come to an Oct 18th morning meeting where ITAC can discuss the need for a cyber incident response plan that includes the whole of town government. BMLD typically meets in person but can accommodate a hybrid format when necessary.

Paul Roberts also had reached out to the Belmont School Committee for a meeting, and heard back from the chair Meg Moriarty as well as the superintendent. Paul Roberts gave them a brief introduction to ITAC and what it does. There was no firm date from the school committee about when they could support an ITAC visit to their meeting, but October may be a good time. ITAC members agreed to encourage the cyber IR plan issue in the town so that it does not fall off town officials' very dense priority lists.

Paul Roberts reported that he would be meeting with the Library Board of Trustees as their appointee for ITAC in October as well. The discussion will be about potential needs for ITAC to help the library building committee. The whole of ITAC does not have to be there.

Between now and next meeting, Paul Roberts asked ITAC members to try to get some clarity on the cyber IR plan grant situation— what's available and when applications are due. ITAC can ask Dave Petto about how he plans to use the \$22,000 grant as well. Paul Roberts would like a cross-department body to shepherd the project. Charles Smart pointed out that Belmont doesn't have a CIO, which would be the natural role to lead this if it existed. Members generally agreed that Belmont government is very distributed and siloed, so the town should maybe consider moving toward having a role like that in the future. Charles Smart mentioned that he has always looked to Dave Petto for this kind of function, as someone who oversees what's going on town wide, but Paul Roberts points out that the authority of that existing role to lead a process like this is unclear. Charles Smart suggested that maybe the select board would be open to appointing a CIO, as Town Meeting voted to allow the select board to appoint a Treasurer for the town. Dave Ellard brought up the potential for ramifications from making a change to a more hierarchical town government structure, which could be disruptive and problematic. Paul Robert noted that this is beyond ITAC's scope but is a natural expansion following from talking about ways Belmont might make the cyber IR plan project a whole-of-town effort with whole-of-town oversight.

Switching to the school chrome book topic, it was brought up that BPS needs to look out for the fine print in the subscription-based agreements. Dave Ellard suggested that given what the chrome books go through with students, maybe BPS should invest in hard cases. Paul Roberts added that long term BPS should be asking why it is buying palettes of new chromebooks if

80% of students just leave them sitting unused. Charles Smart said he thinks BPS could easily go to the staff and offer to them a way to use their own laptops. Dave Ellard cautioned that it could get really complicated if the school or a teacher ever gets sued— the personal laptops could be called into discovery. Paul Roberts said he supports the school providing laptops to staff— it's a small population relative to the students and the laptops take less wear and tear from adults. The goal Paul Roberts is focused on is getting out of high expense disposable tech that's bad for the environment as well as wasteful.

Membership picked a date for the September meeting. Tuesday the 19th is settled upon, though Dan Ellard can't be there.

Kristin Nelson-Patel moved to adjourn. Charles Smart seconded. The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:59pm.