

BELMONT SELECT BOARD JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES

REMOTE MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021

7:00 PM

Approved by
the Select Board on:

10/18/2021

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: October 25, 2021
TIME: 3:10 PM

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Roy Epstein, and Mark Paolillo were present, along with Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, Library Director Peter Struzziero, Police Chief James MacIsaac, Fire Chief David DeStefano, Manager of DPW Highway Division Mike Santoro, Health Director Wesley Chin, Director of HR Shawna Healey and Town Labor Counsel Brian Maser.

Elaine Alligood, Chair, called the Board of Library Trustees to order with members Kathy Keohane, Corrine McCue Olmstead, Mary Stearns, Gail Mann, and Mark Carthy.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Beech St. Center Events:

- "The Incredible Mae West," Tuesday, October 5th at 1:15 pm. To register call 617-992-2976.
- Medicare Open Enrollment with SHINE. Call Rachel Garrity to register at 857-702-9839.
- Make your Own Seasonings with Therapy Gardens, Tuesday October 14th at 1:15 pm. Call 617-993-2976 to register. Cost is \$10.
- COVID-19 Memorial Service, October 14th at 4 pm. Call 617-993-2970 for more info.
- Senior Flu Shot Clinic, Tuesday October 12th from 11 am - 1 pm. Call 617-993-2977 to register.

Town of Belmont events:

- Belmont's First Indigenous Peoples' Day, October 11th from 9:30 to 10:30 am at Winn Brook Field.
- "We Still Live Here," October 7th from 6 to 7:30 PM. Film about Indigenous Peoples will be available on Town website.
- See Town website for other Indigenous Peoples' Day events happening in Belmont.
- Italian Heritage Month is also being celebrated this month.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Paul Griffin said that in recent weeks, the rat problem had mostly gone away. Residents took care of the problem on Grosvenor Street, but now there are 20 rat burrows near Grove St. and the park. He would like to see open composts and trash banned. Burrows can be treated with dry ice.

Evelyn Garcia Gomez has noticed an uptick in litter around the Town lately. She reminded the public that it is important to take care of trash. The problem has expanded beyond the Grove St. area.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

a. October Bulletin

- Jon Marshall said the Town Administrator is going to begin holding virtual office hours starting on October 5th at 5 pm. See Zoom link on the Town website.
- Middle and High School will conduct live tours beginning on October 23rd. See the School Department website for more information.
- Currently seeking public feedback on the second DPW Forum on Fuel Tanks. Please send feedback to Glenn Clancy, Director of Community Development.
- Quarter 1 report will be presented to the Select Board on October 18th and the operating budget process will start soon.
- The Cultural Council is seeking grants.
- The Fire Department received new electric rescue tools.
- Jon Marshall will be moving to a new job. He will be Deputy Assistant of Operations in Natick. He said he has enjoyed working with the wonderful staff and residents in Belmont. The Town is fortunate to have an outstanding leader in Patrice Garvin, and he has learned a lot from her. The Select Board wished him well and applauded his new job.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Proclamation – Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of violent crime in Belmont. The Select Board issued a proclamation regarding domestic violence awareness. Mark Paolillo read the proclamation written by the Select Board that proclaims October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The proclamation encourages institutions to recognize this issue.

Motion was made to issue the Domestic Violence Awareness Month proclamation. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion on Library Building Project

Dash convened the joint meeting with the Board of Library Trustees.

Elaine Alligood and Kathy Keohane presented slides on the current building conditions at the library:

- 65% of Belmont residents have a library card. Belmont has a very popular and well used library. The library never stopped service during the height of the COVID pandemic and hosted a number of offerings. They offered bags of books during COVID and gave away 700 books through the Friends of Belmont Library group. The library offers over 100 databases to the public. The library also provides after school tutoring and academic help to students. The library building is 57 years old and has run out of space for services.
- The main scope of the proposed discussion tonight is to talk about the new building, but Alligood wanted to let people know that the library has done well despite the conditions of the current building.
- Kathy Keohane said the library services are thriving but the building is failing. They reached out to the Cambridge Housing Authority to estimate cost factors that would go into a new building. All the info is on the library website.

- They showed a short video created by the Director of the Library, Peter Struzziero, to showcase the building conditions. A civil engineer was hired to do an assessment and he verified that fire protection is compromised, American Disability Act requirements are not met, plumbing and electrical codes are out of date, and the roof needs constant repair. Back up pumps and heating system did not work for two weeks before they could be fixed. The elevator is old and when it stops working, parts have to be custom made. This year they had to cancel programs because of lack of heat/air conditioning or leaking roof.
- Three different design teams have assessed the building renovations and found that new construction was the most efficient way to proceed.
- Kathy Keohane said the time is now. We have been asking for four years for a new building. Core systems are no longer fixable and there is asbestos and lead in the building. As the library returns to in-person programming, there will be a need for more space.
- Each year the Board puts a five year capital budget plan together. The capital budget submission from last year had over \$12M in repairs. The capital budget rules do not allow spending more than 33% of building value or \$1.8M over three years. Repairs over that amount will trigger the Americans Disability Act. This means we can't do the renovations one project at a time. We could put all our urgent repairs together but it would not help with increasing space needs.
- The estimated budget would involve debt exclusion, vote and design. Project would not be able to be launched until 2024.
- Three feasibility studies showed that renovation is not an option. The same architect/designer that oversaw the Police Department building renovation said that a renovation is estimated to be almost the same cost as a new building

Chair of the Building Committee, Clair Colburn, addressed space needs. She showed renderings of a new building design.

Some aspects of the new building:

- Sustainable building with solar panels, solar roof, and exterior walls well insulated.
- Repair would be \$25 M, new building would be \$35 M.
- Some aspects of new design:
 - Building will be brought down to sidewalk level
 - Expansion of children's section
 - Group study area and small meeting rooms with glass
 - Space brings nature indoors.
 - Natural light in middle of building
 - More gathering spaces.

Potential funding sources:

- Kendall Fire funds
- American Rescue Plan money
- Free Cash
- Community Preservation funds

- Belmont Library Foundation (campaign to get people engaged in the process, naming rights funds and grants)

Trustees have unanimous agreement to recommend an action plan for debt exclusion in November 2022. They encourage the public to go to the library website. Tours will be given on October 17th for the public.

COMMENTS FROM LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Gail Mann, Library Trustee member for seven years, summarized bullet points. The Town's Capital Budget cannot fund the necessary repairs. She said the main floor is currently not handicapped accessible. The renovation option would reduce usable space by 25% due to ADA rules and it would not be possible to even offer the same programs we are offering now. The only viable option is to place debt exclusion in front of the voters in November 2022.

Corrine McCue Olmstead, Library Trustee, agreed that a new building is needed. The building doesn't have the potential for renovation. She said that there were a number of public forums and surveys where we discussed the issue with residents. The building design came out of those discussions and forums.

Mark Carthy talked about the poor conditions in employee spaces.

Mary Stearns, Library Trustee, expressed concerns for visitors and employees. She said we need to insure that people are safe. She wants to compliment the staff and trustees for managing to keep the services open with current building problems

[Dash announced there are over 200 participants in this meeting.]

Dash said the conditions at the Rink and Library need to be addressed. He said that we need to address the poor conditions and lack of ADA compliance at the library.

Paolillo said the building has failed. It is unsafe for everyone. He realizes the competing priorities in light of the failed override. However, he said we had \$5M in turnbacks due to COVID, and we received federal rescue funds. We need to be creative and find the money for a new building. He asked that the residents consider the debt exclusion for 2022.

Epstein said the building hasn't entirely failed, but if a debt exclusion were successful in 2022, it will likely be 2024 before building can begin. There needs to be a plan to provide library services if the building becomes unusable by the public before a new building is ready.

Paolillo commented that funding sources need to be lined up as soon as possible. Raising a certain level of funding will show residents that we are being creative about finding money for this project. He suggested that the Trustees could work with the Financial Task Force to identify funding sources.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON LIBRARY BUILDING

Jess Hausman uses the library with her kids. She had to train her children at other libraries before they could handle the crowds at the Belmont Library. She supports the new building.

Elshad Kasumov, Town Meeting member, said he is grateful to hear this discussion. He strongly supports the debt exclusion. The new high school is projected to save \$5M in operating costs. He thinks

we should try to get those types of statistics for the library campaign. The Town should try to show what money could be saved with new library. For instance, renting out spaces at the library could offset initial costs.

Melissa McIntyre strongly supports the goal of a new library. She is willing to work to help with getting funding.

Hal Shubin was Trustee from 2002-2011. If you are unsure that we need a new library, then look at other town's new libraries. It's time to get a new library. We need to take advantage of state funding.

Amy Kirsch supports the new building.

Mark Gregor said the library should be a civic living room that encourages people to gather to become active citizens. He supports the new building design.

Paul Roberts, Town Meeting member and Library Board of Trustees Advisory member, said he supports the new library. He offered to go door to door to secure debt exclusion.

Rachel Heller, Town Meeting member, enthusiastically supports the new library.

Bob McLaughlin, Town Meeting member, member of the Warrant Committee and Library Building Committee, said the Rink and Library are in need of funds for renovations. He said we need to consider the fact that 65% of the public use the library. He thinks the library should come first in the competition for funds.

Evelyn Gomez said she would agree with Roy Epstein. She wants to see concrete plans or how services will be continued when renovations and construction are being made. Could we use the high school space while the library is being built?

Kathy Keohane answered Evelyn and said they have anticipated the use of temporary space during building renovations. One of the options they looked at was using the modulars after the high school and middle school is built. She said they have discussed this idea with Superintendent Phelan.

Jim Sullivan agreed the Belmont needs a new building and asked if there was an estimate for the new building cost. He would like to have debt exclusion vs. override explained.

Dash explained that the debt exclusion allows the Town to borrow money for a set period of time, while an operating override raises the tax levy permanently.

Bill Anderson said he would like to see what we are getting for \$35M, \$30M and \$25M. He feels the Town needs to rebuild trust by making funding sources transparent and creative.

Clair Colburn answered that it would be an 18-month building project. Kathy Keohane said the details of the design costs are on the library website. There have been six community forums to discuss what design options the public wanted and that's what determined the cost. The size of the new building is only 25% larger than current building but more effective.

Jeff Liberty said there is damaged trust in the Town about transparency in government. He would encourage people to vote yes on a new building because this is not a political decision.

Meg Moriarty, Town Meeting member, said the library department has been honest and transparent about what they have to offer and their willingness to support schools should be applauded.

Marsha Semuels said people may think libraries are obsolete, she hopes that people realize that the library holds the community together.

Jeanne Mooney said the time is now for this project.

Dash said it's time for the Trustees to develop a funding plan between now and November 2022. We have heard the general consensus that the Select Board is in favor of doing this.

Kathy Keohane asked for a timeframe from the Select Board. She wants to know what the Select Board needs from the Trustees. Dash said the Library Trustees should start working with the Financial Task Force II and Town Administration to develop a funding scheme. Dash said that the Select Board would need to know the amount they are asking for in the Spring, specifically, the gap between private funding and town funding and the amount that would need to be put on the ballot. The November election requires a longer lead time for ballot questions. Dash thinks it would also be prudent to continue public outreach.

Paolillo said as a member of the Financial Task Force II, he is willing to work with the Trustees on the financial aspects. It was agreed that the funding component should be determined by early Summer 2022.

[Joint Meeting with the Board of Library Trustees ended at 8:45.]

The Board of Library Trustees adjourned with a quorum.

Update on weekend trash removal and discussion of funding source

Jon Marshall reported that there was discussion at recent meetings about reinstituting weekend trash pickup. He reported there is some funding available through FY22 for funds for extra trash pickup. And he said they plan to also include this extra trash pickup costs in the FY23 budget. Marshall said we need to explore places where pickup is needed.

Epstein corrected what he had said in a previous meeting and said that under the current contract Waste Management is picking up five days a week.

Mike Santoro said when Waste Management took over the contract in 2019, they changed from a 3 day to a 5 day pickup. The DPW and Parks and Recreation will do additional pickups at the schools and parks on Friday afternoons and Saturdays.

Epstein said it's not clear that the design of the trash barrels is a problem. That issue will be further assessed after a more frequent pickup schedule has been launched. He also asked that the DPW take over the cost and the work of placing the dry ice in the rat tunnels.

Marshall said that the open positions at the DPW have released more funds for additional trash pickup. Also he noted that outdoor dining ends on October 31 and there should be less trash in Belmont Square after that date.

Motion was made to fund the additional trash pickup as outlined by Marshall and Santoro for remainder of this fiscal year until June 30, 2022. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Update on Belmont Police Department by Chief MacIsaac

Chief MacIsaac gave an update on the Police Department.

- On October 16th, there will be a dedication of the renovated Police Department building.
- An ongoing problem at the Police Department has been filling vacancies, there have been four vacancies for almost two years. Only two candidates were eligible, but they could not pass physical ability tests. The department received a civil service list with 30 names. They are beginning the process again with six candidates to fill four vacancies. Two superior officers were also assigned to the National Guard this year.
- He also reported that they have had considerable amounts of turnbacks to free cash. But he said we cannot continue with this level of officers. He reported that more applications were received by towns who stopped civil service. It could also increase diversity in candidates. The Chief said it's not optimal to fill four vacancies with six candidates. He said the Belmont Police Department deserves a lot of credit for what they have accomplished during their understaffed conditions. It was agreed that towns who have left civil service have larger and more diverse applicant pools. Dash said that we need to put the issue of civil service on the Spring Town Meeting agenda.

Update on Belmont Fire Department by Chief DeStefano

Chief DeStefano gave an update on the Fire Department.

- A new engine has been put in service at Leonard St. Thanks to the citizens of Belmont for allowing us to put this apparatus in service.
- Two new rescue tools were also put in service. They are battery operated and don't have long hydraulic hoses. They are very useful at the scene of auto accidents.
- A new cardiac monitor was also activated. The monitor allows advanced treatment for injuries.
- Also starting to place in service the new radios purchased with Capital Budget funds. They are programmed with new channel configuration to be more user friendly with regional resources.
- There are six new recruits in process. The six recruits passed the physical assessment phase. Four out of six recruits will begin the January class. They will be ready for assignments in April. He said there are five vacancies and four members on injured leave so there are nine people out. It's taking a longer time period to get the recruits onboarded with civil service and Mass Fire Academy. But he is proud of the department stepping up to fill in the gaps.
- Fire Department is working on enhancing community engagement through citizen and Town CPR events, Underwood pool training, tours of the Fire Department at Town Day, and attending block parties. The Human Rights Commission was invited to visit the department in November to talk to all firefighters.
- Some strategic Initiatives being worked on now are: revitalizing Standard Operating Procedures, conducting Community Risk Assessment about targeting hazards to mitigate emergencies.
- Chief DeStefano said he conducted an internal stakeholder analysis. He met with every single member of the Fire Department and polled the department using a blind survey. His goal was to determine firefighter satisfaction. He also talked to stakeholders outside the organization to leverage new partnerships and create a successful plan for the future.

Chief DeStefano outlined the most frequent five answers in each category of the survey:

- Strengths of Department
 - Advanced Life Support
 - Equipment
 - Leadership of officers
 - New ideas
 - Pride and ownership; engagement in job.
- Weaknesses
 - Expand opportunities for all members of department and they are starting to do that
 - Loss of low frequency skills; renovating training program to address this
 - Losing too many fire fighters to other departments; the main reason is they had the opportunity to go to departments closer to home and job security
 - Outdated and inconsistent policies.
 - Outdated pre plans.
- How can we make the Belmont Fire Department a better place to work?
 - Training
 - More opportunities for advancement
 - Opportunities to train outside department
 - More ability to become a driver operator
 - More opportunities for higher education.
- What can be done to improve the department?
 - Mentoring with people
 - Being team player
 - Assisting with training
 - Boost morale with their passions
 - Educate people about fire service.
- Road ahead
 - He would like a dedicated training officer that is dedicated to training. The current training officer is doing three different tasks and training takes a back seat.
 - Major policy reviews and revision will continue.

DeStefano feels the community has supported him and he is actively working on many of the issues identified in the assessment survey.

The Select Board commended Chief DeStefano for discussing issues with each person in the department.

Paolillo asked what Chief DeStefano needs from the Select Board to support his efforts. He said the most important thing he needs is for the Town and the residents to value the work of the firefighters.

Epstein asked if the Fire Department was not in civil service would it shorten the process of staffing up? DeStefano said if the application changed to an open, revolving process, he could fill vacancies quicker. The question is, if we open it up, would the number of applicants increase? If we didn't have the statewide list, if we relied on community outreach, it may be better in some ways, but then we would have to rely on community outreach.

Epstein asked for an explanation of the outdated policies. DeStefano said outdated policies can be addressed if SOPs are reviewed every year. However, that is a labor intensive effort. As a result, policies exist year after year, and they will get antiquated based on technology and fire service trends. Some of the policies he found, were old and needed to be updated. He will continue the evaluation of policies throughout the year.

Accept resignation from Meet Belmont Planning Committee Member, Brian Saper

Motion was made to accept the resignation of Brian Saper from the Meet Belmont Planning Committee. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

COVID Update and discussion and possible vote on vaccine mandate for Town of Belmont employees

Brian Maser, Shawna Healey and Wes Chin joined the group.

Wes Chin said COVID cases in Belmont were trending downwards, but last weekend we picked up 13 new cases, which is double what was reported in the last few weeks. The Health Department compared mask mandate numbers and, not surprisingly, cities and towns with mask mandates have a lower incidence of COVID.

Paolillo asked about penalties for businesses since the mask mandate was adopted. Chin said there have been three written warnings for employees not wearing masks. Marshall said after the last Select Board meeting, notifications were sent out using the Economic Development Committee list. He has had positive responses.

Chin said, based on CDC risk categories, Belmont is just below the category of substantial risk. He said the numbers still warrant a mask mandate and remote meetings. He cautioned that winter may bring higher levels of infection.

There has been no ruling from OSHA yet.

Brian Maser, Town labor counsel joined the group. Shawna Healey reported that the vaccine survey was sent to 300 employees and as of today we have 106 responses, although the poll is still open. So far everyone who responded said they were fully vaccinated. Maser reported that he is waiting for communication from OSHA.

Dash said we will put this on the agenda for the next Select Board meeting on October 18th so we can get the results when the polling has been completed.

Epstein asked if the vaccine mandate was just for Town employees and not School employees? Shawna Healey said the School Committee has come to an agreement with the Belmont Education Association to mandate vaccines for union employees and they are now working on the requirement for non-union staff. Shawna said she would share this information with the Select Board at the next meeting.

Possible committee appointments and discussion on possible charge updates:

a. Meet Belmont Planning Committee

Hillary Roth is the only applicant for the Meet Belmont Planning Committee. There are many vacancies on this committee. Dash said we haven't had a Meet Belmont event due to COVID so maybe we could explore creative ideas about how to move forward.

Jon Marshall said he discussed this with the chair of the committee. The chair would like to give it another year. She has commitment from its members. It has been difficult during COVID. Marshall suggested reducing the charge from nine to five members. They would prefer to have people who are not members to act as volunteers to fill some openings.

Motion was made to amend the charge of the Meet Belmont Planning Committee to reduce membership from nine (9) to seven (7) members. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Motion was made to appoint Hillary Roth to the Meet Belmont Planning Committee with a term to expire 2024. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

b. Middle and High School Traffic Working Group

[Dash is recused from this matter and left the meeting.]

Epstein took over chairmanship. Epstein said there is one resident who expressed interest in the one open position.

Motion was made to appoint Ranganath Nayak to the Middle and High School Traffic Working Group. Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0. Dash was recused from the vote.

[Dash returned to chair the meeting]

SELECT BOARD'S COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Structural Change Impact Group started to have meetings with Town departments. They had a productive meeting with the Town Manager from Arlington.

Community Path is moving towards a 25% design submission and discussing having a public forum post-submission in early November.

Middle and High School Traffic Working Group has identified a good number of issues and low-level improvements that don't require Select Board approval. There are issues that will require Select Board approval, eg., permanent parking changes. They are planning a forum for residents from Cottage St. to Orchard St. later this month. There's an issue with student overflow parking on side streets. Generally, traffic issues have improved.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- a. August 30, 2021 – Executive Session
- b. September 13, 2021 – Regular Meeting
- c. September 13, 2021 – Executive Session
- d. September 20, 2021 – Regular Meeting
- e. September 20, 2021 – Executive Session

f. September 21, 2021 – Special Meeting (Mend Belmont)

Motion was made to approve the above minutes as amended. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Executive Sessions:

a. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares; All Unions

b. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; Belmont Fire Department

Motion was made to enter into Executive Session and not return to public session.

Respectfully submitted,



PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

