

APPROVED BY THE SELECT BOARD

2/27/2023

Select Board Meeting

Monday, February 6, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

7:00 PM

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: May 8, 2023
TIME: 9:02 AM

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order by Chair Mark Paolillo. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Select Board member Roy Epstein were present, along with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin and Assistant Town Administrator/Financial Jennifer Hewitt (remote).

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Belmont Woman's Club Announcements

- Bob Warren from Channel 25 will share insight on top stories in our area on February 9, 2023 from 7 to 8:30 PM. Zoom event.
- Care to Share Valentine Giveaway on the Lunar New Year will be held in Belmont Center on February 12th from 2-3 PM. Includes materials to make Valentines' Cards.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

[NONE.]

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Preliminary 2024 budget is online on budget tab for Schools and Town. There will be a presentation by Superintendent Phelan and Patrice Garvin on February 9th at 7 pm.
- Press release draft will be disseminated about the settling of the Police Patrol and Firefighters' contracts.
- MIIA Grant Award of \$15K was received to apply to the installation of new security door in Town Hall.
- Belmont Hill School project is currently going through the Planning Board. Belmont Hill School and abutters have come to agreement on modified plan that includes removal of above ground gas tanks, elimination of six parking spaces from original plan, retaining trees, increasing distances to property lines. Paolillo said the Planning Board will be responsible for making the decision on this matter. The Planning Board will be meeting tomorrow night. Not all abutters are in agreement with the modified plan.

COMMENTS about Belmont Hill School project

Max Schwartz is an abutter and he said the Belmont Hill School and abutters did not come to an agreement. He's said they agreed about the removal of the above ground field tanks, but 2600 people have signed a petition against the agreement. Most have asked not to have the project approved. He

said that the agreement does not nothing to reduce traffic or environmental impact. He believes they have a long way to go before they can come to an agreement with the school.

Lois Pines said since September only eight members of the public have been allowed to speak at the Planning Board meetings. Hopefully the Chairman will allow them to speak at subsequent meetings. She thanked Paolillo for the attempt to achieve more input from the public. She feels that a full public hearing has not taken place and she believes they need an environmental impact report. She hopes the Planning Board will not assume the abutters have reached agreement,

Paolillo said that the Select Board role was to bring the parties together. The Planning Board is the arbiter that will make final decision. There is a need to continue to hear from all residents. The agreement is between the Belmont Hill School and the abutters.

Lisa Pargoli, pct. 4, Town Meeting member, said that Belmont School should not be dictating to the Town. How do they have authority over us? Lisa feels that the School should not be allowed to buy up property without paying taxes. They should be paying through a pilot program.

Paolillo explained that as a not-for-profit school, Belmont Hill is not required to pay taxes under Mass. law. They have a right to make requests to our Planning Board on property they own. The Planning Board has the authority to approve this plan.

Garvin said she was in the room for a month with abutters and the Belmont Hill School and there were concessions from the closest abutters. She confirmed the Planning Board is planning on holding a number of public discussions.

Discussion and possible vote on request from the Belmont Contributory Retirement System for approval of Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2022, An Act Relative to Cost of Living Adjustments for Retirees

Kathy Riley, Segal Company and Tom Gibson, Chair of the Belmont Retirement Board summarized the request. Gibson said the last time an evaluation was done was January 1, 2022.

Due to high inflation rates, Chapter 269 provided eligible retirees a one-time increase in the maximum allowable COLA for FY23 of 3% to 5%. The Select Board and Retirement Board need to approve the increase for Town employees.

Gibson reported that the cost of increasing the COLA from 3 to 5% will produce a \$800K increase. This is a long term change from the period of FY24 to FY30.

Kathy Riley displayed tables that showed two ways to fully fund the extra liability. 1) defer payment to fiscal 2030, or 2) pay off every year from FY24 to FY30 (lower interest rate).

Paolillo asked for feedback about experiences in other communities. He thinks that 2030 is a pretty short schedule. Other municipalities have spread that period out.

Riley said the rate of increase is 4.45%. She said other towns and cities have a higher rate of increase than Belmont.

Dash said that Belmont extended the schedule to 2030 awhile ago. He asked if we could change the funding schedule from 2026 to 2030 due to the tight budgetary period. Riley said you could start schedule in 2025 and deal with it at next valuation. Dash said if there was an operating override in 2024, they could move it to 2026.

Epstein clarified that the requested increase is a permanent increase in the benefit , not a one-time increase. Tom Gibson said employer contributions and return on investments will cover half of the liability.

Epstein said he is in agreement with Paolillo and Dash that this request requires more thought before taking any action.

Gibson said the deadline is June 30, 2023 and he brought the issue to Select Board early for further consideration.

Paolillo thinks it's a modest increase and if we increase the retirement rate but we may need to explore other ways to fund it.

Mike Widmer, Town Moderator, said he wants to underscore the comments of Select Board members. He said that pension financing is complicated and it needs more thought. One of the issues that needs to be addressed is whether it is appropriate to extend the schedule past the 2030 date. If we commit too much money, that could mean teacher layoffs or an increase to the override. Widmer said that the state has given towns the authority to be flexible and he thinks we should be taking advantage of that by spreading out the schedule.

Gibson said they look at the funding schedule every time they evaluate. He said the Retirement Board tries to be sensitive to the Town's needs, but a delicate balance needs to be maintained.

Paolillo asked for a funding schedule update from Kathy Riley before the end of February. The Select Board is worried about further strain on the FY24 budget.

Update from the Municipal Skating Rink Building Committee followed by discussion and possible vote to place a debt exclusion for a new rink on the Annual Election ballot, followed by public comment

Mark Haley, Dante Muzzioli and Tom Caputo, members of the Municipal Skating Rink Building Committee joined the group.

Paolillo said public input will be allowed after the presentation.

Ted Galante, from Galante Architecture Studios showed an aerial photo and existing plan for the Rink. Key points from Galante's presentation:

Updates on plan for new Rink

- New Rink will be built on the location of the existing Rink
- Revised Rink has been reduced to 40K sq. ft. (reduced from 48K sq. ft.)
- Revised plan includes fire lane, Harris Field is left in place and mezzanine has been reduced in size
- Roof was extended and kept as a rectangle to keep it open for future additions

- New cost estimate is \$29,950,000
- Solar has been reduced by half due to size reduction, and more cost savings were accomplished by removing mezzanine and not trying to recycle parts of old building
- Majority of roof will be fitted with solar panels
- Possibility of getting 26.5% of estimated \$1M solar costs reimbursed by Inflation Reduction Act.

Galante confirmed that the old Rink needs significant repairs. Mechanical systems have reached their useful life and there is no working sprinkler system. \$175K in repairs will be needed next year to keep it in workable condition and more ongoing costs in subsequent years.

Caputo said the sports program has not been compromised by the reduction in cost. The new plan will include new Rink, four dressing rooms and four locker rooms. Haley said the new resources can be shared by the full community not just hockey players. The plan could still accommodate the addition of a tennis court.

A Program Matrix showing the times when different sports can be played was displayed on the screen. The building can support other school and Recreation Department activities, and locker rooms can be used by football players. They calculate 400-500 hours of rent time when Rink is not being used. Hopefully the revenues can help balance out the costs of running the facility. It will be a 12-month facility and will be much more energy efficient.

Dash agreed that the Rink is broken and may not be able to be fixed. There are environmentally dangerous chemicals being emitted. Voters need to re-evaluate the Rink. He feels that Belmont cannot stop putting it on the ballot.

Epstein said he has watched as the project has evolved since the summer. The revisions to the design are good. He compared the rink to the pool--after the new Pool was built, more people used it. Epstein and Dash agreed they would like to see a skate shop added for the community.

Dante Muzzioli reinforced that the facility will serve as a community center for 12 months per year.

Haley said the new design of the Rink could support tennis courts.

PUBLIC COMMENTS on the Rink

Stephen Sala, Permanent Building Committee member said that when new Pool was built, attendance increased.

Ann Marie Mahoney, member of the Permanent Building Committee, said if you try to keep Rink going, it will be a huge capital expense. If you shift these costs back to the School Department for renting ice, then that will incur a huge expense.

Meg Moriarty, Chair of School Committee, said the Rink Building Committee has been focused on a building plan that encompasses basic community needs. Access to rest rooms is a huge plus.

Ann Paulsen, said she was the Chair of the Pool Building Committee and the benefit of the Pool is that it is available to residents of all ages. She would like to see two tennis courts provided to extend broader community use.

Becca Plizzi said the Rink is so much more than a place to hold hockey. She uses the Rink to raise money for her 5K Run.

Aaron Pikcilingis, Town Meeting member, pct. 6, member of Vision 21 asked if there is space to add PV panels in the future? Ted Galante confirmed that there is room for additional solar panels in the future.

Epstein said the Select Board will need to work on a plan for operating a new rink, which is separate from construction.

Sarah Townsend, Belmont Garden Club President, and coordinator for Belmont Girl's hockey program said she grew up playing hockey in an outdoor rink in Canada. She feels the Rink is a community asset.

Ade Baptista said he is in support of the Rink. He asked about operational costs if Rink is built.

Haley replied that there is an opportunity to make the project cost neutral. The solar panels also contribute to savings.

Lisa Pargoli, Town Meeting member, pct. 4 asked if a debt exclusion amount has been determined.

Paolillo replied that the Town will make sure to disclose the full tax impact.

Jim Reiner, pct. 3 said that we have to think about future and current parents and what would they think of the lack of hockey home? He has never ice skated and his son and daughter don't play but he would support this Rink. It's a community investment. It suggests that the community invests in itself. What would happen with the closed Rink? Town would have to remediate the situation.

Alison Lenk, Town Meeting member, pct. 8, commented that she agrees with Ann Paulsen. It's not fair the tennis courts were not included in the Middle and High School plan. It would be great to include courts in the new Rink.

The Select Board and Rink Committee confirmed that outside organizations, will be charged rent. Galante said the only legal costs will be to advertise to comply with Mass. General Law.

Jeff Grace said he is encouraged by what he has heard. He asked if a view of the inside of the building could be shared with the public? This would help the community know the broader appeal. Galante said that he could have renderings of inside of building available to the wider community.

Haley said there will be three forums held before April 2023 that will show renderings of the inside building.

Carol ? suggested a change to the wording in the debt exclusion to reflect a broader use of the Rink.

Ellen Schreiber, Town Meeting member, pct. 8 said she thinks that the name of Belmont Ice Skating Rink is limiting. She thinks the name should to reflect broader community use. Paolillo said if a change is made, we need to decide the name of the facility tonight.

Tom Gatzunis, Town Meeting member, suggested a change in the name to Rink and Sports Facility.

Anthony Ferrante, member of Rink Committee suggested the name of Rink and Community Facility. Building could be used for summer camps and other community events.

Dash announced that the Town Counsel said that the Rink and Sports Facility name is fine.

The Select Board decided to vote on the ballot question now and amend later, if necessary.

Motion was made to approve the following ballot question be placed on the April 4, 2023 annual election ballot: shall the Town of Belmont be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Prop 2 ½ (so called) the amounts required to pay the bonds issue in order to pay the cost of designing, demolishing, constructing, originally equipping and furnishing the Belmont Rink and Sports Facility located at 345 Concord Ave. in Belmont MA and all costs and expenses related thereto. Yes or No. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Paolillo asked for a five minute recess.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Presentation on Net Zero Strategy Findings and Implementation Recommendations

Julie Curti, Director of Clean Energy and Van Du, Senior Environmental Planner from Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for greater Boston Area.

Ms. Curti said that for the past year and half they have been working with Roger Wrubel, Ben Thiverge and James Booth from Belmont Light and Energy Committee to prioritize implementation on Belmont's climate action plan. They did interviews with nine different resident groups in Belmont to get feedback on climate concerns.

Ms. Curti said that Belmont has been a leader on climate action. She explained that the role of MAPC is to offer recommendations to Belmont. They showed slides about potential ideas for reducing green house emissions, and adopting the specialized stretch code.

Van Du said she interviewed seven Belmont Town Administrators to get an understanding about the challenges facing Belmont in the drive towards net zero implementation. Belmont's climate plan seems to be an ad hoc response that is not governed by a centralized plan.

Ms. Du showed the top nine recommendations made after the evaluation. They recommend the Select Board work closely with the Energy Committee and Belmont Light to work towards the current requirements of the state.

One of the key recommendations was to hire a full-time Sustainability Manager to help to submit sustainability grants. Other municipalities have a full time position for Sustainability Manager. An option may be to share a climate resilience planner with another town.

Epstein said it would be interesting to review the list of recommendations identified against what we are already doing.

Steve Klionsky, Chair of the Light Board, said MAPC has come before the Light Board before and he said they would welcome their input again.

Discussion and possible vote on method of collecting parking fees for vehicles using EV charging stations on Town property

Steve Klionsky, Chair of the Municipal Light Board reported that last October Craig Spinale proposed that parking fees for the chargers at the Claflin lot be bundled in the new charging fee and that Belmont Light would remit the parking fees to the Town. Epstein reported that this plan was accepted at the time by the Select Board but that it turns out not to be workable.

Klionsky said the software isn't able to differentiate the times when parking is free of charge. Belmont Light is now recommending that parking fees continue to be collected by using the Claflin kiosks. In addition, Craig Spinale is looking into whether Belmont Light should amortize the cost of the equipment over a longer period of time, which would reduce the charging fee.

Paolillo asked what happens if we don't charge for parking? If we want to encourage EV charging, we should make it more convenient.

Epstein said maybe we should wait to see if there is a falloff in the next few months at the four charging stations now that there is a fee for charging.

Ben Thiverge said the Energy Committee needs to do a needs evaluation based on those who have the capability to charge at home. We installed chargers in a few additional places so now we can do new evaluations.

Motion was made to approve a separate method for collecting parking fees for EV Charging Stations and Town will no longer be due any parking revenues from Belmont Light. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote on request from the Belmont Center Business Association (BCBA) to host Belmont Town Day on Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Motion made to approve the request from the Belmont Center Business Association (BCBA) to host Belmont Town Day on Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Discussion and Possible vote to formally submit ballot question language as approved by Town Meeting on January 30, 2023 to the Town Clerk to include on the 2023 Annual Town Election Ballot.

The Select Board members agreed to put Question 2 on the Annual Town Election Ballot.

Motion was made to approve the following ballot question as approved by Town Meeting on January 30, 2023 be formally submitted to the Town Clerk to be included in the April 4, 2023 Election Ballot: Question 2 -- Shall the Town vote to the have its elected Town Treasurer and Collector of Taxes become an appointed Town Treasurer and Collector of Taxes? Yes or No. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote on approval of new Common Victualler License for CoCo Fresh Tea and Juice, 43 Leonard Street, Belmont

Motion was made to approve the Common Victualler License for CoCo Fresh Tea and Juice, 43 Leonard Street, Belmont.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

- Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee met last week.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the December 21, 2022 Joint Meeting minutes with the Community Path Project Committee will be delayed until next meeting.

Motion was to approve the January 9, 2023 Select Board regular meeting minutes as amended. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Motion was made to approve the January 9, 2023 Executive Session minutes. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Executive Session –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; Joint Public Safety Dispatchers International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1637

Motion was made to move to Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Next Meeting Dates:

- (1) February 9, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Select Board Joint with Warrant Committee, School Committee and Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee – Budget Summit V (2)
- (2) February 27, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary