



Minutes
Town of Belmont
Select Board
Virtual Meeting on Zoom
Monday June 8, 2020
7:00pm

Approved by
the Select Board on:
June 15, 2020

CALL TO ORDER:

A regular meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Tom Caputo and Select Board member Adam Dash were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Father's Day hot dog celebration at the Beech Street Center, June 19 at 12noon. Sign up in advance, limit of 50 people – contact Dana Levitt.
- *Raising Babies* event June 15 at 1:15pm hosted by Mass Audubon.
- Kindness Rocks project organized by the Beech Street Center – paint rocks with a positive message.
- *All About Rhubarb* virtual cooking demonstration hosted by Council on Aging Director Nava Niv-Vogel, Wednesday June 10 at 10am.

Epstein made a statement regarding the death of George Floyd and expressing his support of recent peaceful protests in Belmont Center led by high school students. Caputo and Dash echoed these sentiments.

Police Chief Jamie MacIsaac was present, having just come off a virtual public forum with State Senator Will Brownsberger about policing practices. MacIsaac said he had received numerous calls/emails about the '8Can'tWait' initiative, which outlined specific guidelines regarding use of force by police. MacIsaac confirmed that the Belmont Police Department complies with these guidelines in its' existing policies. Finally, he noted he would work to address questions that had been raised about use of body cameras. In general, he wanted to make it known that the Police Department is always open and available to discuss issues raised by the community.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

- *May 18, 2020, regular session:* Dash had two edits, one related to the Recreation Commission's recommendation on the Underwood Pool, the other related to the marijuana submissions.

Motion: To approve the May 18, 2020 regular session minutes, as amended. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- *May 11, 2020, executive session:* Epstein had proposed some minor clarifying edits accepted by the other members.

Motion: To approve the May 11, 2020 executive session minutes, as amended. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS:

- *Michael Collins (Member, Belmont Against Racism):* Advocated for the Select Board to formally adopt 8Can'tWait – important for Town leadership to make a public statement endorsing the principles, as a matter of policy and affirmation of progress towards ending racism in Belmont. Collins noted that while he was very appreciative of Chief MacIsaac and his support of these initiatives, this had not always been the case historically with the Belmont Police Department. Collins asked what an anti-racist Belmont would look like, in terms of housing, hiring practices, etc. As an example, he pointed out that Chief MacIsaac had raised the issue of the Department belonging to Civil Service, which was an obstacle to the hiring of minority police officers.
 - o Epstein indicated he would work with Chief MacIsaac and Garvin to move forward on getting the 8Can'tWait policies formally approved, and reiterated his previously stated support for leaving civil service.
- Anne Paulsen: [Technical difficulties, she would call back into the meeting.]

ACTION BY CONSENT:

Policing / 8Can'tWait

Epstein had not realized that this agenda item was intended for a formal vote on approving the 8Can'tWait policies; he had not had a chance to review the related materials and preferred to take up the matter in a week's time. He expressed his support for the policies in principle and did not foresee any obstacle to adoption of the guidelines.

Dash suggested to take public comment on the issue: Rachel Heller and Betsy Lipson both spoke out in support of adopting 8Can'tWait and urged the Board to vote on the matter this evening. Epstein reiterated the Select Board would vote on the matter next week. Chief MacIsaac noted for the public that the Belmont Police Department website had a page dedicated to explanation of the eight policies and how they fit with the Department's current practices.

Discussion and possible vote on amendment to Town Administrator's contract

The contract called for a cost-of-living increase as of July 1, 2020. Recognizing the financial difficulties of the Town for FY21 and onwards, Garvin had asked to forego this increase and set the cost-of-living adjustment to 0%. The Select Board thanked Garvin for the gesture of leadership in such a difficult time financially for the Town.

Motion: To amend the employment agreement between Patrice Garvin and the Town of Belmont dated December 11, 2016 to say that "...effective July 1, 2020 showing a 0% increase over current base." (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

[Anne Paulsen reconnected to the meeting. The Board turned to hear her comment.]

- *Anne Paulsen:* Had written to the Select Board and talked to Police Chief MacIsaac about the possibility of closing off certain streets to traffic. Given there were limited outdoor activities available due to COVID-19, this would provide a safe space for children to play and ride their bikes.

Such a program could follow the model of hosting a block party, where a portion of the street would be closed for a short period of time on a given day, and with a similar application process. Another idea was to create a connected route through Town that was restricted to bicycles and pedestrians, though it was acknowledged that this would be very ambitious.

- Garvin expressed doubts about having enough available resources with DPW and Community Development to implement such a program. Epstein suggested that Paulsen continue conversations with Garvin to investigate further whether a workable plan could be developed.

COVID-19 update

Epstein wanted to clear up confusion around Belmont's current policy requiring face-coverings in public. The policy comported with Governor Baker's order, with the small difference being that face coverings were *not* mandatory in an outdoor space where social distancing can be properly observed.

Wes Chin (Director, Health Department) called attention to a recently taken photo, sent to the Health Department and Board of Health, showing a group of 30-50 recent Belmont High School graduates at Harris Field – some of whom were unmasked and not observing social distancing. Chin conveyed on behalf of the Board of Health and Health Department that he viewed these acts as disrespectful, especially in light of the time and effort spent by himself and his colleagues in helping to plan a safe graduation event. He advised those involved with the photo to get tested immediately for the sake of the health and safety of the broader community.

Financial Task Force II update

Caputo summarized the message he would be providing as an update to Town Meeting Members in video form. The Financial Task Force II anticipated recommending an override vote be held in either November 2020 or April 2021; would need to collaborate further with Select Board, School Committee and Warrant Committee to put forth a specific amount. The Task Force also planned to provide recommendations on how best to deal with the ongoing problem of structural deficits resulting from Proposition 2.5 limitations. Such recommendations may include: identifying revenue opportunities; rethinking how services are delivered; long-term capital planning; long-term override strategy.

Caputo proposed a joint meeting with the Financial Task Force II and the Select Board be held sometime after Town Meeting. Garvin pointed out that in order to hold a November override vote, ballot language would need to be finalized by July 27, which was only seven weeks away.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Legislation had recently come through approving the holding of a remote Town Meeting. The hope was to conclude all business in one evening, however June 17 was available for a second night if necessary. Materials would be distributed electronically and Town Meeting Members were encouraged to review and follow instructions from the Town Clerk on how to register.

The Board took up the Warrant Articles:

- Article 2, Authorization to represent Town's legal interests:

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 2. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 3, Salaries of elected officials: No changes from the previous year.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 3. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 4, Enterprise funds: Separated into two separate motions, one each for Water and Sewer/Stormwater.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 4a. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 4b. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 5, Revolving fund limits: Caputo noted that a request had been made from the Warrant Committee to see the revolving fund balances and cash flow, as context for voting on the limits. Details would be made available for the Warrant Briefing.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 5. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 6, Appropriation of Transportation Grant: Caputo noted a previous version of the motion had specified where the funds would go (Council on Aging and Community Development). More information would be provided prior to Town Meeting.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 6. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 7, Capital budget: Epstein pointed out that the total amount of the Capital Budget was much lower than usual, due to roads money being transferred to the operating budget. This was a one-time emergency measure which should not be repeated. Two separate motions, one for the capital budget and a separate motion for sidewalk money.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 7a. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 7b. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 8, OPEB: Caputo noted that the Town's OPEB contribution was the minimum allowed at \$50k this year, due to budget challenges presented by COVID-19; plan is to revert back to the usual higher contribution amount in subsequent years.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 8. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 9, FY21 budget: Caputo pointed out that this was not a level services budget.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 9, the FY21 budget and authorization to transfer balances in the amounts stated. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, Adam Dash)

- Article 10, CPC budget and projects: Motion included reserving amounts from CPA trust fund to various buckets for future use, and the Town Hall chimney project.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 10. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 11, CPC amendment of prior appropriation: Rachel Heller (Co-chair, Housing Trust) was present and gave a presentation on the proposal to re-appropriate CPA funds from 2018 towards establishment of a Short-term Emergency Rental Assistance program. The Capital Budget Committee and Community Preservation Committee had both recommend favorable action.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 11. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

- Article 12, Home rule petition to validate results of a remote Town Meeting: As the Legislature had acted to allow for a remote Town Meeting, this Article was not strictly speaking necessary; however, Garvin suggested to keep it on the Warrant as a fail-safe.

Motion: To recommend favorable action on Article 12. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

Discussion on Rolling Rally Criteria

Anticipating an increased number of requests to hold 'rolling rally' type events in Town, Garvin had drafted a set of criteria outlining requirements to be followed by potential applicants to ensure the rallies are conducted safely and efficiently. Requirements included: having a fixed route down Concord, looping around Belmont Center; rallies could only be held Saturdays during a fixed time window; if Town resources (DPW/Police/Fire) are required the organizers would agree to cover the costs.

Comments from the Select Board:

- Epstein: 1] Should require requests be made reasonably far in advance – don't want to have to consider very last minute applications. 2] Put a time limit on the rally vs trying to count and limit number of cars (difficult to enforce, how to know who is in the rally?).
- Caputo: 1] Unclear on logistics of providing a cost estimate to the applicant at the time of application - wouldn't the Town have to work with Police/Fire Chief to get an estimate? 2] Would Concord Ave. be closed off completely, or allow other cars to mix in with the rally? Epstein said to give it some thought, but the general sense was it would be difficult ask to completely shut off the street entirely (hard to enforce, would bring traffic to halt).

Garvin would revise the criteria and provide another iteration next week.

Discussion and possible vote on amendment to the Outdoor Dining Regulations as well as discussion and possible vote on outdoor retail opportunities

Glenn Clancy (Director, Community Development) joined the meeting. Clancy had been working on a set of regulations that would allow businesses to expand, if desired, onto the sidewalk and adjacent parking

spaces outside. Clancy was comfortable that these regulations were developed to the point that the Board could vote to approve them, leaving the Town Administrator to handle any unforeseen minor issues that may arise from circumstances related to a given application.

Further, while closure of Trapelo and Common Streets was viewed as not feasible due to the high volume of traffic, Garvin and Clancy had today revisited the prospect of closing Leonard Street, in light of similar measures that had been implemented in other communities, e.g. Moody Street in Waltham. With the agreement of the Fire Chief, the proposal was to close off Leonard while maintaining a lane for emergency access in the middle.

Public comment from Belmont Center business owners Damian Demagistris and Deran Muckjian stressed the importance of having expanded outdoor space available as soon as possible. The Board was keen to approve these measures to help support the business community in a timely fashion.

Motion: To adopt the outdoor restaurant seating COVID-19 standards and the outdoor retail COVID-19 standards, as outlined in the memoranda from Community Development Director Glenn Clancy dated June 4, 2020, with the following changes: underlined addition to the text as follows "...tables must be positioned so as to maintain at least six feet of distance from all other tables, unless a barrier is provided between the tables that is acceptable to the Belmont Health Department."; that these standards are in effect until midnight of Labor Day, 2020, as opposed to November 1, 2020. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

Motion: To implement the closure of Leonard Street, keeping a fifteen foot emergency travel lane in the middle, along the lines that Community Development Director Glenn Clancy provided this evening, and that this closure is in effect until midnight of Labor Day, 2020. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)

Discussion on Payson Park Music Festivals

Tomi Olson (Founder, Payson Park Music Festival) had requested the discussion to get a sense of whether it would be feasible to hold the Festival this year. Her own research indicated that Phase 3 would begin on July 1 (provided there was no spike in cases), and should allow for holding the event so long as social distancing was observed. Olson had also coordinated with potential acts; some were wary about playing, but she had gotten tentative commitments for 6-7 weeks of performances.

Dash asked if the Health Department had weighed in, to which Chin replied that not enough information on the proposal had been received as of yet. Epstein advised Olson to work with the Town Administrator's office to put forth an actionable plan that could be vetted by the Select Board and Health Department. Dash expressed concern over holding the event in the context that many other communities had already cancelled most annually held large social events throughout the summer and fall – did not want the Festival to become a hot spot of infections.

Selection of Future Select Board Meeting Dates

In general the Board reserved the first and third Monday of each month for the next six months, except where holidays or other constraints necessitated a change. The Light Board meeting would be held prior to the second meeting in each month. Looking ahead to Fall Town Meeting, Garvin had been advised by

the Town Clerk and Moderator to avoid October and November due to proximity with the presidential election. Three preliminary dates proposed were September 21, 23 and 30.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Garvin reviewed the Town Administrator's Report:

- Announcement that Fire Chief Frizzell would be retiring at the end of the year. Frizzell was present and gave a statement. Epstein said that Frizzell had written a very thoughtful email concerning the question of a successor – the Board would need to decide soon on a process for finding a new Fire Chief.
- Garvin was planning to take a week's vacation in July and several days in August; she requested that Jon Marshall be appointed as acting Town Administrator during the period in July. Garvin was in progress of preparing a policy that would allow the Assistant Town Administrator to be appointed by default, in cases where she needed to take time off on short notice.
Motion: To appoint Jon Marshall as acting Town Administrator from July 1 to July 6, 2020. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)
- The one proposal that had been received for the Rink RFP had been circulated to the Select Board and School Committee. Internal meeting planned for Thursday to conduct an initial screening evaluation. Caputo noted the minimum criteria had been met, but there were several issues identified that would likely require negotiation with the bidder. The internal working group would suggest how best to proceed.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:

Caputo: Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee met Wednesday, project continues on track. Financial Task Force II had recently been meeting on a weekly basis – as discussed, would plan for a broader joint meeting following completion of Town Meeting. Warrant Committee voted on several Town Meeting article and finalized report to Town Meeting Members.

Dash: Capital Budget Committee voted on the CPA articles.

Epstein: Community Path Project Committee still waiting to schedule the public meeting with engineering design firm Nitsch to get input towards the 25% design proposal.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn at 9:40pm. (Vote passed 3-0, roll-call vote: Roy Epstein, Tom Caputo, and Adam Dash)


Respectfully Submitted,
PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

