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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: January 27, 2021
TIME: 9:54 AM

Meeting Minutes
SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2021
7:00 PM

Approved by
the Select Board on

1/11/2021

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Tom Caputo, and Select Board member Adam Dash were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, Wesley Chin Health Department Director, and Chief of Police James MacIsaac were also present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Council of Aging will hold a four-part program on China (virtual event) on January 12, February 9, March 9 and April 13 at 1:15 pm. The host is John Gardella, former history teacher. To register, please call Beech Street Center at 617-993-2976.
- Belmont Light will hold program on Wednesday, Jan 13 at 1 pm on power outages. Call Beech Street Center at 617-993-2976.
- Cardboard Drop-off Event will be held this Saturday, January 9 from 8 am to 1 pm at the DPW Yard. This is a fee-based service for \$5. The cardboard should be placed in trunk of vehicle. Please bring an ID. This event is for Belmont residents only. Call DPW with more questions.
- Christmas tree pickups will be done by waste management between January 4-14, 2020. Please put tree on curb without a bag.
- The Warrant Committee will be holding a meeting on Thursday, January 7th at 7 pm called "Examining Financial Options for FY22 and Beyond." The purpose of meeting is to explain some of the structural features of the town budget relevant to potential override.
- Roy Epstein made a sad announcement that Jeffrey Wheeler, Senior Planner for Town of Belmont passed away last week. Jeffrey worked for Town of Belmont for 26 years as a devoted and hard-working employee. Patrice Garvin said they have heard from so many people about how kind and giving he was. He was professional, yet added a personal touch to everything on which he worked. A fund has been established in Jeffrey's name to raise funds for a memorial bench to be placed in Town Hall Complex to commemorate and memorialize his life and his role in the Town of Belmont. If you are interested in donating, please contact the Town Administrator's Office.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- October 19, 2020
- December 21, 2020

Motion to approve minutes of October 19 and December 21 as amended. Approved by vote (3-0).

COVID update

Update presented by Wesley Chin, Director of Health Department.

- Chin expressed concern about uptick of positive cases due to holiday week. If you have any reason to believe you were exposed, please stay home if you feel sick and try to keep away from others who are at risk, and also get yourself a COVID test and make sure you answer any calls from local or State contract tracers.
- Chin talked about recommendations for length of quarantine. He advised, if you have ability to quarantine for 14 days, that is the best preventative approach. Shorter quarantine periods of 7 to 10 days are mainly for people who may experience economic hardships from longer quarantines. We have seen local cases where people have tested positive 10 days after exposure.
- He continues to receive questions about availability of vaccine. At this time, he does not have any new information. He is waiting for directive from state. State has plans for people 75+ years to get vaccinated at beginning of second stage in early February. Once he gets information about distribution, he will share with public. For more info, google “when can I get I COVID vaccine in Mass.” and it will take you to website with more info.
- Epstein asked if people could get test instead of quarantine if they have traveled. Chin said that is a good option for people who have traveled, but if you are identified as a close contact for a positive case, he still suggests a 14 day quarantine for most people.

Update on the Police Reform Bill

Chief MacIsaac presented update on bill.

- Governor signed Police Reform bill on Friday. MacIsaac said bill has 87 complex and large sections. He attended a meeting for the Massachusetts Police Chiefs’ meeting last week and there are many questions and concerns regarding what will be asked from different agencies. The bill adds a lot of commissions that aren’t in place yet. By July 1, 2021 police departments will have to be certified against these eight new policies. That will require us to create eight (8) new policies and edit 13 existing policies. The Police Reform bill creates a new agency called the Police Office Standard and Training (POST) and towns will be required to contribute information to this new agency and other commissions in the next six months. MacIsaac said he doesn’t yet know what kind of discretion will be used by committees. As an example, racial profiling is against the law and bill says that communities that are found to have racially profiled based on “data” can be sued or license put in jeopardy. He’s not sure what “data” they are talking about and the new committees will have to determine definitions similar to this.
- Epstein asked if there was anything that conflicts with our current laws and regulations. MacIsaac said there is not anything that conflicts with Town of Belmont laws, and that the law actually adopts a use of force policy similar to Belmont’s existing policy.
- Epstein also asked if there are things that need to be done at local or state level. MacIsaac replied that there will be state organizations filtering down best practices so we won’t be working alone. Some aspects of bill went into effect immediately (use of force), other parts become effective as of July and Dec. 2021.

- Dash asked if there would be any budget implications. Patrice said they anticipate some, but not sure of full impact.
- MacIsaac said that we have to be certified for the eight new policies and that should not be too much of a problem. But development of policies is a challenge in Belmont because we do not have a dedicated person to help us do that due to size of department.
- Garvin said that the costs will be in the interpretation and we have to wait and see. Dash asked about insurance costs and she said there are none that they know of yet. This new bill may wind up increasing court activity which would need to be addressed.
- POST is law enforcement agency, so they can run their own investigations. If Belmont resident wants to lodge complaint, they can go directly to POST and the agency can make decision about how to proceed. State will get inundated with issues ranging from use of force issues to parking tickets. It will be a challenge for State how to manage the volume of requests. The biggest requirement for Belmont is that we need to submit to POST by July 1, all employment history regarding discipline over their entire careers. Then any internal Belmont investigations will have to be submitted in two days to POST.
- MacIsaac said they have already started working on the requirements. He needs to learn criteria for certification on eight new policies. He would prefer that the State created policy rather than each town create their own policy. He's hoping State will have a set policy for all municipalities that will create a standard.
- Caputo wondered if there could be a consortium to draw up a common set of policies. MacIsaac said that this often does not happen in Massachusetts. Each town wants to have their individual policies, but he's hoping that the core policies may not differ too much from community to community.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Accept Committee Resignation from Patricia Groves from the Structural Change Impact Group (SCIG)

*Motion to accept resignation of Patricia Groves from the Structural Change Impact Group.
Approved by vote (3-0).*

Committee Appointments – Structural Change Impact Group

- Jon Marshall announced that there are three applicants for replacement appointment – Brian Antonellis, Norma Massarotti and Vicki Amalfitano.
- Epstein said we don't have a consistent policy about whether we allow candidates to speak on their part for their candidacy; but given the circumstances, he would like to allow the three candidates to speak on their behalf.

1) Vicki Amalfitano expressed that she wants to focus on the unique needs of the town. Overrides and cost reductions are one option, but we have to look for other options and she feels the SCIG could focus on this. She feels Belmont needs other avenues of revenue stream. Currently she serves on the Belmont Cultural Council.

2) Brian Antonellis said that he grew up and lived in Belmont his whole life. As an accountant, he worked for 10 years with state government agencies. He now develops

real estate in New England and would like to look at how to create new revenues for town. He's involved with other towns in his real estate business and he thinks he could add value due to his experiences.

3) Norma Massarotti said she has 30 years business experience with large companies and tech companies. She has lived in Belmont over 20 years. She is interested because the SCIG is diverse from a function standpoint, and includes residents. She feels that finding additional revenue streams is very important. Looks forward to solving problems in non-partisan, collaborative way.

Select Board discussion on Structural Impact Change Group candidates:

- All members of the board agreed that all three candidates are very strong.
- Dash said that because Vicki was a strong candidate for the school committee, and they all voted for her at that time, and because she has already served on one Town committee, he likes her as the top candidate.
- Epstein reported that Norma has been contacting him since late last summer about her interest in area. And with her background in business and technical areas, and plus being long term resident, he believes she would be best candidate.
- Caputo said he wonders if we could get more perspectives from competent residents by creating more opportunities for volunteers on all town committees. He feels that Vicki was impressive on school committee and he would vote for her as top candidate.
- Epstein said even though we don't have unanimous views, he would vote for Vicki. He suggested that the Board could have an informal policy that gives preference to residents who have volunteered at least one time before. Dash said he does that mentally now, and Caputo said that he doesn't want to formalize but he agrees continued interest in volunteering is a good indication of a candidate's willingness to contribute.
- Vicki needs to get a letter from Town Administrator's office and get sworn in by the Town Clerk. Dash noted that the next meeting of SCIG will be January 7th.

*Motion to appoint Vicki Amalfitano to fill vacancy on Structural Change Impact Group.
Approved by vote (3-0).*

Website Renewal Committee Appointment

- Jon Marshall reports that the current Town Treasurer on the committee has asked to be removed. Marshall said that the appointee is happy to continue to support any activities but doesn't want formal involvement.
- Marshall noted that there were originally three names in packet, but because one withdrew, and another member was appointed at previous Board meeting, that this leaves Jeff Hansell as sole candidate. Jeff works with Belmont Media. Marshall said that due to these circumstances, there are two actions that can be made: 1) remove treasurer from charge, and create a business position, 3) keep committee with current eight positions.
- Dash said we could also change the Town Treasurer slot to be just a Select Board appointee, which would require an amendment of the committee's charge.
- Epstein wanted to confirm that this vacancy is only created because of the Town Treasurer's wish to not serve on this committee. He stated that he would like to get this committee off the ground without reopening application process.

- Dash and Caputo think Jeff is a good choice for committee.

1st Motion to amend charge for Website Renewal Committee to replace Town Treasurer or its designee position on said Committee with a Select Board appointee position. Approved by vote (3-0).

2nd Motion to appoint Jeff Hansell as the Select Board designee on the Website Renewal Committee. Approved by vote (3-0)

Discussion and possible vote on emergency assistance rental program (removed from this agenda)

- Epstein noted that the discussion and possible vote on Emergency Assistance Rental program sponsored by Housing Trust for Community Preservation Committee will now be discussed at a special joint committee with the Warrant Committee and Select Board on Wednesday, January 6th.
- Caputo asked if they should be notifying Town Meeting members because this was originally voted by them. Epstein said he has been informed that an e-mail blast will be sent out to Town Meeting members from Ellen Cushman's office. Even though Housing Trust has the legal authority to use funds for 4th month, the desire was that the bodies who originally signed off be consulted to keep everyone on same page.
- Meeting on Wednesday night was set up to involve as many members of Select Board and Town Meeting Members as possible without having to call a Special Town Meeting.
- Caputo clarified that Town Meeting Members will not be able to vote at that meeting, but it is an opportunity for them to speak.

Select Board discussion of town-side adds for override

- Epstein thought it would be a good idea to review this issue that has been addressed in budget meetings and in budgeting for Financial Task Force. Select Board has not specifically discussed what additional FTEs should be considered in override. One example is social worker position at Council on Aging that has been topic of discussion for last few years.
- Garvin reported that the FY22 budget included: 1) Facilities Department, System Manager position at \$106,899; 2) Procurement Manager position (originally under Facilities) will now be in Town budget at \$91,460; and 3) Social Worker position at Council on Aging at \$80,903. Salary lines include family benefits. Budget also includes \$500,000 in nondiscretionary items for capital projects. For FY '23 and '24 we evaluated needs of new High School/Middle School building and identified need for new laborers so one laborer was included for \$50k each year (this estimate does not include benefits). The FY23 and FY24 budget also included additional \$50K in contract services; predominantly driven by cleaning costs for increased footage at high school. Total three-year estimate for override is \$979,252.
- Epstein asked if cleaning services position would also be involved with DPW and Police Department. Garvin said we are looking at extending current contract, and once extended we will go out to bid, and will define adjustment amount later once high school is online.
- The focus of Facilities Manager is the climate control system for high school. Caputo thought we should call it Systems Manager to define technical expertise required. Garvin

confirmed that extra square footage costs goes in town budget. Snow removal of new high school has not been estimated yet. Garvin wants to get more accurate cost once high school up and running. She said she escalated Facilities budget by 2%; they will firm that amount when they get cleaning budget firmed. Garvin confirmed that we have to wait until high school building is fully completed before we can estimate FY24 budget.

- Caputo and Garvin agreed that even though we won't have total idea of needs until school completely built out, we should have a sense of trend after first year.
- Epstein noted that it seems there are a number of vacant senior level positions in Community Development. Garvin said that she has been working with Glen Clancy and they are working on plan to restructure department because with the open positions, this is a good time to reevaluate needs.
- Select Board agreed that these are minimal additions to budget. These changes have been discussed before in these departments. They noted that adding these positions may actually save money in the long run.
- Garvin said when she was evaluating the need for these positions, that she took into consideration their impact on the town in general. For example, the Social Worker may also be able to work with Police Department. Likewise, the Facilities procurement hire may be able to contribute to streamlining procurement on a town-wide basis. The System Manager's primary focus will be on high school, but the position may also be able to help with other energy efficient projects in town. The additions of these positions, will translate to savings for use in non-discretionary capital that can be used to upgrade current infrastructure.
- All agreed that the addition of these positions promises to be money well spent, and the Town has done good job of creating long term cost savings.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

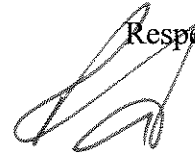
- Caputo reminded everyone that the Financial Task Force is meeting Friday morning, January 8th at 8 am. This is a joint meeting with Select Board.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

- Subhash Malik called to ask where all the money is going in Belmont. He noted that when he first bought his property, the roads were in good condition. He asked about the reasons for an override. He said he received a letter from Community Development and when he brought it to Town Hall, Mr. Clancy denied that he put his stamp on the letter. Mr. Malik feels there is bias in town. He feels that his property seems to have higher taxes than other nearby houses.
- Epstein said assessments should be taken up with Assessor's Office. Mr. Malik said he would do this, but he wanted to let the Board know his concerns with fairness in the assessment process. He claims his next door neighbor pays less than him. Board suggested he undertake the abatement process.
- Epstein asked if Garvin could make arrangements for Epstein and Garvin to meet with Mr. Malik to discuss his issues.
- Garvin said that she and Glen Clancy had a meeting about year ago to try to review Mr. Malik's issues and she is willing to forward paperwork to Board from that meeting.

Motion to adjourn was passed by vote (3-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrice Garvin', written over a horizontal line.

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator