

**APPROVED BY  
THE SELECT BOARD**

*3/29/2021*

Meeting Minutes  
Town of Belmont Select Board Meeting  
Monday, February 1, 2021  
7:00 PM

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 5, 2021  
TIME: 2:57 PM

**CALL TO ORDER**

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, along with the Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, Director of DPW Jay Marcotte, Director of Community Development Glenn Clancy, Director of Highway Division Mike Santoro, Police Chief MacIsaac, and Acting Fire Chief Haley.

**Beech Street Center events:**

- Four-part history presentation by John Gardella, Feb. 9 at 1:15, virtual session, "Modern China."
- Journaling Group (11 meetings). Starts February 3 until April 14.
- Cooks Corner, February 10, Nava and Dana and surprise guest will be baking for Purim.
- Mass. Historical Society, starting February 4 at 11 am, overview of African Americans contributions in Civil War.
- Updates on financial matters in town including taxes and override presented by Mark Paolillo, COA Chair, and Tom Caputo.

**Town Announcements:**

- Structural Change Impact Group virtual public forum will be held on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Ideas about structural change will be discussed.
- Epstein read a statement from Ellen Cushman in memory of resident Stanley Dzierzeski, who passed away on Dec. 31, 2020. He served Belmont for many years as an election warden and as a member of the board of registrars of voters.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

- January 6, 2021 – Joint meeting with Warrant Committee
- January 7, 2021 – Joint meeting with Warrant Committee, School Committee and Financial Task Force II
- January 11, 2021 – Regular Meeting

*Motion to approve amended meeting notes from January 6, 7, and 11, 2021 was passed by vote of (3-0).*

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS**

[None.]

**ACTION BY CONSENT**

APPROVED BY

Public Hearing – National Grid WO #1369299, Grant of Location for New Gas Service to 81 Oliver Road  
[Representative from National Grid was not present.]

- Jay Marcotte said that no accessible gas lines exist at 81 Oliver Road. You have to run 4-inch gas line to tie them into grid. Owner of property of 81 Oliver is Thomas Linden.
- No service at house now. National Grid need to repave street when changes are made. They have to make to specifications of town.
- Opened up to public comments for granted location for new gas service at 81 Oliver Road.
- Nadja Linden, homeowner, clarified that they are converting from oil to gas.
- Mike Santoro said they need to cut sidewalk as well as street. Restoration would involve sidewalk and street repair.
- Work will be done late April or May. Marcotte said this work needs police detail.

*Motion made to approve request for National Grid WO# 1369299 to install and maintain 10 feet of 4-inch plastic main from existing main for new gas service at house at 81 Oliver Road in Belmont. Motion approved by vote of (3-0).*

Public Hearing – Belmont Department of Public Works to Amend Existing Fuel Storage License at the Town Yard off C Street to Change from Underground Storage Tanks to Above Ground Storage Tanks

*Epstein opened the public hearing. Dash made motion to lay the matter of fuel storage installation on the table. Motion approved by vote 3-0.*

COVID Update by Wesley Chin:

- Regionalized vaccination effort underway with Arlington and Lexington. DPH said we could receive more vaccine doses with regionalization.
- DPH is guaranteeing not more than 100 doses per week. Most municipalities are receiving Moderna because they don't have deep freezers. Two weeks ago we held clinic for first responders at Arlington High School. Site will be receiving 100 doses for 75+ residents.
- Belmont Health Department reached out to 135 residents who completed eligibility survey. 78 residents have been registered and have more to call for this week's clinic. Other residents have sought out other vaccine locations. Some residents were able to book with primary care too.
- We will continue with regional approach with 100 doses per week. If we get more, we will plan local larger facilities. We are having meetings to plan larger clinics.
- Chin suggested getting info from DPH website about eligibility. Info on Belmont website as well.
- Sign up is on town's webpage. Click on survey, and it will take you to form. Chin said they are also taking calls at COA and Health Department.
- Nava has offered the use of the town elder bus to transport residents to and from clinic. Contact COA if you need transportation.
- If there is snow day, the Board of Health will reach out to everyone who signed up for that day. If an appointment is missed, they will stay on list, until they get more vaccine.
- Chin announced that the State is guaranteeing second doses.

- Garvin said that if doses increase, then we are going to have to figure out our response. If we need to vaccinate 1000, then we will have to evaluate whether the town has the capability to hold these clinics.

Questions from attendees:

Jennifer Burgess asked whether she should call Board of Health or Town of Belmont and what are the correct website addresses? Go to Belmont-ma.gov and there will be link to COVID 19 survey. At the end you can fill in contact info. Chin said they would try to put survey in a more prominent location on the website.

Judith Feinleib wanted to know how the Board of Health is reaching out after people sign up. Some of us may not have heard, even if we signed up. Chin said that they still have 60 calls to make. Town will contact all the people who have completed survey by next week.

Mark Paolillo reported that there is a COA board meeting at 8:00 pm tonight. He talked to Nava and Wes about possibility of COA board sponsoring call this Friday to answer questions from seniors from our community. Epstein said that if that means more administrative support for Wes, that would be good as long as there are no duplicative applications. Epstein encouraged him to try it and make Zoom link known to everyone. Garvin asked him to connect with her tomorrow.

Public Hearing – Belmont Department of Public Works to Amend Existing Fuel Storage License at the Town Yard off C Street to Change from Underground Storage Tanks to Above Ground Storage Tanks

*Dash made motion to take matter of fuel storage installation off the table. Motion approved by vote 3-0. Epstein resumed the public hearing.*

Epstein said he is still awaiting information on insurance rates so he will hold off a vote until the next meeting. The discussion focused on specific questions raised by abutters.

- We have been working with Weston and Sampson engineers. They have told us that underground tanks would cost an additional \$90K over what Town Meeting approved. Underground tanks must be inspected monthly, but this is not required for above ground. The extra costs for inspection would be \$700 per month.
- Regarding locations other than DPW yard, Epstein said there are no practical alternative sites in Belmont, and incinerator site doesn't have fiber optic service needed for modern tanks. In addition, round trip from the former incinerator site to DPW is four miles and, it's not reasonable to take so much time to send vehicles there. DPW seems to be the best location.
- As far as projected fuel consumption for next 5 or 10 years, since there are no electric alternatives for police cars and heavy vehicles, consumption is expected to remain the same as today.
- Winchester, Newton, Brookline, Melrose, Lynnfield, Marshfield, Sudbury, Swampscott, Saugus and Danvers recently installed above ground fuel tanks. Epstein stated that Winchester has bigger tanks that are closer to residences than the proposed Belmont tanks.
- Lights will be mounted to have minimal impact on abutters.



- Jamie Fair project manager from Weston and Sampson, talked about potential blast radius for tanks in case of explosion. There is no record of a tank exploding. Epstein added he reviewed OSHA records online and there is no instance of tanks exploding.
- Epstein said that Town Meeting voted to approve \$540,000 for tank project. Expectation was always predicated on above ground installation. There is no budget for below ground installation.
- Epstein requested information on whether the cost of insurance for fuel storage tanks is different for above ground vs. underground but has not received answer from insurer yet.

DPW presentation by Jay Marcotte:

- Belmont fuel system replacement project approved \$540K for removal and replacement of tanks. These tanks are single walled and no longer allowed since 2017. [Slides showed existing fuel conditions.]
- Another slide showed schematic of garage and DPW building. The proposed fuel island will pick up residual spills from nozzles. There will be three pumps, one dedicated to police.
- Weston and Sampson has extensive experience in designing 27 of these systems. There are 100 similar tanks in New England. The tank is double walled and fire protected. They can be moved in the future if necessary.
- Ann Marie Mahoney stated that the Capital Budget Committee discussed replacing the fuel tank issue for five years and only received funding from Town Meeting in June 2020.

[Epstein asked that public comments be directed in form of a question and only in an area that has not yet been covered].

Comments from residents:

Jeanne Mooney asked if soil conditions are going to be tested and if tanks are locked when not in use? Marcotte said that Weston and Sampson are doing assessment of soil suitability. If soil is not good, we will put additional gravel bar to prevent settlement. Jamie Fair answered that pumps are locked, and only authorized personnel can get access.

Lisa Oteri said that she is still opposed because we should continue to improve neighborhood, by striving for clean energy, lowering health risks. She feels that covered fuel tanks will increase property value. She feels that it's difficult to have confidence in the process. She said that other towns with above ground tanks have roadways, fencing and more space that separate residential property from tanks. She does not think that comparable examples have been given. Jamie Fair, said that the building height is 16 feet tall so lights would be below 15 feet and they will be dark sky LED so that it will be unlikely that neighbors will see that light.

Raffi Manjikian asked if there are any observed or known leakage in these types of tanks. If so, what would be remediation for soil contamination? Daron Kurkjian from Weston and Sampson answered that they have done environmental testing and there is limited petroleum impact. He said so far, that they have identified limited impacts and plan to do further testing. He was also concerned that there will be more vehicles entering and he was worried about the safety for kids walking to Butler School. Marcotte said the police department has been fueling at DPW for 18 months, so you have seen what full capacity is now.

Judith Feinleib said she is opposed to project. She feels that the use of the incinerator site needs more investigation. If soil remediation is necessary, the costs will need to be projected ahead of time. Turkian from Weston and Sampson said they will be able to figure out how much soil remediation will be needed ahead of time.

Doug Koplow asked if underground is safer than above ground and wanted to know how many underground tanks Weston and Sampson have installed? Jamie Fair replied that from an environmental safety side, the above ground are safer. As far as fire hazard, above and below ground tanks would be the same risk. NFPA has assessed that a safe distance from above ground tanks is 15 feet. The nearest resident is 160 feet away. In other communities we looked at, there is a resident who is 95 feet away. The only time we go with underground is when there is no space.

Richard Madden asked if neighbors could still issue concerns after tonight? Epstein said there will be continued discussion next week because we are waiting on insurance information.

Jean Pierre Eliane Said he lives close to DPW and he's still opposed. He feels there is a safety concern with traffic on C St. He feels that the fire department needs to regulate speed of their trucks. He would like to hear how police can regulate this. He would like to see reduction in speed for outside contractors as well. Epstein said he understands the traffic issue on C St., but it's not fuel related it's just traffic at DPW. However, we can add that on to this project.

[Epstein closed public comment].

Glenn Clancy reported on viability of incinerator site for fuel tanks.

- The former incinerator site requires capping from DEP. We are not ready for that so if relocation has to occur in next few months, cap would not be installed in time. You have to find a place that doesn't require capping at that site. There are only two places to do that. You could put it where former incinerator was, and that will not require capping.
- The 9.4 acres behind incinerator closest to Rock Meadow is owned by town. That was never used as landfill so does not require capping. But he said the drawback for those sites is that DEP would have to approve citing of the operation. That is a three to six month process. Also, both sites are under purview of Conservation Commission. This would be a permanent storage facility and he knows that the Conservation Commission would not be comfortable with this.

#### Discussion by Select Board and other town officials:

- Dash said we just have to amend license. Traffic issues are not part of this today. He thinks we should vote tonight. Epstein said that they have to vote by next week, and he still wants to hear about insurance.
- Caputo can see the value in waiting a week. He said he is interested in hearing answers to insurance question.
- In response to question about frequency of fueling:
  - Marcotte said that the DPW would be filling up all night.
  - Acting Chief Haley said it's very rare for the Fire Department to fuel up at night, only if they had a fire.
  - Chief MacIsaac said that generally three to four vehicles would fill up at the end or beginning of three shifts.
- Epstein said we will wait a week to make decision.

### Discussion on Town Meeting Article to Rename Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day

- Presentation by Belmont High Students, Laura Ovcharova and Alex Fick.
  - California renamed the holiday in 1992. Since then, 175 cities have changed the name.
  - Ten towns in Massachusetts have made change.
  - Legislation at state level is being considered, we want to make it at town level before that time.
  - Columbus committed genocide of indigenous people.
  - He was not the first European to discover America. It was Leif Erickson who discovered North America.
  - The name of Columbus, primes us to white supremacy and imperialism. We have to stop honoring violence he committed.
  - We can't do both Columbus Day and Indigenous Day and this is not an attack on Italian Americans. Indigenous people are invisible, Italians are not.
  - They are asking support from Select Board so that they can bring to Town Meeting.
  - Over 550 have signed petitions and testimony to support this change.

[Epstein asked for resident's comments.]

Kathryn Bonfiglio – Belmont against Racism supports this endeavor. She is revolted by having Columbus associated with Italian history. Belmont should be putting pressure on state to make changes.

Mahtowin Munro introduced herself as the co-leader of United American Indians of NE. She helped to create an indigenous organization working to help bring forward indigenous day. She said groups have been asking since 1970s to get Columbus Day changed. She said the name has a bad effect on everyone. It's easier to marginalize indigenous peoples when we continue to celebrate Columbus Day. This is an opportunity to better appreciate that we can become allies in breaking down institutions.

### Discussion by Select Board:

- Epstein said confronting European colonialism is necessary. Nebraska made it Native American Day and Columbus Day on same day. Challenge to think about Columbus Day and Indigenous People's Day.
- Dash thanked Alex and Laura for the presentation. He thinks with all the surrounding events in the nation, it's important to discuss this. It will go to Town Meeting with or without Select Board approval, and he would like the Select Board to place this article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.
- Tom Caputo would like to hear from a few more people. He thought the student presentation was well done. He feels our collective understanding has changed since he learned American history. He noted that there are questions about procedure regarding whether the Select Board needs to put the article on the warrant.
- Epstein sought clarification whether Indigenous Peoples Day should be established by a vote of the Select Board or a vote by Town Meeting.



- Dash summarized the opinion sent by Town Counsel George Hall, who could not attend the meeting. The Select Board could vote to adopt it by proclamation or that the Select Board could present the question to Town Meeting for a vote. Hall recommended a vote by Town Meeting.
- The proclamation received from Lora and Alex was modeled on Brookline. Epstein wanted to know if draft exists for warrant article? Garvin said that she could put placeholder on town meeting warrant, and then she and George can work on wording.
- Epstein said that we can use draft proclamation and bring it into a form to present at town meeting. Epstein thanked the students for work.
- Dash suggested that we let people who have hands raised talk before we move on to next agenda items. Epstein agreed that he would allow two-minute comments from the people with hands raised. Intermission will follow after the comments have been heard.

#### Comments from attendees:

Sara Bilodeau addressed concerns about how the first part of meeting was prioritized. Now this topic is being pushed off. She feels that the Select Board chair tried to silence the community. When we decide to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day it is specifically for Massachusetts. Celebrating Columbus Day continues to extend the legacy of Christopher Columbus. He enslaved African Americans as well. She feels that Belmont has to become more anti-racist and this is a good reason to come together.

Jennipher Burgess stated that she feels that Chair Epstein has not allowed everyone to talk this week or last week. She said this is the reason we need a task force and a diversity director. She feels too much time was spent at the beginning of meeting on other less important issues.

Heather Leavell introduced herself as the co-founder of Italian Americans for Indigenous Peoples' Day. She says there is responsibility of Italian Americans no longer celebrate Columbus because he was a genocidal monster. We still have Italian American month to celebrate Italian culture. This day has been a misplaced adulation of Columbus.

- Epstein agreed that the Select Board vote to advance this issue to Town Meeting.

*Motion was made to place article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant for 2021 to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day in Belmont. The Town Administrator and Town Counsel will draft said article. Motion was approved by a vote of (3-0).*

#### [Five minute intermission.]

#### Discussion Regarding the Forum on the Upland Road Tragedy and Discussion and Possible Vote to Create a Diversity Task Force

- Epstein said he wanted to discuss the advisability of creating a separate task force as opposed to having the Human Rights Commission to take responsibility of this task force.
- If there is not an agreement about that, we should turn to the language of the charge in front of us that Patrice Garvin developed and see if it meets our purposes.
- Dash would like to model this on the Belmont Business Study Committee. That was a temporary committee of business people in town and a new economic development committee was

created from that temporary committee's suggestions. He feels we need to move the issue of diversity along quickly. There seem to be many people who would like to volunteer. We need to keep momentum going.

- Dash proposed that the 9-member task force would have members from relevant committees and groups, and two residents.
- Epstein commented on language and he thought meeting weekly seems like a lot and the last sentence about the voice vote could be removed from draft. If task force continues until September, he would like to see preliminary and interim reports presented to the Select Board from this task force. Dash and Caputo agreed.
- Caputo agrees with idea of task force. He would like to see draft be more specific about how to reach goals. There are a lot of ideas in the community and a clearinghouse for those ideas would be a productive step forward.
- Caputo read back sentence change to draft charge: "provide observations and give recommendations" should be changed to "provide observations and develop recommendations to the Select Board for steps the Belmont community can take to combat systemic racism and embrace greater diversity, equity and inclusion in Belmont."

[Epstein opened discussion up to the public and reminded everyone to keep comments to two minutes:

- Ade Baptista said he is very supportive of the task force. He hopes it will be fully charged to make strong decisions. It would be nice to find actionable items to bring before Town Meeting in April. Concerned that often the town resists moving forward.
- Kim Haley-Jackson said she also fully supports the task force. She said that at the Belmont Human Rights commission uses only volunteers because they don't have funding. She feels that too often the onus is put on the community to take care of ourselves.
- Michael Collins listed three action items that the Board of Belmont Against Racism would like to see the task force address: 1) Recruit members that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the town; 2) Town officials should be part of this board commitment to hire a director of equity and inclusion as a permanent position in the town Human Resources Department. This work cannot just lie in task forces. In every organization, if it's everyone's job, then it often becomes no one's job; and, 3) Select Board should hear the voices of the committee and the DEI director at Select Board on a regular basis about how people have been affected by racism.
- Bob McGaw feels that it is painfully obvious from the last Select Board meeting that there is a need to have more diversity in the town. He hopes Select Board members will be more responsive than they have in past. There seem to be many people who would like to volunteer. He asked if people attending meeting could have access to the document under review. [Jon Marshall said he will put the document up on the screen.]
- Jennifer Burgess stated that a lot of districts around us have a task force. She agrees there should be someone from the Select Board on the task force. And she would respectfully ask that it not be Roy Epstein. She suggested that there could someone in a similar district on the task force to bring in new ideas.
- Sarah Bilodeau said the task force should be representative of people who are served. Some of the people who have spoken tonight would be good members of the task force. She



encouraged Epstein to pause and consider if there is some way to make amends for cutting off Jennifer Burgess last week when the discussion of the task force arose.

- Evelyn Gomez is in support of the Diversity Task Force. She asks that this be a permanent task force. And she would like to see a permanent committee to come out of the task force. She also supports having a permanent, paid Equity and Inclusion Director for the town. She said the demographics of town are changing and we need to include everyone in our vision moving forward.
- Kara Sassone commented that topics like Columbus Day and the Diversity Task Force are very important and the Select Board Chair should recognize this.

*Motion made to create Diversity Task Force with the makeup and charge proposed with the edits that were made by Tom Caputo and Roy Epstein. Motion approval by vote of (3-0).*

#### Request for Bench Dedication at Grove Street Park

- Benches will be installed in honor of the memory of Narine Van Hal. Funds were raised by residents and the donation was vetted by Recreation Committee.
- The resident group will work with the Friends of Grove St. Park and the Town Treasurer.
- Seetha Burtner started this effort because Narine's son wanted this. She was a Burbank parent. Many neighbors wanted to do this. Narine died after a difficult battle with cancer. Alex and his Dad still live at Houghton St. and they go to that park.

*Motion was made to approve request from Seetha Burtner to place memorial bench in honor of Narine Van Hal at Grove St. Park. Motion was approved by vote of (3-0).*

#### Recognition of Projector Screen Donation to the Town Hall by Brian Saper

- Epstein expressed thanks for Mr. Saper's generosity to the town.
- Saper said this projection screen is like a movie screen. He had gone to many town meetings and Powerpoints were not very visible on small screens. He offered this gift so everyone could appreciate at the meetings at Town Hall Auditorium.
- All Select Board members said it was a great donation.
- Dash said that this could also help with rentability of town hall auditorium to supplement Belmont's revenues.

#### Continuation of Discussion on the Draft Leaf Blower Bylaw

[Tabled until next meeting.]

#### Discussion on the Tax Impact Calculator

- Epstein sent comment to Jon Marshall that the calculator was confusing the way it was laid out. Dash said he had the same comment about the calculator.
- Garvin said this came out of Financial Task Force meetings and was designed to get more info to residents in town about specific impact to property tax. Calculated can be found under Fiscal Year 22 budget info on the Belmont Town website. Jon did walkthrough to help residents navigate the calculator.

- Jon changed the calculator according to feedback. Caputo thanked Patrice and Jon for their help on this.
- Jon walked through the interactive program. He pointed out that this is estimated tax impact. There can be fluctuations after assessment.
- Jon pulled up a recent home sale. Can use drop down or type in address and then it automatically calculates. There is a link included about assessments and he will add link to budget page.
- Jon thanked the finance team and Todd Constantino, the GIS coordinator for his help with this.

#### Discussion on the Override

- Garvin said she met with Treasurer, Chairs of Financial Task Force 2, Warrant Committee, Capital Budget Committee, and School Committee, to discuss the budget if the override was not successful. She reported that these groups came to a consensus on proposed reductions.
- Caputo said that in the event of an unsuccessful override, we won't make only cuts to close the budget gap, and we would rather rely on additional free cash, but that we must also consider Free Cash guidelines. Question is to what degree do we spend free cash and to what degree do we make reductions to FY22 budget. We now have a budget deficit number to plan around, and we have info to put forth a proposed budget for FY22 in the event of a failed override.
- Epstein said that Geoff Lubien and he looked at the Financial Task Force model independently and came to the same conclusions. If the override does not pass, the cuts using a 40/60 split of the deficit would be \$1.5 M from the Town budget and \$2.3M from the School budget.
- Garvin will propose reductions at February 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Dash said it would helpful for the Select Board to actually endorse the override in addition to just putting it on the ballot. The Board agreed to do that next week.

#### SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

- Dash announced that the Structural Change Impact Group is meeting on Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>. A preliminary report will be brought to Select Board on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>. A Public Forum will be held, tentatively, on March 4<sup>th</sup>. They will come back to the Select Board with interim report on March 15<sup>th</sup>. They are currently developing an online portal to add ideas and a matrix to objectively analyze the ideas received.
- Dash announced that the Long Range Capital Planning Committee's goal is to have a long range plan like Arlington going forward, to make sure our assets don't degrade.
- Caputo announced that the Capital Budget Committee discussed a process related to FY22 budget(s) and discretionary capital allocations. The Capital Budget Committee will go through a prioritization exercise in the event of an unsuccessful override and less discretionary capital available.
- Caputo reported that the Belmont Middle and High School project is continuing to conduct monthly business. The project is still on budget and on schedule. Anyone who wants to see the building can look at press photos in the local papers.

*Motion to enter into Executive Session: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion*

*personnel; - Fire Chief Contract. Motion approved by vote of (3-0). The chair announced that the Board would not return to Open Session following the Executive Session.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*



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*PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator*



