

APPROVED BY
THE SELECT BOARD

1/11/2021

Meeting Minutes

TOWN OF BELMONT
SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2021
7:00 PM

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 21, 2021
TIME: 9:18 AM

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. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, Wesley Chin Health Department Director, Chief of Police James MacIsaac, DPW Director Jay Marcotte, Town Counsel George Hall and Council on Aging Director Nava Niv-Vogel were also present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Beech St. Center events:

- “From Abolition to Civil Rights in Music, part 1.” Held on Friday, Jan. 15th, at 1:15 pm, presented by John Clark. Call 617-993-2977 to register for this virtual event.
- “Journaling/Reminiscing Group” sponsored by COA. Weekly virtual events on Wednesdays (11 total) held from Jan. 18 to April 5, 2021. For more information, contact Mackenzie at 617-993-2986.

Cardboard event (update by DPW Director Jay Marcotte):

- Marcotte reported that this was a well-attended event. He counted a total of 348 cars that participated in the event: 211 registered; 137 showed up without registering. He said the cardboard that was collected filled (5) 40-yard containers, 2 dump trucks, and 2 bays that hold snow equipment for an estimated total of 20 tons. If we get 20 tons, then we can break even.
- Epstein said he went down to the event at 9 am and at that time there was small trickle of cars, but at 11 am cars were backed up down the street.
- DPW did great job of keeping things flowing and there were no complaints about blocking driveways. Mr. Santoro was on the site the entire time. Marcotte said during a cardboard event over the past summer that went on for two weeks, they only collected 17 tons, and in this concentrated 5 hours we collected close to 20 tons.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- January 4, 2021

Motion to approve minutes of January 4, 2021 as amended. Approved by vote (3-0).

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS
[NONE]

ACTION BY CONSENT

Discussion on Recommendation to ZBA on Safe Harbor of Land Area for the Town of Belmont

- Last June, Epstein worked with Renee Guo from the Planning Board on a safe harbor calculation based on land area. At that time, they collected data on parcels in Belmont. Their conclusion was that they did not qualify for the safe harbor program. Since that time, Mass. Housing has allowed this project to go forward to the Zoning Board. Once Mass. Housing made that decision, the fate of the project is no longer in hands of the Select Board and now is entirely within the jurisdiction of the Belmont Zoning Board of Appeals.
- Around December 2020, abutters and neighbors of Beatrice Circle requested the data and Epstein sent the data Ms. Guo and he had worked on to them. He explained where the data came from and they then proceeded to do their own safe harbor calculations. In this exercise, they retained counsel, consulted different data sources and adopted different legal theories. This group then called Epstein and asked that the Select Board consider the new calculation. Epstein reminded them that this still needs to be reviewed by Town Counsel and Town Administrator's office. This morning, he received a spreadsheet from this group. The new assumptions are showing that the ratio is north of the 1.5% that is required to qualify for safe harbor designation. The group is asking Select Board to issue a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals to pursue the safe harbor defense.
- This calculation is complicated, there is a detailed set of steps required to perform the calculation in order to meet the criteria set forth by the state agency. He cautioned that you can get different outcomes based on which assumptions and data are used. The analyses put forth by residents are internally consistent in that they reflect assumptions made. There are still some issues with the data they used, that may be able to be remedied, but results need tweaking.
- Epstein doesn't think it's feasible for Select Board to make recommendations because we haven't had enough time to review what they have done and we don't have the authority or expertise. That is something typically done by the Town Administration and Planning Department in consultation with their counsel. He reiterated that he doesn't think it's appropriate for Select Board to embrace or recommend.
- Dash agrees that they don't have a role in this, but he wants to make sure that the town makes the decision in good faith. The Zoning Board needs to make decision. He supports using Town resources to see if we really are in safe harbor zone. He affirmed that the safe harbor bar is a hard bar to meet. If we are designated a safe harbor zone, then there are implications beyond Beatrice Circle that impact housing policy so we need to get these calculations done accurately. We should run numbers, but it's not a simple task. We also don't want to pressure Zoning Board, since they are appointed by Select Board. He supports using town resources to validate what the Zoning Board requests.
- Caputo is in general agreement. He commented that when first heard about the situation, it seemed like this was straight forward. But he now is aware that this sounds like it a

complex exercise. He agrees that it is legally the Zoning Board of Appeal's decision to make. But Select Board should provide them with any help they request. He said he would be supportive in including Town Counsel and Town Administration to see if they can get the right number.

- George Hall, Town Counsel, commented that there is a deadline that runs from the opening of ZBA hearing (which is soon) and 15 days to assert their request. The residents who put forth the analysis know there is a close deadline and they perceive that the decision may need to be made tonight. He said he received information late and he discussed this with the Chair of the ZBA. The plan, subject to agreement, is to schedule a special meeting to discuss this issue next week. That will provide Glen Clancy, Hall and Garvin more time to evaluate the request. It will also allow ZBA members to read the plan. If ZBA cannot make decision tonight, he thinks there is time to do it before January 26, before the notice deadline.

Questions/Comments from Town Residents:

- Max Colice commented that he is a neighbor, but not direct abutter and he is a lawyer, and he was involved in making the safe harbor calculation. He cautioned that defense needs to be raised in time to meet Jan. 26th deadline. He feels that everyone agrees that it is a complicated issue but no one can declare with certainty that the defense should be waived. Just because the safe harbor defense is asserted, doesn't mean it has to be exercised. ZBA can still hear project plans and grant permit, but we do need to schedule public comment in time to meet deadline. Hopefully the ZBA can schedule a meeting in time to hear public comments before deadline to get the support of the Select Board.
- Epstein emphasized that the Select Board and Zoning Board are making the best effort possible in next two weeks to study and take public comments, but he said the Select Board can't recommend a certain course of action.
- Hall is leaving this meeting soon to meet with Zoning Board and they will be discussing this issue.
- Caputo said although not endorsing, we are encouraging our town resources to leverage this exploration of safe harbor defense.
- Epstein said Renee and he are willing to share their calculations with whomever asks.

COVID Update by Wesley Chin

- The Health Department is getting a lot of questions about COVID vaccination. The Health Department is currently working on updating plans to hold a large scale vaccination plan for residents. But he said they won't have role until Phase 3, when general population is being vaccinated. They are trying to keep residents updated.
- He announced that over last 12 days they had to quarantine 7 local youth teams. Students have to abide by 14-day quarantine. Health Department is having discussions with the Recreation and School Department to see whether they will need to put in process a plan to pause indoor sports activities. Our contact tracers are contacting the parents of team members.
- Epstein asked about the cause of spread. Chin said that spread was caused by teams who use town permitted facilities and one high school team. He said the Health Department

can't share info about which teams are affected, but contact tracers give information to parents. The town of Belmont currently has three contact tracers working on regular basis.

- He also reported that they are still getting mask complaints from Cushing Sq. and Leonard St.
- General public vaccination could be as early as April 2021.

Comments from Residents:

- Mark Paolillo, Chair of Council on Aging Board, asked if there is possibility to have vaccines available at the Center of Aging. Most of the people asking questions about vaccinations are seniors. Maybe we should do more to communicate to senior community through COA? Many are over 75 years of age. Chin said that the town put out an announcement on town website about phases. Senior vaccines are scheduled for beginning of Stage 2. Chin said the Health Department plans to partner with the COA. He said Nava and Dana from the COA want to be involved with the rollout process. They reached out to CVS and CVS replied that they do not yet have set plans for the vaccination process.
- Lieutenant Daley is willing to leaflet doors of seniors if they don't have internet. Paolillo said he would like Nava, Dana and Wesley Chin to discuss the role our health department can play as a vehicle for senior information dissemination. He would like to see if Belmont could provide more information and help to facilitate direct support. Chin said he would be willing to meet with Mark about this.
- Epstein said Paolillo should let them know how they can help.

Vote to Approve Contract with Stiles Company, 922 Pleasant Street, Norwood, MA, for Water Meters and Replacement Parts, for a Sum Not to Exceed \$150,000.

- Jay Marcotte explained that Smart Meters have been completely installed and surplus funds remain from this capital accrual. The DPW would like to use this surplus to buy more meters going forward. Stiles has one vendor in region and they will be the only distributor for Honeywell. Therefore, Stiles is the sole proprietor of this item. The business model is that Honeywell supports and Stiles supplies. They have performed well so far in Belmont. Marcotte said we don't need to bid this out, because they are the only vendor.
- The surplus savings equals about \$180K. He would like to use a majority of these funds for replacement parts. Caputo asked if there is possibility that equipment could become obsolete. Marcotte said that they have a shelf life of 20 years. Meters 15 years and older, have already been replaced so having replacement parts on hand would allow DPW to perform repairs and replacements on an ongoing, regular basis.

Motion made to approve contract with Stiles Co., Norwood MA for water meter replacement parts for use not to exceed \$150K. Approval passed by vote (3-0).

Vote to Appoint Member to the Council on Aging (COA)

- Epstein said at the last Select Board meeting, they voted to accept Dr. Michael Cahalane's resignation to the COA. Epstein wants to clarify to residents at large that the Select Board uses "rough justice" when multiple, quality candidates are available. The process that is used is made with the hope that the interests of the town are adequately served. When we are identifying Police of Chief, or department heads, the Select Board has more rigorous practices, but for citizen volunteers, we do the best we can. When the Select Board is making appointments for new committees, there is generally less feedback to base our decisions on. But when filling positions in existing committees, generally the chair's preference is given weight. This evening, there are two candidates for position on COA and both seem qualified. In this instance, where the director of the Council on Aging expressed preference, the Select Board gave deference to that preferred candidate.
- Dash said there are town committee rules and those rules state that chairs can offer their preference for the appointment process. No one is bound to accept their preference, but often these preferences take into consideration traits like reliability and other work experience.
- Caputo said that the Select Board often talks about the process of appointing new members to volunteer positions. When there are multiple applicants, he likes finding ways for non-selected candidates to participate in another committee. The other candidate also put in for Human Rights Commission. He assured people that once you get in our database, you don't leave!
- It was pointed out that the appointment that is being voted on tonight is for six months only until election in June 2021.
- Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of COA, said that the recommendation was made by vote at the COA Board. It is not just her personal recommendation. She wanted to point out that the COA board was torn between the two candidates. She said she would personally welcome that the candidate who was not selected, who has background in public health to help with the upcoming vaccination effort to help coordinate clinics for seniors.

*Motion made to appoint Andrea Pascale for term that terminates June 30, 2021 on COA.
Approved by vote (3-0).*

Discussion and Possible Vote on a Senior Parking Pass

- Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of COA explained the request. The members of the age friendly Advisory Council along with Lt. Daley and Officer Garabedian of traffic police identified a need for seniors to access meters. They feel this would encourage them to come to Belmont Center where parking is challenging. It's hard for seniors to deal with metered parking in bad weather. They know that in Watertown, a program exists for seniors to register for parking permits to park in their town center. Nava said she researched that program and after conversation with Belmont Police and Town Treasurer (who handles parking ticketing) they came up with plan on how to administer program.
- The plan includes approval for parking permits to be administered through COA. Seniors register and pay \$5 per year and they get a placard which entitles them to two hours parking in one spot. COA would keep the info about who was registered and share with Police Department and Treasurer's office to enforce who is exempt from ticketing.

- Epstein concurred they he wants seniors to patronize our programs and stores. The seniors make up a significant part of Belmont, but he's concerned about putting in place a blanket program for all seniors since it is a significant fraction of Belmont. He would like to see a more targeted, means tested idea be reviewed. He would like to see them find a way to identify the most needy seniors. He said that \$5 for year is almost free.
- Nava said for this program, the board agreed on 65 years and over for the eligibility criterion and both disabled people and seniors would be eligible.
- Epstein feels that if someone has severe mobility problems, they could get a handicap sticker. He doesn't agree with giving such a benefit to someone just because they ask without showing needs.
- Dash said the cost is minimal, and not many people are going to apply, and since the Town Treasurer and Advisory Board backs it, he would endorse the idea. Dash said it's not really a matter of money, but is more a matter of being an age friendly community and getting people over 65 out of the house and helping the Belmont economy. Garvin added that supplying passes would not be a major loss of revenue.
- Caputo said he supports creating an age friendly community. He suggested framing the program as a pilot and then reevaluating, with acknowledgement that we could tweak it in six months. He thinks it's important to set the age criterion at the right level.
- Garvin said that as she was investigating this idea, she heard two concerns: 1) increase in administrative work for COA; 2) program may create competition with business owners; business owners currently pay \$65 per month for employees to park so we have to be prepared that business owners may want discounts as well.
- Epstein likes the idea of a pilot. Dash and Garvin agree that the pilot should be established for a year.
- Nava said they plan to simply use a colored piece of laminated paper for the permit. The permit would include license plate number to connect to vehicle.

Comments from attendees:

- Mark Paolillo (Chair of Council of Aging Board) said that the Select Board raises some good points. Watertown's program has no exceptions and the age criterion is over 65. If we wanted, we could raise age to 70. He noted that he is hearing from a number of seniors who are concerned about the upcoming override. Even though a number of them live in valuable homes, they still are on fixed incomes so he feels there is more we need to do for this population. If we change the eligibility cut off to 70 year and over, then it may work better. He likes the idea of pilot program for year. He feels that the majority who apply will be in real need.
- Dash asked Paolillo if he was suggesting that we bring up the age cutoff question to the COA board. If there is majority support on Select Board, we could go back and make the cutoff 70 years and over.
- Epstein asked what the fee for the sticker is in Watertown. Nava answered that she thinks it's less than \$5. But she reminded that Watertown has many resources and commercial taxes. Epstein would be happy to retain the 65 years and over eligibility for \$5 with one year pilot. Nava said that it will take awhile to roll this out, because their volunteer capacity is short staffed. If surge goes down, then maybe they could roll this out in a couple of months.

- Dash said that April 1 would be a reasonable rollout date.
- Caputo asked if we could color code flyers with a different color every year. He thought that maybe we should approve now as pilot, and hopefully it could be available as soon as COA is fully staffed.
- Dash said Paolillo could get back to us about enforcement. If someone parks in metered space, with special permit and they don't pull a receipt from meter, how will the time stamp work? Garvin said she would work with Chief MacIsaac on the monitoring details.

Motion to approve a senior Parking program from April 1, 2021 to Sept. 31, 2021. Open to anyone 65 and over, parking space is limited to 2 hours for fee of \$5 per year. Approval made by vote (3-0).

Vote to Accept a Monetary Donation from Brian Saper for the Purchase of a Large Projector Screen for Use in the Town Hall Auditorium

- Garvin reported that before the Police Department moved into new quarters, Mr. Saper had approached town about this donation. Now that the police are moving back in, and once all storage is out of auditorium, the projector screen could be installed and they could now make use of this projector.
- The Police are expected to move out of the auditorium in late February, early March.
- [The group waited for Brian to expound on his donation but he could not get onto Zoom meeting to talk due to his internet connection.]
- Epstein read the specs from their handout and described the donation as a gigantic projection screen for Town Hall with a cost of \$13K and includes a hanging kit worth \$500.
- Epstein said he would commit to having Mr. Saper come back at next Select Board meeting to talk about his donation.

Motion made to accept monetary donation of \$13,934.56 from Brian Saper for purchase of large projection screen and mounting kit to use in Town Hall auditorium. Further move to have permanent acknowledgment plaque in Mr. Saper's name installed in the auditorium to commemorate the donation. Motion approved by vote of (3-0).

Update from Lisa Gibalerio, Program Coordinator of the Belmont Wellness Coalition

- Epstein said he asked Lisa to attend the meeting to inform everyone about her work on the Belmont Wellness Coalition. He said he was originally introduced to her as the note taker for the Warrant Committee. She has since moved on to other pursuits in public health as the Coordinator for the Belmont Wellness Coalition
- Lisa said she had presented an overview on the Wellness Coalition for the Select Board in 2018. She thanked Epstein for the introduction. She explained that the Wellness Coalition is a program of Wayside Youth and functions as a family support network. She began working for the coalition in 2017. Wayside has started coalitions in Waltham, Watertown and Brookline. Lisa received a 5 year, \$625K grant in 2018 to create the coalition for the Town of Belmont. She said she will be reapplying for same grant. The

grant funds her salary and the mission of a drug free community. The goal of the grant is: 1) lowering youth substance abuse for Grades 7-12; and, 2) facile communication about mental health related to risk for substance abuse. In her role, she meets regularly with the School, Police, Fire and Health Departments as well as library. This past year, she reported that she created 27 videos for parent education and pivoted to COVID 19 issues once the pandemic hit. The Coalition undertakes a youth risk survey every 2 to 5 years in Belmont. She says that the Coalition is constantly out in the community and produces tip sheets for parents. Parents can come ask us just about anything related to the youth population. The coalition has a website with lots of info and resources and offers one-on-one consultations free of charge.

- Epstein asked if they use volunteers. Lisa answered that the Coalition is made up of volunteers except for Lisa and one other Wayside employee and that they would like to have more town and/or resident involvement. There are parents, clergy member, school resources officers and school nurse currently working with the Coalition, but they are always short staffed.
- The website for the Coalition is: Belmontwellness.org.
- The Board thanked Lisa for her work in the community. She said it will be interesting to see the results in the next survey this Spring, since it has not been done since 2012 so it will be interesting to analyze the pandemic's effect on youth. She said that the Coalition frequently presents at the School Committee meetings and she would welcome the opportunity to continue to make presentations at the Select Board meetings. We have survey we just put out on social and emotional learning that we will be analyzing and disseminating soon.

Town Administrator Report

- Garvin reported that when the ZBA meeting was posted, Belmont Media was asked to televise it along with webinar from 90 Beatrice Circle. But that the webinar was set up after public notice had already gone out. People were being locked out because the webinar had hit capacity. An announcement was made that anyone who didn't need to actively participate could live stream or watch on tv to reduce the number on the webinar, but many people were still left out. Belmont Media will now be coordinating and exercising the webinar, and increasing size capability moving forward. She is bringing this up at the Select Board, so members are aware in case they receive phone calls about the issue.

Annual Town Meeting Update

- Garvin had meeting with Moderator, Town Clerk, School Superintendent, Chair Epstein, and Chair of School Committee to discuss meeting schedules for Town Meeting to prepare for the possibility of continued remote meetings. Legislation that allows us to do remote meeting ends sometime in March. She anticipates that the town will have remote meeting in March, but she said they will put in place a Plan B, in case Town Meeting can't be held remotely. Town administration is starting to build the warrant and she will bring the opening of warrant to February Select Board meeting.

Proposed dates for Segment A: May 3, May 5, and May 10 and if needed, May 12.
Proposed dates for Segment B: June 2, June 7 and June 9, fourth meeting TBA.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORT

- Dash reported that the Structural Change Impact Committee will bring preliminary report to the Select Board meeting on February 8th.
- Caputo gave updates for Financial Task Force 2. They are meeting two times this week. He said they are working to refine and make recommendations. Their meeting with Select Board is scheduled for Jan. 15th at 8 am to move process forward. He said they are starting to get closer to concrete recommendation.
- Caputo noted that the High School/Middle School Building Committee is meeting this Thursday, January 14th at 8am. It is their 112th meeting. The Building Committee was given tour of new school building and it looks great. Wall and windows are now being installed and you can get sense of teaching and common spaces. To confirm, we are still on budget and on time for September opening.

Motion made to enter Executive Session and 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. Approval vote passed (3-0).

Next Meeting: Monday, January 25, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,



PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

