

Approved by
the Select Board on:

10/18/2021

BELMONT SELECT BOARD

REMOTE MEETING

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

7:00 PM

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: October 25, 2021

TIME: 3:10 PM

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Roy Epstein and Select Board member Mark Paolillo were present, along with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, and Director of Community Development Glenn Clancy.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Community input discussion of fuel tanks in Belmont

Dash announced that this is the second forum on the fuel tanks. The slides presented by Glenn Clancy tonight are available on the Town website.

Clancy gave a background of the fuel tanks project. The project involves discussion about the best way to replace two aging, single-walled fuel tanks that were installed in November 1986. This forum will focus on consumption and department operations. There will be a third forum about the design of the project and financing issues.

Recommendations

- Implementation of a three-month trial that will allow the departments who have vehicles that use fuel, to use offsite gas stations for unleaded fueling from the period of 6 am to 10 pm. The DPW yard would continue to supply fuel to the Police Department during off hour times because there is not a 24-hour station in Belmont available.
- All diesel fuel operations will remain at the DPW. There will be no change for the big vehicles that use diesel fuel. The purpose of the trial is to decide whether we want to move unleaded fuel offsite.

General Consumption Data

- All 12 departments use unleaded gasoline, and eight (8) out of the 12 departments use diesel fuel. The report included consumption data for the period of FY20 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020).
- Clancy said he looked at the time period outside FY20 and assessed the impact from COVID for the DPW department because they are the largest consumer of unleaded fuel and the second largest consumer of diesel fuel.
- The largest consumer of unleaded fuel is Belmont Police Department. The largest consumer of diesel fuel is the Belmont Highway Division.
- There are nine private gas stations in Town that would be available to provide unleaded gas during the trial period. Wex, Inc. provides municipalities with the ability to purchase fuel from private companies.

- Regular business hours are considered to be 6 am to 10 pm. Most gas stations are open at that time.
- 85% of all unleaded fuel use by Town vehicles is done during regular business hours. Belmont Police were the most significant users of fuel during offsite hours (after 10 pm and before 6 am).

Analysis of lost productivity with offsite fuel operations

- Only three (3) departments out of 12 store their vehicles at the DPW yard (Highway, Water and Belmont Light). Clancy collected data to analyze the lost productivity for departments that don't store their vehicles at DPW.
- Of the three departments that park vehicles at DPW yard, only one vehicle from each department pumped fuel more than once per month between the period of 6 am to 8:30 am. Vehicles are not fueling up every morning. This is important because this opens up opportunities for fueling up at private gas stations.
- For Police vehicles, the data indicate that it may be more convenient to fuel up at private gas stations. Clancy said that it looks like it would also be more convenient for departments that don't store vehicles in the DPW yard, to fuel up offsite.
- Clancy said the results from the report indicate that there should be no loss of productivity with offsite fuel operations.

Financial Impact: Private gas vs. consortium

- The Town currently purchases fuel through a consortium with a good bid price that is usually below market price for that year. The price does not include state taxes.
- The offsite company that we will be using for offsite fueling, includes state tax and discounts the federal tax.
- The data shows that if the Town has been buying gas offsite from 2006 to 2021 at private gas stations, the Town would have lost \$4600 annually on average or just under \$13K for a median loss.
- If we only purchase one tank, there will be savings for initial installation costs and for maintenance. Clancy said he plans to revise costs in his reports based on the number of tanks installed.

Storm event impacts

- Data showed that even during recent past snow events, the predominant amount of fuel was pumped during business hours (6 am to 10 pm), rather than off hours.
- There still needs to be a place to pump on off hours. During snow storms, the report showed that more unleaded fuel was used than diesel.
- Clancy's report used four-month, pre-COVID consumption data, that includes snow storm data. Assumptions were made about the amount of fuel used from November to February and he feels that if offsite fuel is used between 6 am and 10 pm, data show that a well managed fuel supply at the DPW would be adequate, even with a snow event.
- Clancy said that the future integration of electric vehicles will be included in the final analysis. However, even though there will be a savings due to fossil fuel savings, vehicle turnover will be slow.

- The next Forum will discuss the placement and required size of tanks, plus cost alternatives. Clancy said he will work with Weston and Sampson to see what other Towns are doing. He will be continuing to update data in the report over the next three months while trial is being undertaken.
- The third Fuel Tanks Public Forum is expected to be held late January into February.

Dash thanked Clancy for this comprehensive and important report. He opened comments to the Select Board.

SELECT BOARD COMMENTS

Epstein said the report is excellent. Major snow events are important not just because they influence the average but also to prepare the Town for worst case scenarios. He feels that if we don't get a blizzard in three months, then the trial should be extended. Clancy said he would be willing to extend the trial in the event there were no snow storms during the trial period.

Paolillo asked about when the current insurance on the tanks terminates. Garvin said insurance terminates in Summer 2022. Paolillo wondered if we could evaluate other options so we don't have to wait until the end of the trial period. Clancy said he will be able to run down three or four scenarios and they would drop out inefficient scenarios by end of trial period.

Clancy said he would like to see the trial period start mid-October, if given permission by the Select Board. There is an application process and he would like to get permission as soon as possible.

Dash said there are 58 people at this forum. Sizing of the tanks should be based on worst case scenario. He notes that our current fuel consortium has a fixed cost and it makes it easier to budget. Private gas consumption will not be as static so it may leave us more vulnerable to supply and cost.

The following reports are available on the Town website at www.belmont-ma.gov:

1. A Report on Fuel Consumption FY20
2. FY20 Fueling Events - Excel
3. Fuel Financial Study - Excel
4. Fleet List with Fuel Type
5. Snow Events 2019 - 2021 - Excel
6. All Data with Snow Storms - Excel

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Robert McGaw said it was an impressive presentation. He said that Mark Jameson, Belmont gas station owner, told him he would be willing to stay open during snow events and he said he could offer a better price to the Town. There may also be a way to get rebate from federal taxes.

Clancy replied that a 1.5% rebate is provided by Wex Inc. Wex is on the state bid list and they are on line with procurement laws and we don't have to go out to bid for each offsite gas station. He said he will follow up about private stations having fuel available during snow events.

Alison Lenk, Town Meeting member, thanked Clancy for his presentation. She agrees that it would be prudent to extend the trial length.

Michael McNamara, Town Meeting member, had three areas of concern:

- What about competition between gas stations if we favor one gas station over the other?
- If there is a big storm what if everyone is going to a gas station, and they can't get in front of Town vehicles?
- We have full control of DPW, but we don't have full control of the offsite stations.

Lisa Oteri appreciated the analysis. She felt it would be better for evaluation accuracy to use a productivity/data collection report instead of the qualitative survey. She hopes that the evaluation tools will be designed properly. She feels we need to include in the above ground tank evaluation the appropriateness of being near residential property. She would like to see special rates being negotiated from private gas stations.

Clancy replied about unfair competition. He said he does not want to mandate where Town employees should go to obtain fuel. Because of the way gas stations are distributed in Town, there is not a concern that fueling will only occur at the same gas stations.

He said he wants to work on developing a good survey. Wex, Inc. will be supplying analytical data to the Town. The reason he prefers not to go to a six-month trial is because he wanted to get info before the budget is drafted for Spring Town meeting. He confirmed that any recommendations for above ground tanks, will include the 300-foot requirement. Dash said that since the insurance on the tanks runs out in Spring we need to move quickly on the analysis and further discussion.

Norma Massarotti, Town Meeting Member, said the report was well done. She suggested that an estimated timeline be shared in any communications and documents so everyone has a common understanding of the issues. On the supply side, she would like to know what the assumptions are that lead to the decisions about underground vs. above ground tanks.

Massarotti would like to see options listed separate from the recommendations. Then when we have the public forum we can focus the discussion on options. She also understood that going to Watertown public facilities was not feasible. Is that still true?

Jay Marcotte said he talked to the Public Services Director in Watertown and he said that he would not be able to accommodate the increased burden of additional vehicles from Belmont.

Judith Feinleib said it was a superb report. She is in favor of the trial. She said Clancy is good at building trust with the community and this report helps to build trust. She cautioned that he should continue to operate independently. She hopes he won't be influenced by others.

Clancy said he is not being influenced by others, but he often communicates with others. He said he has a preconceived idea of the methodology planned, but he is willing to use people's expertise. He commented that this report has entailed a lot of work and it's not possible to do this with every project in Belmont.

Judith Ananian Sarno, Town Meeting member, voiced her support in favor of the trial. She feels this is a once in a lifetime chance to explore fueling alternatives. The tanks are insured with monthly inspections, but they are near the end of their useful life. She suggested they use this time wisely to do proper planning when not in crisis. She also enforced the importance of including climate action in the plan. Belmont's gas stations are all close together in proximity and that will help to make this plan viable. Let's lead Belmont in well-planned, fiscally conservative decision making. We shouldn't have to spend money on fuel storage that may be obsolete in 10 years.

Ann Marie Mahoney, Chair of the Capital Budget Committee, thanked Glenn for his work. Unfortunately she said the plan is being advertised negatively by Citizens for Fiscally Responsible Belmont. They put out information that was inaccurate about the Capital Budget Committee. She said this project cannot move forward without factual information. She said that anyone is welcome to contact her with questions so she can supply accurate information.

Chris Grande, Town Meeting member, thanked everyone involved. Doing data collection is a lot of work. It reflects strong leadership in the Select Board. He is excited that we can do something creative that tries to save money. He supports a test period. He asked if it is feasible to have a smaller tank for standby use for emergency situations? He would like to see all the options available so we can be creative.

Clancy confirmed that all the options are being considered.

Bob Sarno said he knows how hard it is to put numbers together. The issue around the tanks is how large a tank we need for different types of fuel and whether tanks should be above or below ground. He understands the importance of diesel fuel remaining at the DPW, but he said maybe we could break vehicles into different groups by size to see if some diesel vehicles could use private gas stations. He advocates that the trial be comprehensive enough so that we can dig deep into data and options.

Clancy said there are three stations that offer diesel in Belmont but not all may be certified by Wex. He did not look at types of vehicles in his report and he is always open to looking at data again.

Ade Baptista, Town Meeting member, supports the trial and he appreciates the energy spent on it. He would like to see an extended trial until the end of March. He asked if the tank size could be reduced based on the trial? He wondered if we could ask all gas stations to open earlier?

Kathy Keohane suggested that unleaded fuel use could be grouped by routine vs. special. It seems like routine use could be satisfied by offsite. Are we exploring other options for the exception conditions? She asked why we are not considering gas stations outside of Belmont.

Clancy said the Chief of Police said there are problems with officers using out-of-town gas stations.

Deborah Tallanian talked about above ground tanks being 300 feet from residences. She said she read the rules and this is true of below ground tanks as well. The height of both below and above ground tanks is the same, but length increases. She asked if they looked to see if there are any other trials that are being done in other municipalities? Garvin said Dedham has been doing offsite fueling for 20 years and it was successful, but Dedham has 24 hour gas stations.

Marie Warner, Town Meeting member and member of Citizens For Responsible Belmont (CFRB), said CFRB stands by their comments in the newsletter today. She said there was good info in Clancy's report tonight. In the newsletter they referred to an email from former Chief Frizzel. She thinks he should be contacted.

Clancy said he did contact former Chief Frizzle, but he said one of the reasons he agreed to take this job on was that he would only look forward. The Chief was looking more historically. Garvin announced that no one with a car allowance fuels up in the DPW yard.

Phil Thayer, Town Meeting member and Chair of Sustainable Belmont, agrees with Bob Sarno that if the majority of diesel vehicles are not large and could fit in a private gas station, that they should be included in the trial.

[Dash closed the public portion of the meeting.]

Possible discussion on fuel tanks and possible discussion and vote on trial program for offsite fueling for vehicles

Epstein commented that everyone seems to agree that the trial is a good idea. He said that COVID is still an issue and cut through traffic is still down significantly. This issue should be considered in the trial. He feels that we only need one more snow event this year in order to get accurate data. He doesn't think we should prolong the trial just for that reason. The background work and analysis needs to be completed before the summer, because the one-year insurance lapses in July. He said if the policy is not renewed on the 40-year old tanks, the Town would be vulnerable. In order to get this wrapped up by May Town Meeting, we should complete our report by February.

Paolillo appreciated the comments from the residents. He suggested the trial period could be extended from October 15 to February 15.

Dash thinks we should start the trial with a three-month period and then change later. Clancy said they have the ability to view data pretty quickly through Wex and this allows flexibility in decision making.

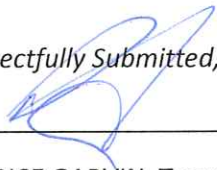
Clancy said he was willing to include smaller, diesel pick-up trucks in the trial. A significant amount of diesel is used by these smaller vehicles. Clancy said he wants to do further research on diesel use.

Epstein asked whether Clancy expected the survey to be answered directly by employees or if department heads would be submitting a memo about the experience based on employee feedback? Clancy said the survey is aimed at the end user. Epstein said that it would be a good idea for Department Heads to also weigh in on the decision. Clancy said he will be working with Lisa Oteri to develop the best survey tool.

Motion was made for approving recommendation for an initial 3-month trial period for offsite fueling for unleaded gasoline, with the understanding that the Director of Community Development may come back to the Select Board with changes about the diesel issue. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Motion to adjourn was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,



PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

