

APPROVED BY THE SELECT BOARD

2/27/2023

Select Board Meeting

Monday, January 23, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

7:00 PM

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 8, 2023
TIME: 9:02 AM

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order by Chair Mark Paolillo. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Select Board member Roy Epstein were present, along with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin and Assistant Town Administrator/Financial Jennifer Hewitt (remote).

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Staying Active in Winter, January 27th at 1:15 PM at the Beech St. Center. Presented by Melanie Hudson, DPT. Call 617-993-2270 to register.
- Life Transitions Binder series on January 31st at 1:15 PM at the Beech St. Center. Presentation by Sandra Batra about creating a life transition binder. Call 617-993-2270 to register.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

[NONE.]

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Price Increase for Town Counsel, Anderson & Kreiger
Garvin read the new rates as outlined in e-mail from George Hall. The new rates would take effect as of July 1, 2023. Select Board members agreed that these rates were reasonable and noted that Anderson & Kreiger had not increased rates for seven years.

Bill Anderson asked how long these rates would last? Select Board said these are the rates for the next fiscal year and if there is an unreasonable increase next year, they can put the legal services out to bid.

Motion was made to accept the price increase for Town Counsel, Anderson and Krieger as presented. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

- Discussion and possible vote on Screening Committee for Superintendent
Garvin announced that Roy Epstein volunteered to be the Select Board member on the Screening Committee for Superintendent. Dash and Paolillo agreed that Epstein's appointment makes sense since he is currently the School Committee liaison.

Motion was made to appoint Epstein as Select Board liaison for Screening Committee of the School Committee. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

- FY2024 Budget Update – Balance of Reserves

Garvin said that the Select Board had requested a proposed use of reserve balances ratio at the last budget summit. Garvin displayed slides about the reserve balance and Hewitt explained the options.

Hewitt said without transfers, free cash would be \$7.45M and that is within the required target range. She said changes will be in the free cash carryover. No additions will be made to general or capital stabilization funds. The base revenue allocations for free cash for FY23 is \$6.88M. She talked about how the reserve ratio is affected by the free cash carryover.

Paolillo asked how we know how much free cash we can devote to 2023 budget?

Epstein said the most recent fund balance is from June 30, 2022. FY23 fund balance won't be available for this exercise.

Paolillo asked how we get to the comfort level of using the \$4M in free cash and how they can determine if it aligns within reserve and free cash guidelines if financial statement for FY23 won't be available until the fall?

Geoff Lubien, Warrant Committee Chair, confirmed that the construct used by the Town Administrator's Office is the same construct used in the Financial Task Force II. He said as long as they are within 10% of the guideline for the key three funds, he feels comfortable with the projection.

Option 1: \$6.88M free cash

Option 2: Additional \$4M in free cash

Option 3: Additional \$3M in free cash.

Once we get FY23 free cash replenishment, the percentage of free cash will increase.

Lubien said even with override, we need supplemental dollars to mitigate size of override.

Epstein is concerned that the full \$4M is too much.

Lubien said this is an agenda item for Wednesday night at the Warrant Committee. He said the Warrant Committee can report at the next Select Board meeting.

Paolillo asked about the revenue report. Senator Brownsberger said he would try to address the 14% Out-of-district cost increases.

Garvin said we should be getting the state numbers by March.

Lubien said if any funds come in then that would build in a cushion for the free cash. He would rather not change the numbers on the budget at the last minute and it would allow for more free cash for next year.

The stabilization fund numbers cannot be changed. The Select Board discussed the options in more detail. They decided it was important to determine what amount we need to keep the 4% free cash guideline. Lubien said we could do replenishment of free cash at \$2M, but that is speculation.

Warrant Committee will discuss which of the three options would be acceptable and report back to the Select Board.

- Cardboard Event

The most recent Cardboard Event resulted in a loss of \$190. The Board agreed that they had too many Cardboard Events this year and having fewer events would be more lucrative. The Select Board members agreed to limit to one event in January every year.

- Town Administrator's notification of vacation

Garvin said that she will go on vacation as of February 10th. Jennifer Hewitt will fill her role.

COVID-19 Update

Wes Chin, Health Department Director joined the group to give an update on COVID numbers. Wes Chin said it is difficult to provide a clear picture right now of the COVID rates so he will be presenting a history of trends. Belmont had 105 cases in December 2022. and in January there have been 57 cases and the average age is 47 years. Most are fully vaccinated and outcomes are not as bad now. Belmont is at medium category for CDC metrics which means that masks are recommended indoors. Chin said they have 13K tests available at Town offices and library. The newest recommendation is quarantine for 5 days and resumption of normal activities is allowed if you test negative.

Appointment of Town Accountant, Donna Tuccinardi

Garvin said Glen Castro vacated the Town Accountant position a few weeks ago. The Assistant Town Accountant showed interest in the position. The Select Board got to know her and interviewed her. The Town extended an offer to Donna to become the permanent Town Accountant. She is currently doing the Town Accountant, Assistant Town Account and Payroll Manager and they are trying to get those positions filled.

Garvin said the offer letter will go out with contingency of certification in three years. There is no contract. It will be a three year term. Salary level is \$121,000.

Epstein said Donna has been doing a great job. She identified funds last year that could be unencumbered and used to increase the capital budget. She has two accountant degrees and has good ideas for staffing and restructuring work flow. Donna thanked Glen Castro and Patrice Garvin for their support.

Motion was made to appoint Donna Tuccinardi to the position of Town Accountant for a term of three years beginning January 23, 2023 contingent upon her obtaining certification in three years. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

[Paolillo asked for a five minute recess due to technical difficulties.]

Library Donation Presentations or Announcements

Gail Mann Trustee of Library and Kathy Keohane, Vice Chair of the Board of Library Trustees showed slides to update the Board and the public on the status of donations.

Kathy Keohane announced that \$5M in private funds have been donated to the Building Project. She showed a list of donors. All donors will be recognized on the new library wall.

\$1M will be transferred tonight from the Trustee Building Fund (pledges) and ARPA money already secured for the project.

Keohane said that citizens can get involved with community forums beginning in March. She showed the Library Building timeline. Design and development will occur throughout 2023. At the end of 2023, they will move to temporary space. Construction begins in Spring of 2024. Moving in date is scheduled for summer/fall of 2025.

Motion was made to accept the donations to the Town in the amount of \$875K and direct the Treasurer and Town Accountant to deposit them for the purpose of the Belmont Library Building Project subject to further expenditure by the Building Committee. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Change to new Voting System

Town Clerk Ellen O'Brien Cushman joined the group remotely to discuss:

- a. Discontinuation of the use of the current vote tabulators for Belmont
- b. Authorization to use the new vote tabulators for Belmont effective the April 4, 2023 Annual Town Election

Cushman said that the new voting machines need to be authorized 60 days before the Town Election on February 3rd. Massachusetts still requires paper ballots, and does not allow internet voting machines. That state has moved over to vote by mail. Belmont had 13K mail in ballots at the last election and the old voting machines could not handle the ballots. Cushman said that demos of the two state approved machines were done and Belmont decided to go with the Software DS200 system. She is asking the Board to vote to discontinue the use of the AccuVote system and approve the new DS200 effective April 4, 2023. The money has already been appropriated in the correct amount.

Motion was made that in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 54, Section 34, the Select Board of Belmont authorizes discontinuing the use of the AccuVote electronic vote tabulators and authorizes the use of the DS200 electronic vote tabulators, and any other tabulation equipment associated with the DS200, beginning April 4, 2023, for all elections, primaries, federal, state and local, to be held in the Town of Belmont, from that day forward, until otherwise ordered by the Select Board. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Town Clerk Cushman announced that they will be using electronic voting lists for the April 4, 2023 election. There is a video for voters to acquaint them on the new system on the website. Deadline for nominations is February 14, 2023. Absentee ballots need to be requested in writing. Vote by mail will be in effect and votes can fill out form to receive ballot in the mail. She said they are currently discussing if early voting will be recommended and that will be decided in the next week.

Update by the Age Friendly Action Plan Committee

Judy Morrison, Chair of the Age Friendly Action Plan Committee and Dana Bickelman, Director of COA joined the group.

Dana Bickelman presented slides about the Age Friendly Action Plan.

- Members of the Age Friendly Action Council were appointed in 2019
- Five-year plan is divided into four parts
- Plan includes: Housing, Transportation and Walkability, Outdoor Spaces and Communication. Goals were created around these categories
- Names of the members of the Age Friendly Action Plan Committee were displayed.

Judy Morrison showed slides and talked about the projects launched this year.

Housing

- First project of the Housing category was to develop and produce a booklet called “Home Fit Guide”
- High School teacher designed the brochure and AARP will pay for it
- Booklet will be used to launch the first initiative of the Plan to help seniors modify their homes for safety
- Next initiative will be to assess the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Committee will be partnering with the Housing Trust for this project and the first step will be to research other towns who made ADUs accessible.

Transportation

- Senior parking permits have been put in effect
- Volunteer driving and ride share program have been implemented
- Funding for medical rides for seniors outside of Belmont was funded by Friends of the Belmont COA
- Next transportation project will be to develop transportation across the three shopping areas
- Working with Transportation Advisory Council about additional transportation options that the Town can put in effect.

Walkability

- Hiring of an Assistant Director and Assistant Coordinator at the COA helped to re-start the walking group
- Volunteers from the High School were put in place to remove ice and snow
- Started coordination of a Town-wide safe walk routes with the Schools Safe Walk Routes
- Plan to survey seniors to see where they go and how they get there
- Will be working across Town groups to come back with priorities for walking
- Looking for GIS software for mapping walkways.

Outdoor spaces

- Paul Cowing, from Parks and Rec Commission became a partner with the committee
- The Recreation Commission said they will check with the Age Friendly Action Committee before voting on related issues
- Public hearing on the Community Path will be held so senior voices can be heard
- Will develop a list of important age friendly enhancements to introduce into the Belmont environment.

Communication

Dana Bickelman reviewed the Communication goals.

- Representation on the Town website redesign

- Re-establishing senior digital classes
- Activate seniors to volunteer across Belmont
- UMASS Gerontology may have student for internship for communication consultancy.

Paolillo said the plan is very comprehensive. There is still an unfilled position for a resident representative on the Age Friendly Action Plan Committee.

Discussion and possible vote to approve request for Henry Tapia 2nd Annual Memorial Vigil & Walk, Saturday, January 28, 2023 at 3:00 PM, 45 Upland Road, Belmont

Dash said the memorial walk traces the route of Henry Tapia the night he died.

Motion was made to approve the request for the Second Annual Memorial Vigil and Walk for Henry Tapia on Saturday, January 28, 2023 at 3:00 PM, 45 Upland Road, Belmont which includes the temporary closure of Upland Road between Slade and Beech Streets for speeches. The Belmont Police will provide an escort for the walk. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible designation of Animal Control Officer for the period of January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

Garvin said in accordance with Mass. Law the Select Board must annually delegate the Animal Control Officer. Suzanne Trasavage, the current Animal Control Officer, works under the health department and said she has been there since 2019. The Select Board thanked her for her service.

Motion was made to designate Suzanne Trasavage as the Animal Control Officer for the Town of Belmont for the period of January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Possible vote on request from Belmont High School PAC Patrons for a one day liquor license (beer and wine only) for a fundraiser to be held at the Beech Street Center on Friday, February 10, 2023 from the hours of 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Lauren Capitani with PAC Patrons, a support group for arts at the Belmont High School, joined the meeting. PAC Patrons augment the theater program. Trivia Night is an annual event. Lauren said that people can also support directly by donating online at BHS-pac.org. The play this year is Mean Girls on March 16-18, 2023.

Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont High School Performing Arts Company Patrons for a one-day liquor license (beer and wine only) for a fundraiser to be held at the Beech Street Center on Friday, February 10, 2023 from the hours of 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM contingent on approval from the Board of Health. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Possible vote on request from the Belmont Gallery of Art for a one day liquor license (beer and wine only) for an art event to be held at the Belmont Gallery of Art on Saturday, February 4, 2023 from the hours of 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Rebecca Richards is requesting a one-day liquor license for an event sponsored by the Belmont Public Schools' Arts Teachers.

Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont Gallery of Art for a one day liquor license (beer and wine only) for an art event to be held at the Belmont Gallery of Art on Saturday, February 4, 2023 from the hours of 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM contingent on approval from the Board of Health. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Update by the Energy Committee

Roger Wrubel and Brian Kopperl from the Energy Committee joined the group to discuss updates at the Energy Committee and to explain two Warrant Articles that they want to bring to Spring Town Meeting.

The Energy Committee is asking for the Select Board to join with Energy Committee to support two Warrant Articles that have been written to achieve climate goals:

Article 1: Adoption of New Opt-in Specialized Energy Code. The Department of Energy Resources released new building codes. We can choose to adopt a more stringent stretch code.

Article 2: Authorization of longer term leases for electric vehicles. This Article would set the groundwork for electrification of school buses and other Town vehicles.

Wrubel reported on Article 1.

- Energy stretch code was adopted in 2011 by Belmont.
- Department of Energy Resources (DOER) developed a new stretch code and opt-in code.
- Three codes are now available.
- When state changed the stretch code in January 2023, Belmont's code changed. 299 communities across Mass. have adopted the stretch code.
- The specialized code is the that requires Town Meeting approval.
- The specialized code regulates residential buildings.
 - The specialized stretch code only covers new buildings.
 - Mixed energy house has to have solar PV
 - All electric houses with heat pumps are not required to be solar.
 - If dwelling is over 4K feet and all electric then specialized codes will need to be followed.
 - The bigger the house the more stringent the requirements.
 - Stretch code includes houses with 1000+ sq. feet of renovation to the entire house.
 - Specialized code is only triggered by a new house.
 - Similar guidelines will also apply to municipal buildings.

Kopperl talked about Article 2.

- Schools felt it was too late to implement a plan for electric buses because they had just put in effect a new three year service contract.
- Energy Committee feels it is important to prepare an option for the next three year contract.
- Larger electric vehicles are more expensive.
- In order to make their purchase competitive with diesel vehicles, there needs be the possibility for a 10-year amortization in the service contract.

- MGL 30b Sec. 12 limits all municipal contracts to three years so the Warrant Article extends the contract for school buses and other electric vehicles. It doesn't require the Town to go electric but gives the Town the procurement ability to save money.

Dash asked if the vehicles are expected to last more than ten years? Epstein said a most likely candidate are school buses because we lease them. We need Article authorization first for 10-year contract.

The Energy Committee members also encourage the Town to find a parking station that can be used for a charging station for buses. When batteries are not used, the energy will get pushed back to the grid and that is a revenue source for Belmont Light.

Roger Wrubel talked about creating a position to help the Energy Committee write sustainability grants. He has identified a person who can write grants for Towns.

Patrice Garvin said administering grants after you receive them is a laborious process.

Epstein said it would be worthwhile to determine what kind of grant opportunities would be available in light of all the new buildings coming online in Belmont. If we determine which buildings would qualify, then it would be worth the \$20K per year for a grants person.

The Energy Committee will plan to come back to the Select Board after discussion about the Articles with the Warrant Committee, School Committee, and Light Board.

Discussion and possible vote to approve new Antique/Second Hand Goods License for Belmont Consignment Furniture, 697 Belmont Street

Motion was made to approve new Antique/Second Hand Goods License for Belmont Consignment Furniture, 697 Belmont Street. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Executive Session –

a. To 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; Belmont Police Patrolman's Association

Motion was made to go to Executive Session and return to public session. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Motion was made to return to open session and approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote to ratify Belmont Police Patrolman's Association Union contract

Patrice Garvin explained the two Belmont Patrolman's Association contracts that were discussed in Executive Session.

The first MOA is for a two year term from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022. COLA for that period is at 2%. First responder stipend, effective July 1, 2021 will be based on 4% of weekly based pay.

Motion was made to ratify the MOA with the Belmont Patrolman's Association from July 1, 2020 to July 30, 2022. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

The second MOA is for a two year term from July 1, 2022 to July 30, 2025. COLA is set at a 2% increase for each of the three years. In the first year of MOA, the increase for first responder stipend is 6% of weekly based pay. In Years 2 and 3, the first responder stipend amount will be at 7% and 8% of weekly based pay. Also includes educational incentive for BA degree, \$1 per hour increase to detail rate, annual vacation leave will increase to 5 weeks after 20 years (used to be 25 years), change to bi-weekly payroll and inclusion of \$2K COVID stipend.

Motion was made to ratify the MOA with the Belmont Patrolman's Association from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2025 including appropriation of \$56K of ARPA funding for stipends and recognition work performed during the COVID pandemic. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Possible vote on appointments, reappointments and acceptance of resignations:

Disabilities Access Commission - Appointment

Motion was made to appoint Dana Bickelman as a regular member of the Disabilities Access Commission with a term to expire June 30, 2025. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Youth Commission - Resignation

Motion was made to accept the resignation of Heidi Wickersham. From the Youth Commission. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Diversity and Equity Implementation Committee – Resignation

Motion was made to accept the resignation of Hildy Dvorak from the Diversity and Equity Implementation Committee. Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

Information Technology Advisory Committee – Appointment

Motion was made to appoint Kristen Nelson-Patel to the Information Technology Advisory Committee for a three-year appointment to expire June 30, 2025 (to replace Glen Wong). Motion was approved by vote of 3-0.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

- Comprehensive Capital Committee finished interviewing department heads and will start ranking projects.
- MBTA Communities Advisory Committee will have a report for Town Meeting and submit action plan at the end of the month.

Next Meetings:

a. Potential Topics:

(1) MAPC Presentation on Net Zero Carbon Emissions (2/6/2023)

b. Next Meeting Dates:

(1) February 1, 2023 – 6:00 PM Pre STM meeting VIA ZOOM to take a position on the Treasurer position Article.

(2) February 6, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

(3) February 9, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Select Board Joint with Warrant Committee, School Committee and Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee – Budget Summit V

(4) February 27, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

(5) March 6, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

(6) March 20, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

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

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary