



Select Board Joint Meeting with Diversity Task Force

March 21, 2022

Remote Meeting

7:00pm

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 13, 2022

TIME: 2:34 PM

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Roy Epstein and Select Board member Mark Paolillo were present, along with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Acting Assistant Town Administrator Glenn Clancy and Director of DPW Jay Marcotte.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The League of Women Voters will hold a Candidates' Night on March 24th at 7 pm. The event will be live broadcast on cable. The event will include short speeches by all Town-wide candidates for election and will also include a question and answer period. Town Election Day is Tuesday, April 5th.

The "Parkinson's Song and Dance Man" will be held on April 8th at 1:15 at the Belmont Senior Center. This is an interactive performance to improve awareness of Parkinson's Disease. Admission is free.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Brian Iler, pct. 7, asked about the agenda item regarding ARPA funds for the High School and Middle School Building Committee. Dash said that limited comments will be allowed when that issue is addressed later tonight, as it has been thoroughly discussed in prior meetings, including at public forums.

Marie Warner, pct. 6, expressed concern about the budgeting issues with the High School Building Committee. She wants to know if the overrun on that budget may be caused by something other than the COVID delays. Dash said that the Building Committee is under the purview of the Town Moderator, and therefore, the Select Board is limited in what they can do. Paolillo suggested that Tom Caputo as the Select Board appointee, might be able to speak to the Select Board about the anticipated budget issues at a later date.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Town Moderator – Request to call 2022 Annual Town Meeting to be held by Remote Participation

Moderator Mike Widmer reported that he is recommending that the May segment A of Town Meeting be held by remote participation. He will reserve his decision about June Town Meeting as we get closer to the date. He said he has examined the situation closely with the Health Department, and he decided that 300 people meeting in one area could be risky for the spread of the new COVID variant, especially for at-risk Town Meeting members. The Town is required to take an electronic vote at the beginning of each Town Meeting session to see whether members want to continue to meet remotely. If Town Meeting members vote to meet in person, then the next Town Meeting session will be held in person.

Epstein asked what criteria would be needed to hold an in-person meeting in June. Widmer said he is waiting to see about the resurgence of the new variant and evaluate the risk situation in Belmont. He received ideas from residents about how a live Town Meeting could be managed at the High School Auditorium.

Ellen Cushman, Town Clerk said this decision can be revisited for Town Meeting Segment B.

Motion was made for the 2022 Town Meeting that begins May 2, 2022 to be held by remote participation. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion of Police Station Cell Tower Lease

Attorney Jennifer Platt of Anderson and Kreiger joined the meeting.

Patrice Garvin said she has been working with Community Development since 2019 to develop a new agreement for the cell tower at the Police Station and they are now bringing it to the Select Board for discussion.

Atty. Platt explained that the old lease expired in 2019, but due to many vacancies of pertinent people the negotiations were delayed, but SBA, the current tenant, continued to be paid on a monthly basis. SBA was the only bidder on the new RFP. The sole current provider is T-Mobile. Atty. Platt also reported that once the agreement is signed, there will be a signing bonus of \$20K. Also, if the Town secures two other providers, in addition to T-Mobile, revenue sharing will be permitted.

The Select Board discussed details of the agreement with Atty. Platt. Epstein questioned why paragraph 3.3 prohibited additional cell towers on adjacent Town-owned land and Ms. Platt indicated she would revise that language to limit the prohibition to other towers that interfered with the signal from the town on the police station. Paolillo asked if we could get out of this contract if we found it wasn't desirable. Platt said that SBA has the option to terminate the agreement at the end of the first five year period, but the Town doesn't have the right to terminate unless there is a default by SBA. The agreement has options for a 20-year relationship. The rate includes a 3% escalation every year. If the Town decides to renew in five years, then the rate is as stated in the agreement.

SBA is responsible for installing and maintaining equipment, and minimizing any damage to the structure. Epstein asked if we need to review the status of the roof of the Police Station before we sign this agreement. Glenn Clancy replied that during the renovation of the Police Station, the structure that carries the load for the cell tower was modified and he has been assured that the roof can handle the weight of the cell tower.

Discussion and possible vote on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) fund for Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

Bill Lovallo and Tom Caputo from the Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee joined the group to discuss the ARPA funds.

Lovallo stated that the increased costs due to COVID delays and costs, were determined to be \$4.5M and there is a possibility that there is \$1M from ARPA to be offset those costs. A citizen petition currently on the Warrant for Town Meeting would tie the \$1M to the photovoltaic panels.

Epstein said he would like to see a commitment that the photovoltaic panels will be installed. Paolillo said that the Building Committee is independent from the Select Board and we can't dictate how they use the funds. Epstein said use of ARPA money for the building project originated with \$1M to cover expenses due to COVID and the discussion has now become an earmark for the solar panels. If PV is not installed, then the \$1M should be turned back.

PUBLIC COMMENTS about ARPA funds for High School and Middle School Building Committee

Lisa Pargoli wondered why we are giving the Building Committee more money. She feels that the residents haven't been heard. Once the \$1M is gone, what about the rest of the construction needs? She feels there were other mistakes made with the budget and that they are blaming it on COVID issues. Dash said if we can reduce the electric bill for the building over the time it is in existence, then the \$1M is a good investment.

Bill Anderson asked if the \$1M could be earmarked for the funding of the PV panels and the funds be released only when they are in place. Patrice Garvin said that would not be possible due to Mass. General Law. Anderson said the offset to the electrical should be completely transparent. He thinks any surplus should be set aside for the maintenance of the PV panels.

Epstein explained that the power produced likely would not be returned to the grid because it will be consumed on site. The building's electricity consumption will exceed the PV production. The benefit to the Town is that the purchase of electricity will be reduced. The Facilities Department will be the entity tracking the consumption.

Paolillo thinks this it is an interesting idea to set aside savings for the future maintenance of the panels.

Bill Lovallo said if the \$1M is approved, he will make sure that the money will be used in a way that pleases Belmont residents. If it is impossible to add PV, then the Building Committee will come back to inform the Select Board. Lovallo said the Building Committee never had any intentions of cutting the PV panels.

Motion was made to approve the allocation of the \$1M from ARPA funds to the acquisition/installation of the PV panels on the Middle and High School building. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote on request from the Belmont LGBTQ+ Alliance to use grass delta at 2 Leonard St. to install a display for International Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31, 2022 from March 25th

Leslie Talmadge, co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Alliance, joined the meeting. She said the Belmont LGBTQ+ Alliance is requesting to use the grass delta to display 20 lawn signs and flags honoring transgendered individuals. Talmadge confirmed that only half the space on the delta will be occupied by the Alliance.

Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont LGBTQ Alliance to place signs on the delta on Leonard St. from March 25, 2022 to April 3, 2022. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote on request from the First Church in Belmont to use the Town Green for outdoor worship services on April 3, April 17, May 15 and June 12 from 8:00 – 12:00 PM

Motion was made to approve the request from First Church in Belmont to use the Town green for outdoor worship on April 3, April 17, May 15 and June 12 from 8:00 to 12:00 PM including set up and breakdown. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Vote to approve the Warrant for the Annual Town Election on April 5, 2022

Ellen Cushman joined the meeting to talk about this issue. Town Clerk Cushman said that in order to legally hold the election on April 5th she is required to put out a Warrant to list all the offices available. Ellen Cushman read the list of offices that are being voted on in the April election.

Polling hours are 7 am to 8 pm at the usual polling places. When polling places have been changed, residents have received the changes and the info is on Town Clerk's website.

Motion was made to approve the election Warrant for the April 5, 2022 annual Town election at the polling locations as shown by the Town Clerk, being the same polling locations that have been typically used in the past. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Open Joint Meeting with Diversity Task Force

Diversity Task Force members present: Kim Haley Jackson, Chair, Roger Fussa, Julie Wu, Denise Lapolla, Sharon Rich, Lixing Qin, Patrice Garvin, Angela Middleton, Pritha Mitra-Stiff.

Kim Haley-Jackson called the joint meeting of the Diversity Task force to order with a roll call.

a. Presentation of and possible vote to accept Recommendations to the Select Board for Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Town of Belmont Final Report, Revised Version 1

Kim Haley-Jackson read the charge of the Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of a cross section from all populations of Belmont. She displayed a slide that demonstrated the increasing diversity in Belmont.

The following list includes some of the key recommendations suggested by the Diversity Task Force:

- Hiring of a diversity director for the Town of Belmont to collaborate with department heads to create more inclusive opportunities in Belmont.
- Creating an ongoing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Implementation Committee to work with the new DEI director.
- Prioritizing a Town-wide survey for visions and goals related to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan.
- Funding the Belmont Human Rights Commission to help educate the community in DEI issues.
- Promoting long-term diversification of Town positions; including re-examining civil service and consideration of Belmont High School graduates in civil service jobs.
- Researching affordable housing programs for municipal employees.
- Holding diversity training for municipal employees; including a one-day retreat with all DEI stakeholders. Define consequences for discrimination of minorities.
- Converting single occupancy bathrooms in municipal buildings to all-gender use.
- Adding gender inclusive language to Town legal forms.
- Establishing one area in Belmont for multi-family zoning.
- Providing Fair Housing education to all boards and landlords.

- Promoting wider publicity of the tax referral program for seniors.
- Building partnerships between Belmont's government, non-profits and businesses as a long range vision that includes DEI.
- Diversifying the teaching force to recruit teachers of color and developing programs for their retention.
- Developing cultural competency trainings for the schools in coordination with the DEI director.
- Securing funding for mental health issues highlighted in the Belmont Youth Risk Behavior 2021 survey.
- Revisiting the membership in the Minuteman vocational network, if possible. There are not enough openings currently for all students who want to be accepted to the Minuteman.

Haley-Jackson reported that 95% of Town employees are Caucasian and that does not reflect the Town demographics.

Belmont Police and Fire Department demographics show that employees are mostly Caucasian and male and the Task Force feels there is a need for diversification in these departments to more closely match the Town demographics.

Part of the mission of the Task Force was to look at the Town in general. Haley-Jackson said they are not looking at just race and ethnicity. For instance, one of their agenda items was increased transportation options for seniors and disabled individuals.

Kim Haley-Jackson informed the audience to contact belmontdtf@gmail.com if they want to learn more about the Task Force recommendations.

Dash said the Select Board will be voting to accept the report and then the next step is to create a DEI Implementation Committee to work on the other recommendations. Paolillo thinks this report should be presented at Town Meeting. The Select Board members agreed to ask the Town Moderator to add a presentation by the Task Force to Town Meeting.

Motion was made to accept the report from the Diversity Task Force. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Dash said the Diversity Force needs to designate a committee member to approve the minutes from tonight, as it is being disbanded now that its work is done.

Ellen Cushman said that it would be good to make the dissolution contingent on turning in missing minutes. Kim Haley-Jackson agreed to complete the minutes by April 5, 2022.

b. Possible vote for dissolution of Diversity Task Force

Motion was made to dissolve the Diversity Task Force effective April 5, 2022. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Motion was made to adjourn and approved by a roll call of all members of the Diversity Task Force.

Close Joint Meeting with Diversity Task Force

Dash said that the Select Board will discuss a portion of the Community Preservation Committee Articles tonight. Additional Articles will be presented at a later date. The CPA projects will not be voted on tonight.

a. Predevelopment Funding for Redevelopment of Sherman Gardens

Alison MacMartin, Joe De Larauze, and Margaret Moran from the Cambridge Housing Authority joined the meeting to discuss additional funding for Sherman Gardens. The redevelopment project received \$173K for a feasibility study from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and they are requesting \$400K in additional funds to continue pre-development activities. Sherman Gardens is low income housing with 81 bedroom apartments and the apartments have not been renovated in 50 years. The Belmont Housing Authority selected the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) as a development consultant to help with this effort. CHA works with other communities and has a significant amount of experience with these types of developments.

Joe De Larauze presented slides which evidenced the state of the current apartments. He reported that the feasibility study determined that rehabilitation would be cost prohibitive and would not improve all the spaces and that redevelopment would create a better building. It would also enable the addition of 40-60 additional units which has been recommended by the Diversity Task Force. The \$400K in CPC funds would be added to another \$800K in funds from the Metro West Consortium, and other organizations that will promote redevelopment activities.

b. Town Field Phase II: Construction (supplemental funding)

Cortney Eldridge, Chair of the Friends of Belmont Town Field Playground and the Recreation Committee said they are looking for additional funds of \$343K on top of what was already appropriated for the renovation of the Town Field Playground. The current playground needs to be made more practical and useable. She reported that the scope of the project is the same, but all the bids came in over asking point.

c. Payson Park Phase II: Construction

Sue Croy, co-Chair of the Payson Park CPA project joined the meeting. In June 2020 Town Meeting approved Phase I of the project to analyze the needs of the park. The final project proposal was based on community input. Croy said the majority of the park needs to be renovated. Jay Marcotte is the project manager and they are following all the correct processes. The revitalization plan will also be in compliance with ADA. If approved by Town Meeting, the project will begin in Spring 2023. The final request is asking for an additional 20% which will bring the total to \$1,190,529. The CPA unanimously approved the amount. The Select Board agreed that this playground needs renovation.

d. Belmont Cemetery Preservation Master Plan with Treatment

Jay Marcotte said the cemetery is in need of serious restoration. The DPW is responsible for the maintenance of the cemetery, but they can't handle major changes. They are asking for \$60K to develop a master plan to undertake restoration and preservation as needed. Drainage issues have been present since 1966. They are expecting that the \$60K will help determine the expertise needed to complete the project. The interest from the Cemetery Perpetual Care fund can only help supplement

some of the renovations. If approved in June, Marcotte hopes to contract a landscape specialist by summer.

e. Restoration of Belmont's Historic Clock

Michael Flamang, from the property committee of the church, and Radha Iyengar and John Dieckmann of the Belmont Citizen's Forum joined the group. Flamang said the church did some basic structural work and now the clock itself needs to be fixed.

The Select Board members agreed that they will support the request to repair the clock.

Discussion and possible vote on Commemorative Shade Tree Planting Program

Jay Marcotte presented slides on the proposed Commemorative Shade Tree Planting Program. The program will enable residents and organizations to donate money to purchase and plant trees in Town. A donation of \$500 will cover the planting and purchase of a new tree. Marcotte said that the Shade Tree Committee voted in favor of this program. The program also proposes to install a plaque in Town Hall for display of donor names. Donations will be deposited to a grants acceptance and expenditure fund. Marcotte said the language in the proposal specifies that the DPW will work with each contributor to make sure the chosen tree is suitable for the area in which it is planted. Marcotte said he will present an annual update in the Fall to the Shade Tree Committee and Select Board.

Lucia Gates from the Shade Tree Committee said there are people waiting in line to donate.

The Select Board agreed to support this program.

Motion was made to adopt the Commemorative Shade Tree Program as provided. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Discussion and possible vote on request from Belmont Center Business Association for proposed outdoor dining plan and traffic plan

Belmont Center Business Association President, Deran Muckjian, joined the group. Glenn Clancy showed a detailed plan of last year's outdoor dining plan and then he showed a new plan that the restaurant owners want to implement this year. The Business Association has asked if the plan could retain two way travel. The new plan will require that seating areas be adjusted. Two or three of the restaurants that were in the Square last year will be leaving so that will open up more parking places. The 15-minute spaces were retained in the winter and they will continue. If the new proposal is approved, then Gregory's could participate in the outdoor seating plan. Clancy said metal gates will no longer be used. Merchants have said that they spend a lot of time reconfiguring the gates. The seating areas would continue to be designated with jersey barriers. The reconfiguration means that bicycles would have to share space with the car lane.

Dash said he has not heard residents complain about last year's plan. Epstein suggested a low speed limit on Leonard Street as part of the program. Epstein think it's appropriate to try the new plan because merchants have asked for it and we should try to strike a balance for the different constituencies.

Deran Muckjian said there are now seven vacancies in Belmont Center including Comella's and Starbucks. Right now there is not enough retail on one side of street. He has talked to restaurant owners and they are not opposed to the new plan. He feels there is no point of putting barriers in front of open spaces. He said another option to slow down traffic is for DPW to install rubber speed bumps.

Dash said he's concerned about the two-way travel zone. Muckjian said we should consider this plan until more tenants return to the square. Damian deMagistris commented that it's a good compromise from a restaurant standpoint. Muckjian said It also allows us to open up dining and still have Town Day.

The outside dining plan will go from May 4th to end of October.

Motion was made to accept the proposal from the Belmont Center Business Association for 2022 as presented. Motion was approved by a vote of 2-1. Dash opposed.

Dash stated that he was in favor of outdoor dining in Belmont Center, but was not in favor of opening Leonard Street to two-way traffic as proposed during the outdoor dining season.

SELECT BOARD COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

[NONE.]

Executive Session: 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; All Unions

The Select Board voted to go to Executive Session and not return. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary

Respectfully Submitted,



Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator