

APPROVED BY THE
SELECT BOARD

4/24/2023

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Regular Meeting of the
Select Board
and
Joint Meeting with the
Warrant Committee
March 20, 2023
7:00pm**



**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 8, 2023
TIME: 2:39 PM

To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

Call to Order: Mr. name called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Select Board Members	Present	Warrant Committee Members	Present
Mark Paolillo, Chair	Yes	Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes
Adam Dash, Vice Chair	Yes	Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Remote
Roy Epstein Member	Yes	Elizabeth Dionne, Secretary	Yes
Others Present	Present	William Anderson	Yes
Kathleen Keohane, Library Trustee	Yes	Tom Caputo	Yes
Meghan Moriarty, Chair, School Committee	Remote	Christine Doyle	Yes
Claus Becker, Energy Committee	Yes	Anne Helgen	
Margaret Velie, Conservation Commission	Yes	Conor McEachern	Yes
Elizabeth Dionne, Chair, Community Preservation Committee	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Alison Lenk, Belmont Land Trust	Remote	Lynn Peterson Read	
Gladys Unger, LGBTQ+Alliance	Yes	Laurie Slap	Yes
Staff Members		Matthew Taylor	Yes
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Manager	Yes	Jack Weis	Remote
Glenn Clancy, Dir. of Community Development	Yes	Michael Crowley, Ex-officio Designee, School Com.	Yes
Ellen O'Brian Cushman, Town Clerk	Yes	Mark Paolillo, Ex-officio Designee - Select Board	

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Paolillo announced that nominations for Outstanding Teacher Awards are open. Information and nominations forms are available at [FbeBelmont.org/ota](https://fbelmont.org/ota).

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS – no comments.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Determination of Interim Compliance under MGL C.40a, Section 3A: Ms. Garvin explained that Belmont has interim compliance for meeting the MBTA State statues.
- Rink Update: Ms. Garvin showed a slide addressing some questions that had been raised regarding the Debt Exclusion. Mr. Paolillo reviewed the project, its costs, what had been done to reduce the costs, and fundraising efforts. He explained that the tax impact will be \$170/year per \$1M assessed property value. He also reviewed the timeline for the project and expanded uses of the facility.
- Public Comment Posting Policy: Ms. Garvin explained that a resident expressed concern that comments she made that about a project that then were posted on the Town Website compromised her privacy because they contained her email and address. Town Counsel advised that there is no obligation to post the comments to the website, so they were removed. A complaint was received about the removal, and the

complainant was instructed that the comments are available through a Public Records Request. There was a discussion of this issue and a policy. It was decided to look into this issue in order to create a clear policy.

- Citizen's Petitions: Two from the Energy Commission and one from Tommasina Olson have been received. Mr. Dash said he believes one more is coming, regarding parking.

Vote to Approve the Warrant for the April 4, 2023 Annual Town Election

Ms. Cushman explained the details of the Town Election, including the positions that are on the ballot.

A Motion was made to approve the warrant for the April 4, 2023 Annual Town Election as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Public Hearing – Discussion and possible vote on application from Belmont Wine and Beer, LLC, 32 Leonard Street, Belmont, MA for a new \$15 off-premises liquor license (beer and wine only).

Represented by Applicant Roxana Lemus and Attorney Robert Indresano.

Mr. Paolillo opened the public hearing at 7:20pm.

Mr. Indresano explained that Ms. Lemas is taking over the business and reviewed her qualifications. Mr. Epstein asked how many employees Ms. Lemas will have, and she said she expects one parttime employee. Mr. Paolillo said that a number of emails in support of the application have been received.

Mr. Paolillo closed the public hearing at 7:24pm.

A Motion was made to approve the liquor license application of Roxana Lemus of Belmont Beer and Wine, LLC for a new \$15 off-premises liquor license (beer and wine only) at 32 Leonard St., Belmont. The motion passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

The Select Board took a brief recess at 7:25pm and returned at 7:31pm.

Open Joint Meeting with Warrant Committee

Mr. Lubien called the Warrant Committee to order with a quorum.

Discussion and Possible Vote on the Amount of Free Cash to be Used in the FY2024 Operating Budget

Mr. Paolillo explained the scope of the discussion and the vote at this meeting.

Ms. Hewitt explained the history of the budget development and the changes that have been made to the Budget and Revenue Projections since the February 9th budget.

There was a discussion of the initial budget gap of \$600,000 for the Schools with Mr. Lubien and Mr. Paolillo pointing out that this was never a recommendation of either the Select Board or Warrant Committee – it was just the gap that needs to be addressed.

Ms. Hewitt outlined the use of Free Cash that was proposed to help reduce the Schools gap. The remaining Town and Schools gap was addressed in both budgets proportionally and some also went to Shared Services. This budget was balanced.

Mr. Paolillo shared the details of budget increases for the Schools, the Town, and Shared Services.

Mr. Crowley outlined some of the costs that are causing the School Budget to go up, pointing out that some are not under the control of the School Department and the percent increase is smaller if these are not included.

Ms. Hewitt said that the State Aid increased by about \$1.4 million, and explained how these funds are recommended to be allocated across the budget. She then reviewed the Revenue stream details.

Ms. Hewitt reviewed the details of the changes from the last proposed budget to the current one, and the use and status of Free Cash. She also reviewed the Multi-Year Forecast Projection pointing out that right now the deficit for FY25 is just under \$11 million (no Free Cash used).

Ms. Hewitt shared the FY2024 Final Recommendations:

- Place \$600,000 of additional State Aid in the Special Education Reserve Fund to offset the increased cost of Out-of-District tuition in FY24+.
- Use remaining State Aid increase to reduce the amount of Free Cash used for the FY24 budget. This will support a higher Free Cash carry forward and keep Belmont within its Free Cash Policy.
- Any additional State Aid received after March 20th will further reduce the total use of Free Cash.

Mr. Crowley said from his perspective, the School Department needs another \$1M to avoid critical layoffs and suggested compromising by giving the Schools an additional \$500,000 which would help the schools and calm the community. There was a discussion of this suggestion.

There was a lengthy and discussion of a potential override for next year and Free Cash use. Several members offered suggestions for reducing costs, and shared expectations of what would happen if an override fails.

Ms. Doyle said she believes only families with children in the schools will feel the cuts, and recommended cutting Town services so residents without children in the schools will also feel the impact.

Ms. Slap pointed out that some of the Free Cash is being generated by Town employees having to cover 2-3 jobs and when staff is added for those jobs, there will be a decrease in Free Cash that must be considered.

There was a discussion of how to assure community buy in for an override and how to balance what happens this year against the needs for next year.

Mr. Taylor said that because of staff shortages on both the Town and School side middle and long-term strategic activities get dropped even though these are the things that most people agree on. He suggested funding project-based proposals to start staffing that strategic work this year (such as Special Education program building, town engineer or planning work to help with zoning reform, etc.). He then explained some of the research he did and the findings he discovered. These recommendations and how to implement them were discussed.

Steve Sullivan said he feels the group is not aware of the concern that parents have about the cuts being proposed and shared some of these concerns. He added that there is work being done on getting votes for an override, but added that it's disrespectful to put money into Free Cash when cuts are being considered.

Erin Holland expressed her concern about the long term results from cutting kindergarten aids and made some recommendations about how to get parents to support an override.

Cara Sasson expressed concern that valued teachers will leave due to cuts. She said there is also other money not represented in the budget that is funded by organizations like booster clubs, PTOs, etc.

Jung Yueh (remote) said the Town should expect higher revenue growth and explained this position. He added that the current State Aid level is the Governor's proposal and increases should be expected from the legislature. He asked that the Select Board commit to splitting any increases between the School Budget and Free Cash. Mr. Yueh's proposal was discussed as compared to the recommendation to use these funds to lower the overall use of Free Cash this year (see Ms. Hewitt's comments above).

Mr. McLaughlin said he wanted to make sure that residents knew that this is not fun for those working on the budget and assured them that the Boards and Committees are doing the best they can. It's a difficult vote but everyone has to live with it.

Ira Morganstern asked some questions about the information presented, which were answered. He then suggested that the Town communicate what actions were taken since the last failed override, what is currently under way, and what is planned so residents better understand what the Town is doing to address the problem.

There was a discussion of whether or not to include limiting the use of future extra funds from State Aid in tonight's vote on the use of Free Cash.

A Motion was made for the Select Board to authorize the use of up to \$10,066,890 in Free Cash for the FY2024 budget that is presented to Town Meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

A Motion was made for the Warrant Committee to authorize the use of up to \$10,066,890 in Free Cash for the FY2024 budget that is presented to Town Meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

There Select Board and Warrant Committee took a short recess at 8:53pm and returned at 8:58pm.

Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the open meeting of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Dionne seconded, and the Warrant Committee adjourned at 8:53pm.

Ms. Moriarty said the School Committee and Department have tried to strategically add staff and invited people to attend the School Committee meeting to learn about additional lab classrooms being added to provide more options next year.

Discussion and Possible Vote on Request for Handicap Parking Space at 393 Belmont Street. Applicant: Coleen Murphy.

Mr. Clancy explained the reason for the request and added that he recommended approval. He said there is an existing HC spot near Payson Park Church that is no longer needed, which is misstated in his memo.

Ms. Murphy explained that she is wheelchair bound and said that parking on Belmont Street is difficult due to staff parking from a nearby organization. The HC spot in front of her house is often used by a resident of that organization and her driveway is too narrow for her to use.

There was a discussion of the number of HC spots in the area.

A Motion was made to approve the request by the owner of 393 Belmont Street for the placement of an accessible parking space in front of their property at 393 Belmont Street.

Mr. Epstein asked if the HC Parking policy includes reassessing the need for the existing spots. Mr. Clancy said this is done through the Police Department.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Discussion and possible vote on request to advance warrant articles:

- a. Adoption of Massachusetts Municipal Opt-in Specialized Energy Code**
- b. Authorizing Extended Contracts for Electric Vehicles**

There was a discussion of the items already being on the Warrant and that Town Counsel has not had a chance to review the articles. Because Counsel has not reviewed the items the Board decided to wait to vote on them.

Review of Community Preservation Committee FY2024 Applications:

- a. Conservation Fund:** Ms. Trudeau explained that the purpose of the application is to establish a fund to allow the Conservation Commission to take action if a parcel of land becomes available that would be valuable for open space or conservation. Ms. Velie said the Town Treasurer would act as the custodian of the funds.

Ms. Dionne explained that the CPC had received more requests than funds available but are looking at potential turnback's in the hopes of funding this project to the \$200,000 requested rather than the current \$140,000 allocation.

There was a discussion of future requests for this project, future funding levels, the project length policy, and other considerations.

Alison Lenk asked if the Conservation Commission works in partnership with the Belmont Land Trust. She also asked if the chart that was described could be made publicly available. Ms. Velie said there had been no recent meetings, and Ms. Dionne said the document should be available.

- b. **Historical Object Preservation Plan – Belmont Public Library:** Ms. Keohane outlined the details and purpose of the request for funding, including information on the specific items that will be preserved. She explained that the funding requested is the maximum amount that the project might cost. Several questions were asked, which Ms. Keohane answered.

Discussion and possible vote to install twenty transgender posters and flags on the Town Green at 2 Leonard St. from March 28 through April 3, 2023, and to close the driveway in front of the M&T bank on Friday, March 31st from 3:00 – 4:30 pm to host a gathering to read names and accomplishments, in celebration of Transgender Awareness Month. Represented by Gladys Unger, LGBTQ+Alliance, a subcommittee of Belmont Against Racism.

Ms. Unger explained the plan to place yard signs honoring the accomplishments of 20 transgender people and to hold a small ceremony recognizing the honorees. There was a discussion of the logistics of the event.

A Motion was made to approve the request from the LGBTQ+ Alliance to install twenty transgender posters and flags on the Town Green at 2 Leonard St. from March 28 through April 3, 2023, and to close the driveway in front of the M&T Bank on Friday, March 31st from 3:00 – 4:30 pm to host a gathering to read names and accomplishments, in celebration of Transgender Awareness Month. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Discussion and possible vote on request from Belmont Chinese American Association to host the second annual 5k and 2k races on Sunday, May 7, 2023. Represented by Michael Gau, Ye Jung, and Wen Hong Lao.

Ms. Jung explained that the 5K race remains the same, and this year they are adding a 2K race. They will also be adding snacks for participants.

Mr. Gau outlined the permits they have already received.

A Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont Chinese American Association to host the second annual road race with both the 5k and 2k races on Sunday, May 7, 2023 from 7:00am to 11:30am with the routes provided. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Q2 (Second Quarter) Report

Ms. Hewitt explained that a new report structure is being used and asked for Board feedback. She added that it's early in the year to gauge how the Town is doing, although she highlighted some areas of interest. She said that spending is at or below budget but they will be monitoring retroactive payments to Police and Fire. There was a discussion an expected turnback from the Regional School District.

Mr. Epstein asked if there was an understanding of how overtime for Police and Fire might compare to the budget. Ms. Garvin said they continue to have vacancies, so her office is monitoring it. Ms. Hewitt said they are over for overtime but under for wages.

Ms. Garvin said snow and ice still needs to be worked out and pointed out that there are trucks that sit idle during storms because of the loss of two position due to the failed override.

There was a discussion of the impact of cuts on the Town and how most of them are not visible to the public.

Discussion and possible vote to accept a \$1,500.00 donation on behalf of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) from Cambridge Savings Bank for a spring networking event at Savino's Grille on March 28, 2023.

A Motion was made to accept the \$1,500.00 donation on behalf of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) from Cambridge Savings Bank for a spring networking event at Savino's Grille on March 28, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Committee Appointments, Reappointments and Resignations – possible votes:

a. Historic District Commission – two resignations, one appointment.

A Motion was made to accept the resignations of Nushin Yazdi as a full member and Mary M. Perry as an associate member from the Belmont Historic District Commission. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

A Motion was made to appoint Matt Scholwald to the Belmont Historic District Commission for a term ending June 30, 2024 to the vacant Full Member position. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

b. Vision 21 Implementation Committee

A Motion was made to appoint Brian Antonellis to the Vision21 Implementation Committee for a term ending June 30, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Liaison Reports

Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee: Mr. Dash reported that they have been meeting, and outlined their work.

MBTA Communities Committee: Mr. Epstein said submitting the Action Plan was the easy part, and they are meeting regularly.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 6, 2023 – Executive Session 1 and March 6, 2023 – Executive Session 2:

A Motion was made to approve the March 6, 2023 Executive Session 1 and March 6, 2023 Executive Session 2 minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote with names abstaining.

NEXT MEETINGS

- April 4, 2023 at 7:00pm – Regular Meeting
- April 7, 2023 at 8:00am – Reorganizational Meeting
- April 24, 2023 at 7:00pm – Regular Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont Select Board Committee, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:52pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary