

**RECEIVED
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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: October 14, 2020
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Approved by
the Select Board on:

9/14/2020

Minutes

Town of Belmont

Select Board

Virtual Meeting on Zoom

Monday, June 30, 2020

7:00pm

CALL TO ORDER:

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Roy Epstein. Vice Chair Tom Caputo and Select Board member Adam Dash were present. Representatives of the Financial Task Force II (FTF2) Geoff Lubien, John Phelan, and Patrice Garvin were also present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Community Outreach Meeting for a Proposed Marijuana Retail Establishment on July 9, 2020 at 6:00pm (Virtual Meeting). The proposed establishment would be at 768 Pleasant St, Belmont.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Financial Task Force II Budget Scenario Discussion

Caputo introduced the discussion, saying that this was part of a series of meetings the FTF2 would have with other stakeholders to review and discuss the work and emerging recommendations of the FTF2.

FTF2 members Rebecca Vase and Mark Paolillo joined the call, so the FTF2 called itself to order.

Caputo answered clarifying questions from the other Select Board members about the potential override recommendation from the FTF2. Dash and Caputo expressed that the Town and the appropriate committees would need to present changes that would be made in conjunction with an override vote.

Caputo summarized the FTF2 charge and findings thus far with three slides, which he shared on-screen. With Belmont's impending structural budget deficit and impacts from COVID-19, the FTF2 said the Town must consider a Proposition 2 ½ override for FY22 or make substantial reductions in town services. Caputo explained that the emerging consensus was that Belmont needed to present the voters with a Prop. 2 ½ override before the FY22 budget process. The FTF2 recommended an override ask of \$12-14 million in November 2020. The FTF2 planned to present a final recommendation about the override to the Select Board in mid-to-late July.

Lubien and Paolillo walked through the FTF2's "Budget Assumptions and Scenarios" set of slides. The group had made revenue assumptions in property tax levy, state aid, local receipts, enterprise funds, free cash, and other available funds. The FTF2 said these assumptions were made reasonably conservatively, and that they would update the categories accordingly as they received more information. The FTF2 had created a "minimal level services budget" for the Town departments and School Department, and Lubien went over the assumptions made to make that budget.

Dash brought up concerns around the library, saying that with cuts the Library could lose access to their partnership in the Minutemen Network and that, without a new building, there would be additional costs

associates with the Library's aging existing building. Garvin, Dash, and Caputo said that joining the Group Insurance Commission was another option the Town could look into further to save money. Epstein expressed concern that the list of services and needs of the Town was not covered by the minimal level services option. Further discussion around the override ensued.

Lubien showed the fully funded school budget assumptions, fully funded facilities and DPW budget assumptions, and the fully funded Town budget assumptions. After each slide, some discussion ensued around questions about and aspects of each category of assumptions. To fully fund all of the aspects of the Town, schools, and facilities and DPW budgetary needs, it would take about \$20 million in an override ask.

Glen Castro joined the call to answer questions about cost of living adjustments on the Town and school sides in future years. Epstein, Phelan, Castro, and Lubien further discussed the proposed incremental \$400,000 that would go to schools in the override amount and agreed to discuss it again after more calculations were made.

Dash pointed out that the Select Board would have to answer the questions: whether an override would be on the ballot, when an override would be on the ballot, and how much the override ask would be for. The Select Board agreed to allocate time to the issue in the following meetings to decide the answers to those questions before July 27, 2020, when these decisions would need to be made.

Caputo asked the other members of the Select Board for feedback on the idea of an override to bring back to the full FTF2. Dash said he was in favor of putting the override on the ballot in November for the proposed range of \$12-14 million. Epstein said that an override was necessary and that he believed that the override would be approved by the public with careful and thorough explanation from the Select Board, FTF2, and other stakeholders. Epstein said he had not made up his mind but suggested that an April vote on the override might be better, perhaps with just an ask to the public to cover just the FY22 budget. A further discussion ensued between the Select Board members about the override and the uncertainties produced by potential reductions in state aid, revenue, and the impacts of COVID-19.

Lubien brought up that the proposed override amount had increased by \$3-4 million after, and in response to, the COVID-19 outbreak. Paolillo said that he had weighed the timing of the override vote and appreciated Epstein's points. Paolillo also emphasized that the Town would likely need another override a few years about the FY22 override and that the Town would have to work toward more structural reform to prevent another financial cliff.

[Open public comment]

- *Ellen Schreiber*: Asked about the definition of minimal level services and how the new expenses when the new high school building opened in Fall 2021 would be factored into the minimal level services amount.
- *Paul Roberts*: Thanked all involved in the work thus far. Expressed that he agreed with Dash's pitch for a November override vote to include as many voters as possible. Encouraged those involved to come to consensus on the override amount and to present it to the public as soon as possible. Roberts asked if the FTF2 or Select Board had considered a "pyramid" override as an option to present to voters.

Caputo said the FTF2 could discuss a pyramid override further and Dash said he was intrigued by the idea.

Caputo agreed and said he would take the issue back to the FTF2 for discussion.

[Close public comment]


Caputo thanked the FTF2 for all of their work, asked all Town leaders to come together to effectively educate the community, and the FTF2 adjourned itself.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn at 8:45pm. (Vote passed 3-0)

Next Meeting:

- July 13, 2020 via Zoom

Respectfully Submitted,

PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

