

Approved by  
the Select Board on:

9/20/2021

BELMONT SELECT BOARD

REMOTE MEETING

MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 2021

7:00 PM

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: September 29, 2021  
TIME: 9:11 AM

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 Mark Paolillo, along with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin, Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall, Director of Council on Aging Nava Niv-Vogel, Fire Chief David DeStefano, and Director of Community Development Glenn Clancy.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Town Day will be this weekend on September 4<sup>th</sup>.
- There will be a 9/11 ceremony at Belmont Police Headquarters at 9 am on Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Belmont Porchfest will be held on September 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Belmont Light Forum on Use Rates will be held on Sept. 23rd at 7 pm.

Beech St. Center.

- 9/11 memorial event Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup> to share memories and watch documentary. Register in advance.
- Africa: A Consummate Challenge, Tuesday Sept. 14 at 1: 15 pm. Register in advance.
- Fall Prevention Strategies and Balance, Sept. 14 from 11 to noon. Call Dana Bickelman 617-993-2977 to register.
- Ice Cream and Apple Pies on Fridays in September between 1 and 2 pm. Register in advance.

Other Events:

- September 21st, Mend Belmont Forum on Race and Inclusion
- September 28th, second Fuel Tank Forum at 7 pm.
- September 26th, Friends of Belmont Library Book Sale.
- October 11th, first Belmont Indigenous People's Day.
- Select Board members announced that they took a tour of the new High School. They were impressed by the innovative and high tech infrastructure. There is an auditorium that can be used for Town Meetings and a Black Box theatre.
- The Select Board members acknowledged the loss of lives for the 13 service members in Afghanistan.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Marie Warner, Town Meeting member, inquired if there would be additional public forums on the ARPA federal funds. Dash replied that there will be additional forums.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

a. Town Administrator's September Bulletin

The September Bulletin has been posted.

b. Update of 125 Trapelo Road

Garvin announced that they have not yet received any reports or updates from the structural engineer hired by the managing company. Donations for displaced residents can be made at [bit.ly/Trapelo125](https://bit.ly/Trapelo125) and on the Town website. She was informed that the Baker administration will be helping house the people at the Marriot Hotel until the structural report is released. Town raised about \$20K for affected residents.

c. Status of Collins Center Community Compact Grant

Jon Marshall reported that the Community Compact funding just opened up and we have applied and are now waiting feedback. Marshall said he has discussed the use of this funding with Long Term Planning and Capital Planning to arrive at the best project for the community.

Paolillo asked if we should continue with the new Finance Director hire before the Collins Center analysis is completed? Marshall said that the duration of the project would be 6+ months so it would probably not be advantageous to wait. They are planning to review all bylaws in other communities and meet with stakeholders.

d. MIIA Insurance

Paolillo wants to know if we should review our coverage on Town property. What if Town property falls on personal property? Who determines the level of insurance we should have?

Dash said it would be the homeowner's insurance that covers it and there is a clause that protects the Town.

Epstein commented that a Town tree falling on personal property is no different than when your neighbor's tree falls on your property.

Garvin said she would reach out to the insurance company and see what securing additional insurance for this type of incident would entail.

Bill Anderson asked to whom the Finance Director would report. He also wanted to know if the Town had considered using another organization other than the Collins Center for our analysis needs.

Garvin replied that she is the direct report for the Finance Director. She also replied that the Collins Center is knowledgeable about municipal finance and Belmont, and it is efficient to use them.

**ACTION BY CONSENT**

FY21 Free Cash Presentation

Garvin presented slides on the Town's Free Cash.

- The FY21 certified Free Cash amount is \$15.7M.
- Factors that affected the free cash amount: COVID impacts, conservative fiscal management, improved efficiencies in the Accounting Office, 25+ vacancies in Town staff, funding uncertainty

due to lack of override, increased turn-backs, challenging hiring market, and release of encumbrances.

- FY21 financial books were closed on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Department of Revenue certified the Free Cash on August 19<sup>th</sup> which is earlier than in previous years.

Supt. Phelan reported on the schools' Free Cash.

- The turnback amount from the schools was \$2.39M. FY20 and FY21 budgets were impacted by COVID. The budget was not entirely expended due to remote learning and use of federal funds. There were also fewer extracurricular activities and reduced transportation needs. Some general operating expenses were covered by relief funds.
- Garvin reported that despite the savings, the Town still has a structural deficit. We continue to look for ways to save money. We will continue to discuss possibilities for funding with the ARPA relief fund and Free Cash and we are going to continue to hold public forums with residents on the use of these funds.
- Epstein observed that turnbacks were much higher than the historical norm, which underscores the difficulty of forecasting in a COVID environment. While this puts us in a better position to budget for FY23, it also shows the need for continuing conservative fiscal management.

PUBLIC COMMENTS on Free Cash:

Dash said it's good to get this Free Cash certification early. He thanked the new Town Accountant, Glen Castro, for completing this task and finding savings.

Paolillo asked how often do we look at encumbrances. Garvin said they have to check with departments before money can be released.

Epstein pointed out that tax receipts broke our way but could have fallen short. It underscores the importance of maintaining a conservative budget policy.

PUBLIC COMMENTS on Free Cash:

Bill Anderson asked how old the encumbrances were that are being released now? Garvin said they were from 2017 and 2018. Garvin said the plan is to review encumbrances more frequently.

#### COVID-19 Update

Wes Chin reported that as predicted, infection numbers are ticking up. We have 92 active cases in August. Roughly 90% of these cases were related to the Delta variant. 40 to 50% are breakthrough cases with minimal to moderate disease. He said they believe that households are the source of many new cases. He warned people to be careful when in public. Wear a mask especially when living with unvaccinated or immunocompromised people.

Chin said the Health Department is discussing partnering with the schools to offer vaccines for children under 12 years of age.

PUBLIC COMMENTS on COVID levels:

Bill Trablicy wanted to know about hospitalization rates and asked when we should start to think of it as an endemic? Given that the Delta virus is mainly transferred indoors after being with others for long

periods of time, he wonders if, in addition to masks, there should be restrictions on the number of people allowed at gatherings?

Chin said he would like to see more of the population get vaccinated to stop the pandemic. He said he does not want to be overly restrictive at this point in time.

#### Update from the Permanent Audit Committee

Bob Keefe, Chair of the Audit Committee, made a presentation about the annual audit report for the Town and Light Department.

- The Audit Committee is appointed by the Select Board on three-year basis. Treasurer and Town Accountant are on the Audit Committee as well. The Town is audited by Powers and Sullivan and the Light Department has a separate audit.
- He reported that no material weaknesses were identified. The Belmont Light Department 2020 financial statements were audited by Goulet and Associates. Each year the Audit Committee reviews this audit with the Town and Light Department. Both audits were completed on schedule this year. He reported that he also expects both audits for FY21 to be on time.

Paolillo asked if there were any issues of concern in the FY21 audit. Keefe said that both the Town and Light Board received comments. One concern was that the Light Board had a fairly high level of unpaid accounts due to COVID. This will be an ongoing issue for FY22 and they are discussing this issue with other committees and departments.

Keefe said that they have been with Powers and Sullivan for eight years. Paolillo asked do we have a policy where we have to go out to bid? Keefe said they have gone out to bid in the last 10 years. We have a contract with them until 2022. Keefe feels they are the best choice at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS about audit:

Bill Anderson asked if there were any conditions that did not rise to complaint and were there any adjustments suggested for internal controls. Keefe replied that the Town only received the lowest level of internal control comments. One comment was with the size of the Light Department financial staff. Adjustments can be made every year, but none rose to significant level. If they were noteworthy, they would be brought to the Select Board.

Garvin said that the Management Letter suggested that the Town develop a formal written policy for indirect costs and she reported that the written policy has been finalized. The Town is also reviewing financial policies and a financial policy document is being developed. The financial policy document will be on the Select Board agenda on Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### Discussion and possible vote to approve charge of the Age Friendly Action Committee

Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of the Council on Aging, updated the group on the charge of the new Age Friendly Action Committee. It was decided that the charge include a nine-person committee whose mission is to implement the age friendly action plan that was voted on in June 2021. Garvin and she talked about the constitution of this committee and how it would differ from the Age Friendly Advisory Committee.



The nine voting members include: public safety, two residents, DPW, housing, library, disability, schools and recreation. Dash said we need to put out the call for volunteers.

Paolillo asked why there is no Council on Aging representative on the new committee. Nava said that she will be on the committee as a non-voting liaison. Nava said that the DPW is important because the action plan involves transportation and outdoor spaces. They discussed whether they have to be voting members.

Epstein feels that Santoro and Marcotte from the DPW have enough commitments on their time already. A member of the Council on Aging should serve on the committee instead and the DPW could be consulted as needed.

Discussion led to agreement that the charge would replace the DPW representative with a Council on Aging representative and Nava should be ex officio non-voting member. There will be ten members and nine voting members.

*Motion was made to approve the formation and charge of the Age Friendly Action Committee as amended above. Motion was approved by a vote 3-0.*

#### Discussion and possible vote on request for a memorial bench at Clay Pit Pond

Amanda Theodoropulos requested the installation of a memorial bench for her daughter Cleo who passed away.

Amanda said she spoke to Mike Santoro about the bench and the location was approved by the Conservation Committee. The bench will be on the Town-controlled portion of land by Clay Pit Pond.

*Motion was made to approve the request to place a memorial bench at Clay Pit Pond. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*

#### Discussion and possible vote to approve request from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Order Sons of Italy of America to host a 5K Road Race on Saturday, October 30, 2021

This is the first time this race has been held. Everything seems in order and they are paying for cleanup and police details.

*Motion was made to approve the request from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Order Sons of Italy of America to host a 5K Road Race on Saturday, October 30, 2021. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*

#### Discussion and possible vote on recommendation from the Transportation Advisory Committee: Student parking on Concord Ave.

#### Discussion and possible vote on Belmont High School student drop off

[Dash suggested that since the above issues are similar that they should be addressed together.]

Glenn Clancy said that on July 15, 2021, the Transportation Advisory Committee held a public meeting about student parking along Concord Ave. 100 student spaces have been approved on the west side bound side of the road. There are three locations: Goden St. to Cottage St., across from Memorial Library and along Clay Pit Pond.

Clancy said there was also a proposal for drop off/pick up locations. The Transportation Advisory Committee did not take action on that request yet. They are still working on the proposal to flip the parking and bike lane on Concord Ave. Clancy said the immediate need is to identify the pick up/drop off spots for the opening of schools.

Supt. Phelan said they are issuing parking passes by lottery to 100 students. They would also like to provide a dedicated pick up drop off area east bound towards Cambridge so students could use the crosswalk. There will also be a separate pick up/drop off area on the westbound side of Concord Ave, for people travelling away from Cambridge.

Phelan said they don't want to use the campus itself for pick up due to bus traffic. When site is completed, then the campus could be used. He wants to follow the current plan until construction is completed. He knows traffic will be congested, but it won't create conflict with walkers and bikers.

[Epstein chaired the remaining discussion on these agenda items because Dash has been recused on high school traffic matters.]

Epstein asked if that section would be posted with signs that say Student Parking Only and whether the passes are non-transferable? Phelan said since a student may use different cars, the permit be designed to accommodate that and that the passes were not intended to be transferable.

Paolillo asked if there is concern that residents would be affected. Epstein said the High School Traffic Working Group will be reviewing the plan after observing conditions when school opens.

Clancy said the parking area has already been restriped. Contractors have been parking there for the last two years and now it will be used for student parking. It is temporary and will be reevaluated in two years. Epstein was not aware of objections to using the west side of Concord Ave, residents seem more worried about the spill over parking on side streets.

Paolillo thinks there will be students getting off at lights in the middle of the street and he suggests that in the opening days, that we need to have police presence. Phelan said that Chief MacIsaac said that the police will be available to observe and direct during the first two weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENTS about pick up/drop off area:

David Coleman, member of the Traffic Advisory Committee, reported that the reason the committee did not follow the recommendation made for drop off zones, is because that it would increase conflict with the current bike lane. They wanted to hold off on a decision until they know if there will be a protected bike lane.

Anne Paulsen feels that bicyclists are being put in a dangerous condition. Clancy said there will be signage about the drop off zone but no advance warning sign for cyclists.

Norma Massarotti, Town Meeting member, asked if the current school design includes on-campus parking or drop off for 100 or more cars. Phelan said the current plan has double access so it has a long stretch separate from buses and walkers and bikers can use sidewalks. Student parking will continue on Concord Ave. and space west of the field. Massarotti asked if we have anticipated any change to the traffic pattern of students due to the traffic proposal. Where will the dangerous areas be located?

Epstein answered that they are now looking at having a no U turn sign on Concord Ave. in order to stop a U turn at Goden St. Clancy said we need to observe to see how students are getting to spots and how they can make it safer. Neighbors are going to be volunteering to monitor traffic flow.

Alison Lenk, Town Meeting member, said this is a good opportunity to ask if the High School Traffic Working Group is looking at completing the Alexander Ave underpass. She thinks this would enable students to walk to school instead of driving. Epstein said there is another group looking at this.

Chi-Ting Huang thinks it would be better to drop off before the crosswalks on the east bound side. Her concern is people may pull over in the bike lane to drop off. Clancy said the location on Orchard St. was designated because there is a pedestrian zone there. Students would have immediate access to signal. Phelan said that if the pick up/drop off area is too far away from the school, then it would not be close enough for parents to use it.

Ali Boroumand said the drop off may impact the queue of the lights. Traffic may back up into Goden and Concord Ave. If this plan is approved tonight, could it be changed in less than two years?

Epstein said that we are approving a plan for a two-year timeframe and then we will look at it again.

Bill Lovallo, Chair of the Belmont High School Building Committee, said the lights will be linked so they don't back up traffic.

Larry Link, High School Traffic Working Group, said we haven't tested the signals yet. Bill Lovallo said that signals are going live, but real test is when school starts. Parents will have to be patient and communicate any issues. He agrees with Chi-Ting, that using points further west on Concord, may be helpful.

*Motion was made to approve the recommendations from the Transportation Advisory Group in regard to student parking on Concord Ave. Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0. [Dash was recused from the vote.]*

*Motion was made to approve the recommendation of the School Administration in regards to the student drop off zone for Belmont High School. Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0. [Dash was recused from the vote.]*Discussion and possible vote on the High School Traffic Working Group redrafted charge

The High School Traffic Working group charge was edited by residents of Lower Goden St. Epstein met with them and revised the document again for consideration by the Select Board.

Paolillo would like to see the working group continue past 2024 and he hopes that recommendations are reviewed quickly.

Epstein said the group plans to act on recommendations by November. He said he thought it would be useful to have one public hearing and then find a solution. The structure of the existing committee was too complicated, and it involved too many department staff. The new structure will include Epstein and Garvin and involve Town staff on an as-needed basis. Because we need additional resident members, we hope to make these appointments quickly.

*Motion was made to approve the High School Traffic Working group amended charge as presented. Motion was approved by a vote of 2-0. [Dash was recused from the vote.]*



*[Dash rejoined the meeting]*

#### Economic Development Committee Update on Local Rapid Recovery Program

Emma Thurston, Chair of the Economic Development Committee (EDC), presented slides on the Local Rapid Recovery project update, a technical assistance program created by the state to achieve recovery goals related to COVID challenges.

She reports that the committee has been involved in a five-month planning process with 128 communities. The focus of the project includes Waverly Sq, Beech St. and Cushing Square.

- Phase I was to identify customers and evaluate the impact of the physical environment. Surveys and focus groups were undertaken with businesses and consumers.
- Phase II (July and August) reviewed feedback from stakeholders and community. Draft recommendations were made for potential grant money. The top ten recommendations are listed on the Town EDC site. The committee determined that wayfinding is very important and signage is necessary.
- Phase III will be the development of a final plan. Deliverables will be an actual report with dollar amounts and timelines.
- Residents can go to the Economic Development Committee site and take the survey. Emma would like feedback from the Select Board and the public so when grants become available they can act on their projects quickly.

The Select Board thanked the Economic Development Committee for their work and stated that it looks forward to future updates from them.

#### Discussion and possible vote on request from Belmont Fire Department to lower all town flags to half-staff the week of September 11-18, in honor of September 11, 2001

Chief Destefano invited everyone to attend the memorial service. It will be held at Fire Department headquarters at 9 am on Saturday. Since not all town buildings will be occupied on Saturday, he is asking if the following week, when Town buildings are occupied, they can lower their flags as well.

*Motion was made to lower all town flags to half-staff the week of September 11, 2021. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*

#### Select Board's sponsorship of the Indigenous Peoples' Day events

This is the first year of the event. Dash believes that the Select Board should be on the list of sponsors of the event on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

*Motion was made to approve the Select Board sponsorship of Indigenous Peoples' Day events being held on October 11, 2021. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*



*Motion was made to go into Executive Session to discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto; Report from the Information Technology Advisory Committee.*

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*Motion was made to return to public session. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*

SELECT BOARD'S COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

[NONE.]

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- a. August 2, 2021 – Regular Meeting
- b. August 16, 2021 – Regular Meeting
- c. August 16, 2021 – Executive Session

*Motion was made to approve the meeting notes as amended. Motion was approved by a vote of 3-0.*

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

*Respectfully Submitted,*



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PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator

