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Minutes  
Town of Belmont  
Select Board

Select Board Meeting Room

Thursday, October 31, 2019

7:30am

APPROVED  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
DATE: 1/13/2020

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A budget meeting of the Select Board was called to order by Chair Tom Caputo. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Select Board member Roy Epstein were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present.

The meeting was posted as joint with the Warrant Committee. The following Warrant Committee members were present: Bob McLaughlin, John Alcock, Jack Weis, Paul Rickter, and Elizabeth Dionne.

**ACTION BY CONSENT:**

**Budget Meetings:**

Chair Caputo requested department heads to provide highlights from their budget and discuss challenges faced by the department.

*Assessors:* Robert Reardon (Chair, Board of Assessors) and Dan Dargon (Assessing Administrator) were present. The Assessors presented a level funded budget, with only step increases for the department. No capital improvements needed, and the department plans to stay level-funded. The Assessors reported expecting a fair degree of turnover of employees in the next year.

*Library:* Peter Struzziero (Director, Belmont Public Library) and Kathleen Keohane (Chair, Board of Library Trustees) were present. A 1.3% increase to the budget from last year owing to contractual obligations including computer services, book budget, other licensing; increases were offset where possible by reductions elsewhere in the budget. Deferred capital outlay included \$12.5k for scheduled replacement of staff and public-use computers, as well as \$50k for replacement of A/C units.

Keohane outlined the main challenge facing the Library was that many core systems – elevator, fire suppression, electrical, etc. – were nearing the end of their useful life. While progress was being made towards design of a new building, if no path forward was identified soon in terms of funding, significant investment would then be required to keep the existing building online. She further noted that addressing some of the core issues could trigger ADA compliance, which would add another layer of costs.

[Warrant Committee questions/comments.]

- *McLaughlin:* Asked about the proceeds from the annual book sale; Struzziero explained the money is raised by the Friends of the Belmont Library and goes towards supporting Library programs. This year they had raised ~\$10k.

*Human Resources:* Jessica Porter (Director, HR) and Shawna Healey (HR Generalist, HR) were present. Porter presented a flat budget; certain line items had been shifted around to more accurately reflect actual allocation of expenses. Due to a recent retirement of a full-time position, Porter was looking into possible restructuring via adding a full-time HR Generalist position, to be shared fifty-fifty with Belmont Light.

The main upcoming challenge for HR was that union contracts were expiring in June of 2020 – this would require substantial resources, and was one of the motivating factors for the addition of the HR Generalist position.

[Warrant Committee questions/comments]

- *Rickter:* Is there consideration of staggering the union contracts in order to spread the workload?
  - o Porter said that she had/could bring it up for negotiation, however there was no appetite to do so from the unions in the previous round of negotiations.
  - o Garvin noted there were pros and cons to having the contracts negotiated at the same time, e.g. if one union goes first it serves as a point of reference for negotiations with the other unions.
- *Alcock:* How has the paid family/medical leave act impacted the Town?
  - o Currently the legislation did not apply to cities/towns.

*Council on Aging (COA):* Dana Leavitt (Assistant Director, COA) was present. Overall increase of 1.6% due to contractual salary step adjustments. Leavitt highlighted the recently launched volunteer driver program, intended to increase transportation access for seniors in a cost-effective way. Garvin added that she planned to meet with the COA to discuss potential use of money from the Uber/Lyft Tax for the upcoming year.

Epstein asked about the 6% increase to the Transportation Coordinator salary; this was a result of additional hours for the volunteer driver program. Epstein commented it seemed 'top-heavy' to have a transportation coordinator responsible for only 1.2FTEs.

*Treasurer:* Floyd Carman (Town Treasurer / Tax Collector / Parking Clerk) reviewed the responsibilities of the Treasurer's Department. Overall, the budget had decreased from FY20, with small increases to non-salary expenses and the Parking Clerk budget offset by decreased salary/longevity costs. Current challenges identified were online security (preventing external access to online banking network) and maintaining the Town's AAA bond rating.

Carman also reviewed a list of longer-term concerns including: the Belmont High School Building project, ensuring MSBA reimbursements and success of the upcoming second round of financing; Library Building project, possible debt exclusion vote; Belmont Light substation project; Community Path funding; possible implications of the Ice Rink project for taxpayers; potential operating override vote in November 2020.

*Department of Public Works (DPW):* Jay Marcotte (Director, DPW) and Mike Santoro (Assistant Director, DPW) were present. A level-funded budget with no staffing changes, aside from a reallocation of one employee to be full-time at the Cemetery. A significant cost driver was the recently signed trash contract. The increase in this contract was a result of changes in the recycling markets - previously it had been free

to dispose of recycling but now it was a cost item for DPW; recycling had also increased while trash had decreased, under the new automated collection program. Significant reductions in other parts of the budget had been made in order to level-fund.

Marcotte also highlighted that water/sewer costs for public buildings were now being absorbed through the Water/Sewer Enterprise Funds. Deferred capital outlays included smaller pieces of equipment across various departments within DPW, such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers, small vehicles, chainsaws, etc.

Challenges identified for the department included: increasing demand for services on same level of staffing/funding; increasing tree damage resulting from storms; snow and ice removal a constant challenge, with added consideration due to the construction at the High School; sidewalks.

[Warrant Committee questions/comments.]

- *Weis*: Commented that certain line items were being understated; and, it seemed as if savings from certain line items were being used to make up for others. It would be better to try to accurately account for each line item if possible.
- *Dionne*: Asked when the trash contract goes out?
  - o Marcotte said it was the second year of a five year contract, with an option for an additional year extension. He felt the contract was signed at a good time, e.g. Boston had just signed a trash contract with higher recycling fees compared with the contract recently signed by Belmont.

*Health*: Wes Chin (Director, Health Department) and Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department) were present. Chin was presenting a level-funded budget. He noted that, were funding available, he would request additional money to go towards Youth Commission programming.

Current issues for the department included addressing vaping use among youth – the department was working with the School and Police departments, and planned to hold an educational event in November. With respect to the rat situation in Town, the reported number of sightings had remained roughly constant over the past three years. There had been increased efforts to address rat problems associated with construction at the High School, and the issue was now under control. The Health Department strongly recommended that residents contact a professional pest control company to deal with rat problems versus self-treatment.

[Warrant Committee questions/comments.]

- *McLaughlin*: Asked about vaping and CBD oil enforcement.
  - o Ekman reported there had been good compliance with the vaping ban among retailers; CBD oil was more of a grey area – the State Department of Public Health has guidelines in place, and the Health Department is continuing to work with retailers on the matter.

*Town Administration*: A flat budget with level expenses. The legal services budget was underutilized in the previous year, however Garvin was recommending a conservative approach in maintaining the level funding of this line item in the event that any lawsuits come up.

Challenges for the department include a significant increase in workload for the department. This was a result of the number of building projects in Town (invoices go through the Town Administrator's office),

an early budget process in anticipation of a potential override, work with the Financial Task Force, the Ice Rink RFP, traffic issues in Town, seeking grant money, committee posting and administration, and more.

[Warrant Committee questions/comments.]

- *Dionne*: Noted the Town Clock application had returned to the Community Preservation Committee's docket, a project which entailed some litigation risks if undertaken.

**Approval of proclamation for tennis courts**

The Board had previously approved a plaque for the courts to be honored in the name of Sgt. Edward 'Teddy' Lee; this proclamation was to be read at the ceremony for installing the plaque.

*Motion: To sign the proclamation for the dedication of the tennis courts at Town Field in honor of Sargent Edward 'Teddy' Lee. (Vote passed 3-0)*

**ADJOURNMENT:**

*Motion: To adjourn. (Vote passed 3-0)*

Respectfully Submitted,

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PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator