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Minutes

Approved by
the Select Board on:

10/28/19

Town of Belmont

Select Board

Joint with the School Committee

Chenery Middle School, Large Community Room

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

7:00pm

CALL TO ORDER:

A meeting of the Select Board was called to order at 7:23pm by Chair Tom Caputo. The meeting was joint with the School Committee to discuss the Skating Rink RFP. Vice Chair Adam Dash and Selectman Roy Epstein were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present. Town Counsel George Hall was present.

Skating Rink RFP/Lease Discussion

Susan Burgess-Cox (Chair, School Committee) noted the Select Board had met the previous evening and invited Caputo to provide an update on the discussion and on the Rink RFP in general.

Caputo explained that Garvin and Wheeler had incorporated feedback from the September 16th public forum; also engaged with Hall to update the lease. At this stage, the documents were nearing final form with mostly minor revisions/changes still ongoing.

The consensus from last night's meeting among the Select Board was that it was advisable to expand the timeline for the project – one, to give potential applicants more time to put together high quality applications; two, to give the School Committee and Select Board more time to review applications and interview candidates. Caputo presented an updated proposed schedule: RFP would go out on October 23 > responses due by December 18th > review applications and interview process > hold a Special Town Meeting in February to approve the lease and address the related zoning matters.

Further comments:

- Garvin explained the date for a potential Special Town Meeting had been discussed with the Town Clerk, and the schedule worked backwards from there to give sufficient time for submission and review of applications. Want to ensure School Committee and Select Board are comfortable with what is ultimately brought to Town Meeting.
- Hall emphasized that pushing back the release of the RFP had allowed for additional iterations of the lease to ensure concerns raised at the public forum had been incorporated.
- Dash situated the pursuit of a public-private partnership for the rink within the Select Board's broader efforts to address the structural financial situation of the Town via outside-the-box, creative solutions.

Burgess-Cox invited comment from School Committee members:

- *Michael Crowley:* Asked about the rationale for holding a winter Special Town Meeting versus waiting until Annual Town Meeting. Also, what were the budget implications for the Town/School?
 - o Garvin said there had already been verbal inquiries made about the RFP by developers and that the documents are ready to go. Therefore, makes sense to proceed if ready, as it will impact financing decisions for potential developers.
 - o Caputo noted there were maintenance/operational costs each year for the existing rink; Epstein noted the cost of providing electricity alone was around \$50k.
- *Tara Donner:* Asked about the process for incorporating any feedback on the current documents, given that the schedule was to vote approval of the RFP/lease on October 15th; Garvin said to submit comments to herself and Wheeler, and Wheeler would provide an updated redlined copy.
- *Amy Checkoway:* Expressed appreciation for the collaborative approach taken over the summer as well as more recently in incorporating feedback from the public forum.
- *Catherine Bowen:* Asked about the scoring system that would be used; Wheeler explained each criteria would be assessed a score of 1, 2 or 3 corresponding to 'not advantageous', 'advantageous', and 'highly advantageous'. Each evaluation criteria was equally weighted.

Burgess-Cox also thanked Garvin and Wheeler and others for their efforts drafting the RFP and lease. She thought that a February Special Town Meeting was appropriate, as it would allow a potential developer the necessary time to get up and running and therefore have the best chance for success.

[Burgess-Cox opened the meeting for public comment.]

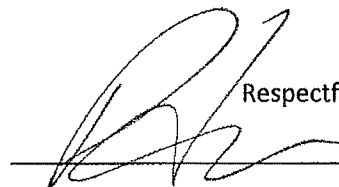
- *Anne Paulsen (90 School St.):*
 1. The location is difficult for this size of rink due to the traffic – neighbors are concerned about having 1.5 sheets, cars constantly coming and going.
 2. Concern that 1.5 sheets on the site would close to the door to having tennis as a viable varsity sport – where was there room to have the 5 tennis courts necessary to hold an event? It was unfortunate that tennis was the sport most impacted by the new school design and there has not been public discussion around getting rid of tennis.
 - o Superintendent Phelan responded that he had been in contact with Recreation Director Marshall to put in a capital request to add a court at Winn Brook. With respect to public discussion of tennis, he noted that the original request was to maintain all sporting facilities, however this was not possible given the constraints. The site design had been made available early on in the process, and always lacked tennis courts.
- *Maryann Scali:* Added to Paulsen's comment re; public discussion on tennis, that she felt answers about what would happen with tennis at the new High School had not been made readily available/transparent in the process. Also expressed concerned about the impact of traffic of the new rink to the existing bad traffic on Concord Ave.
- *Fred Paulsen:*
 1. Should make certain elements of the RFP/lease as non-negotiable requirements, e.g. public skating times, parking requirements. He felt the RFP should be limited to a single sheet rink.

2. What is the alternative/fallback option if negotiations with a potential developer fall through? Have yet to see the Town owned and operated option outlined in detail, including benefits from having a Town owned rink.
 - o Crowley followed on the second point, asking Epstein specifically his assessment of the economics of a Town owned rink versus a public-private partnership.
 - o Epstein put an estimate for a new rink with 1.5 sheets at ~\$12m if the Town were to build it, slightly less for a single sheet. It was his understanding that one motivation for having 1.5 sheets was to have a richer programmatic offering. He did not see a better way to proceed given the current financial situation of the Town. It was his hope that the process would encourage a creative solution for the site, similar to his experience with the Police Station renovation project. Finally, he had made phone calls with operators of other public-private rinks recently established, to varying levels of success – and one had even offered to show him financials.
 - o The Select Board expressed commitment to ensuring Town's needs are met through a public-private partnership. If no suitable proposal is put forth that meets the Town's needs then at that point will have to look at other options, but it was felt it is owed to the tax-payers to run down this option.
- *Tim Flood (Precinct 5):*
 1. Has the new rink been looked at as a potential venture of the Recreation Department? Garvin commented that progress towards setting up a Recreation Enterprise fund was being made, something would be brought to the upcoming Fall Town Meeting.
 2. Will cost of repairs be provided to the current rink while the RFP process plays out?
 3. Reality is the Town will need operational overrides on a regular basis going forward – should make this explicit and put a plan in place so people expect this.

[Close public comment.]

ADJOURNMENT:

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


Respectfully Submitted,

PATRICE GARVIN, Town Administrator