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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2005
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

Call to Order

A regular session of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Questions from Town Residents

There were none.

Action by Writing

Belmont Center Parking Study Committee Chair re: Parking during Holiday Season

The Board moved: to approve the request for increased holiday business parking in the Claflin lot, as requested by the Belmont Center Parking Study Committee Chair, on behalf of the Belmont Center merchants in his memorandum to the Selectmen dated October 19, 2005.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Planning Coordinator re: Building Permit Fee Waiver Request for Brighton Street Affordable Housing Development

The Board moved: to approve the building permit fee waiver request for Brighton Street affordable housing development, as requested by Planning Coordinator Jeffrey Wheeler in his memorandum to the Selectmen dated October 24, 2005.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Belmont Housing Authority Chair re: Request for Increased Lighting on Town Owned Land

The Board of Selectmen reviewed a request from Belmont Housing Authority Chair Sallye Bleiberg to authorize additional lighting on Town property at the end of Midland Street, as documented in her memorandum dated October 14, 2005.

The Board moved: to authorize Town Administrator Younger to make a decision on this request in conjunction with the Light Department.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Other

There was discussion of a letter to the Board of Selectmen from a resident relative to a parking issue on Myrtle Street across from the high school fields. The Police Department is working on this with the neighbors.

Selectman Firenze reported that he had been told that the Belmont Country Club board voted to approve the Woodfall Road land swap. Mr. Younger is working with Town Counsel on getting the legal paperwork done.

There was discussion of holiday displays in Belmont Center and the legal issues surrounding symbols such as a menorah which can be construed as religious. Selectman Brownsberger reported that Town Counsel had indicated these types of displays are legal provided that more than one faith tradition is represented and no group is denied if they wish to add their symbol to the display. The Board expressed interest in involving a local interfaith religious council in this process.

The Board discussed updating the Town's Open Space plan and asked Mr. Younger to look into the status of this.

Action by Appointment

Discussion of Board of Selectmen Schedule and Goals

The Board of Selectmen began its discussion by talking about its own meeting schedule for the next two months. Mr. Younger presented a three-month calendar showing the various meetings that Board members will be attending. He said he is working with Information Technology Director Dave Petto to set this up so the Selectmen can access and edit this from their home computers.

The Board then discussed the revised goals document prepared by Mr. Younger and a spreadsheet framework that had been used in the past which the Board liked. Mr. Younger agreed he was comfortable with that format and noted the importance of updating it monthly. He will incorporate revisions from this point on in that format.

Objective 1: Develop new sources of revenue.

1. Develop plan to triennially review fees. Compared to other communities, and with community feedback. In conjunction with all department heads. Target date for completion: Last week in January.

2. Review and create plan for PILOTs (Payment In Lieu of Taxes.) These are payments by property owners who are tax exempt but receive town services. In conjunction with Assessor and Treasurer. Due: June 30.
3. Review possible disposition of other Town-owned land. Looking for parcels less than an acre that are not contiguous to other town land with an eye towards disposing of them. The Board noted this was done two or three years ago for parcels over a certain size. With Planning and Assessor. June 30.
4. Review and revise, if possible, current process of collection of overdue taxes, water and ambulance bills. With Treasurer. End of March.

Objective 2: Develop, maintain and implement controlling health care costs.

1. Review with Human Resources Director and appropriate Committees various options which could be proposed to lower health care costs. Negotiating with the unions, not necessarily on premium percentage but perhaps on changing the deductibles which could benefit both the employee and the Town. With Health Insurance Advisory Committee.
2. Review possible regionalization of certain health services with other municipalities. This would enable a larger risk pool. This was looked at some years ago but needs to be re-examined.
The Board asked to get an interim report from the Health Insurance Advisory Committee by the end of 2005.

Objective 3: Develop and maintain regional opportunities for the Town.

1. Review shared services opportunities with surrounding municipalities for possible future implementation.
2. Review purchasing opportunities with surrounding municipalities for possible future implementation.
3. Review expanded use of purchasing through the State Contract program for both school and general government.

The Board of Selectmen noted that the budget process, while an obvious part of the Town Administrator's job, is so important that it should be its own Objective #9. With the Warrant Committee. This should include looking at tax relief for seniors and low-income households.

Selectman Brownsberger noted this is the first budget with this team and they will have to have a conversation about how to proceed in developing the Board's own budget position. There was discussion of zero-based budgeting, preparing dual budgets.

Objective 4: Redefine the Town's Engineering, Community Development, Planning and Economic Development Functions

The Board expressed the need to clarify what are these functions and how to structure them.

1. Hire new Planning and Economic Development Manager (2 weeks to 30 days from now).
2. Develop outline of comprehensive planning process and role of all groups involved. Working with the Planning Board to be more proactive than reactive. The Board discussed having a special session with all entities involved in planning just to look at this issue after the new manager has had a chance to settle in.
3. Streamline permitting process. This had been looked at a couple of years ago but never really bore fruit.
4. Define road and intersection construction program including overall cost projection. New software could allow the Town to use the web site to help schedule this in a way that residents could view. The Board discussed areas like Prospect Street where underground wires are very old and unprotected and how to include this in the planning. Coordinating with utility providers.
5. Design and complete monthly review of capital projects. These reviews are already being done now.
6. Assist the Belmont Center Planning Group in overall visioning of that area.
7. The Board added: Looking at how other communities structure this (benchmarking)
8. Selectman Brownsberger added: water quality, storm, and sewer infrastructure planning.
9. Selectman Brownsberger added: regional traffic planning.
10. The Board added: Open space planning
11. The Board added: Purecoat.
12. Selectman Firenze added: Commuter rail stop – planning for possible elimination or consolidation to one stop.

Objective 5: Review Town Management of Facilities

1. Review centralized building maintenance for both general government and the school department.
2. Review privatization of both the skating rink and pool functions. This has started.
3. Review progress of ESCO project and evaluate the success of the project when completed (expected by end of FY06).
At this point in the meeting, Selectman Brownsberger's children appeared before the Board in Halloween costumes for trick or treat.
4. Complete transaction to deed Brighton Street property for housing.
5. Begin negotiations with Archdiocese of Boston for continued use of the Senior Center. This is being worked on.
6. Develop RFP for construction of Senior Center, if approved. And if not approved, plan for what to do next.
7. Develop and execute RFP for Center Fire Station. Already in progress.
8. Develop and execute RFP for Woodfall Road property.
9. Begin process for the disposition of the Harvard Lawn Fire Station.

10. Begin process for reuse of the Light Department Building.
11. Selectman Brownsberger added: Incinerator site.
12. Selectman Brownsberger added: Highway yard.

Objective 6: Assist in public/private partnership regarding development or land conservation

1. Reviewing underutilized private developed land, specifically the DeMilia property. With Economic Development. June 30.
2. Continued progress in Trapelo Road renovation project. Specifically, get this project on the TIP.
3. Continued progress in Pleasant Street construction project.
4. Board - Uplands property

Objective 7: Improving communications

1. Continue monthly meetings with senior citizens to update them on local matters.
 2. Expand use of Town's Web Page. Examples – capital project updates, road construction updates.
 3. Utilize newspapers to deliver weekly reports and project updates.
 4. Update study of whether committees are posting their minutes on the Web site.
 5. Update committee personnel database.
 6. Quarterly newsletters or FAQs or white papers.

Objective 8: Address Personnel Management and Development

1. Develop and complete annual reviews of department heads. There was discussion of whether to stagger this by anniversary date or do it all on one date. Selectman Firenze suggested that it is preferable to do all reviews at the same time. He noted that staggering them raises the possibility that outside considerations and the overall performance environment could change over time and unfairly impact one employee's review differently than another.
 2. Design professional development plan for department heads.
 3. Develop succession plan for department heads.
- The Board asked Mr. Younger and Mr. Conti to revise the document for its review, including some prioritization and definitions of success in each area.

The Board of Selectmen then returned to examining its meeting schedule for November and December. The special session on planning will have to wait until after the New Year. The Board noted its plan to address the Building Committee issue on December 5. The Board considered when to discuss its budget process as mentioned earlier.

Mr. Younger suggested that going forward, the first and third Mondays could be regular operational meetings and the second and fourth Mondays could be left open for special topics. The Board agreed to implement this.

There was discussion of what would be covered in a budget meeting and what types of budget requests the departments are submitting (i.e. level service, level dollar, wish list, zero-based).

Selectman Firenze suggested putting the Health Insurance Advisory Committee on this calendar somewhere. Other suggestions for special topics were roads and the Harvard Lawn Fire Station.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported the new cell tower site has been approved by the FCC and the Historic District Commission and is going to the provider for approval. This will mean revenue for the Town, better cell service and better service for our emergency personnel. Selectman Firenze noted the importance of reviewing what type of fencing should be used to ensure an appropriate level of security.

Selectman Firenze asked that certain issues the Board perennially asks about be tracked by Mr. Younger and Mr. Conti and that something be circulated to the Board on a regular basis with the status of these issues.

Mr. Conti reported on Sherman Street parking issues and noted that he is trying to move forward with painting crosswalks at the intersection of Sherman and Waterhouse as a first step towards continued progress on the larger issue.

Mr. Younger noted that he has requested department heads to respond to his inquiries in no less than 8 days and that department heads have been meeting this request.

The Board adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator