

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES JAN 11 9 11 AM '13
FINAL

DECEMBER 12, 2012, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

Present: Chair Lynch; Members Allison, Baghdady, Bruschi, Dash, Epstein, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin; BOS Chair Paolillo

Members Absent: Libenson, Millane, Sarno, SC Representative Slap

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Lynch.

Chair Lynch welcomed the Town Moderator, Mr. Widmer, who was present to speak about state revenue and the outlook for FY14.

State Revenue – Mike Widmer, Belmont Town Moderator

Mr. Widmer indicated that state revenues are running behind budget. He discussed the mid-year state budget gap, noting that national growth slowed in 2012, which reflects the fact that the economic recovery is lagging.

Interim Budget Cuts FY13

Mr. Widmer stated that some of the Governor's proposed mid-year budget cuts would require legislative approval. He said he has a hunch that the Legislature will not approve cuts to local aid but that it makes sense to plan for the cuts. Mr. Widmer indicated that reduced revenue and the significant use of the state's rainy day fund to close the budget gap will adversely impact FY14.

FY14 State Revenue Outlook

Mr. Widmer noted that FY14 will be a difficult budget year, since a significant amount of one-time money has been used in FY13. Revenue is expected to grow at 4%; however, there are a lot of national and worldwide risks that could impact that growth.

There are two possible tax increases being considered. One is an increase in the gas tax to fund transportation. Also, the Massachusetts Coalition for Communities is working hard to organize unions (as well as local government groups) to raise the income tax to fund education and human services programs. The Governor, Mr. Widmer said, will probably not propose both increases.

The Governor will present his budget in January to the Legislature. The House and then the Senate will take up the budget. Mr. Widmer said that the fluidity of the budget process will make it difficult to predict the FY14 revenues. He said the State will try to level-fund Chapter 70. Mr. Widmer also said that there may be changes to the

Governor's cabinet announced shortly, which may impact the budget process.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 11/28/12 were approved, with two abstentions.

Minuteman Update – Bob McLaughlin

Member McLaughlin informed the WC that there is an identified team of people from Minuteman that agreed to meet with representatives from Belmont to discuss our concerns. He indicated that there will be a meeting next week to discuss the issues that Belmont raised regarding Minuteman.

Subcommittee Update – Subcommittee Chairs

Culture and Recreation

Chair Grob noted that the subcommittee will be discussing the previous years' recommendations, including combining the Recreation, Board of Health, and Council on Aging departments. She said that the subcommittee will also look at benefited part-time positions and how they play into the budget

Public Works

Chair Epstein noted he will begin subcommittee meetings in January.

General Government, Public Safety, Education

Chair Lynch said that the General Government, Public Safety and Education subcommittees have met.

Reserve Fund Transfer Request from the DPW

Chair Lynch noted that the DPW has made a Reserve Fund Transfer request as a result of Hurricane Sandy. Member Epstein said that the subcommittee will meet in January to consider the request and make a recommendation to the WC.

Revenue Projections – David Kale, Town Administrator

Mr. Kale distributed a handout. He began by saying that this is a starting point with regard to preliminary revenue estimates, as there are a lot of moving pieces. He reviewed the pertinent revenue numbers, which were included in the handout.

He reviewed several revenue assumptions, including property taxes, state aid, and other available revenue. Mr. Kale then highlighted the fixed-cost assumptions, including the

overlay reserve, state charges, and debt service. He noted that the retirement assessment actuarial study will be completed in January. Regarding Minuteman, he is using a 5% increase as a placeholder.

Adjustments will be made, he said, as more information becomes available.

Member Allison offered that the gap is not as cataclysmic as expected. BOS Paolillo agreed.

Updates: Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board

Chair Lynch noted that he attended the joint SC/BOS meeting. He informed the WC that the Superintendent wrote a letter to NEASC, which is on the School Department website. SC Rep Slap, he said, may provide an additional update when the WC meets again.

Planning Board: Member Baghdady noted that the PB is working with the Cushing Village developer and that progress has been made. He said the PB received feedback from neighboring residents. The developer is likely to move forward with permits next year.

Member Baghdady noted that the dispensing of marijuana will be a hot topic in the new year for zoning and planning boards. There will be many issues to wrestle with regarding this topic and the PB will begin to discuss this issue in January.

Board of Selectmen: BOS Chair Paolillo stated that the joint meeting with the SC focused on the budget process for the upcoming budget season. No budget numbers were discussed during the meeting.

He then noted that the Board held two Precinct meetings last week whereby an array of issues facing the town were discussed with TM members.

He met with Belmont's new Representative, Mr. David Rogers, and conveyed that Belmont needs the state to at least level-fund local aid, if not increase it.

Public Contributions

[There were none.]

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 8:47 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary