

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Chenery Middle School, Community Room
Wednesday Evening, February 8, 2006, 7:30 p.m.**

The Belmont Capital Budget Committee met in joint session with the Belmont Warrant Committee and the Belmont Board of Selectmen. Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. The members of the Capital Budget Committee that were present were John Bowe, M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, Jennifer M. Fallen and Angelo Firenze. All of the members of the Board of Selectmen were present: in addition to Mr. Firenze, they are Paul Solomon and William Brownsberger. Various members, constituting a quorum, of the Warrant Committee were present. In addition, the following Town employees were present: Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant; Thomas Younger, Town Administrator; Jeffrey Conti, Assistant Town Administrator; and Glenn Clancy, Community Development Director. After the separate committees had been called to order, Ralph Jones, Chair of the Warrant Committee, presided over the joint meeting.

The only order of business was consideration of a proposal to recommend to the Board of Selectmen establishment of a stabilization fund that would be funded by a Proposition 2 1/2 override. The proceeds (proposed at \$3 million) would be devoted to the Town roads or to pavement management, and \$1 million would be deducted for FY 2007 from the traditional annual capital budget appropriation of about \$2 million. Thus, an additional \$1.0 million of the general tax levy in FY 2007 could be available for the current operating budget.

The discussion began with Mr. Younger reporting the answers that Town Counsel had provided in response to questions propounded to him before the meeting by Mr. Jones. Mr. Younger reported: The language as drafted and presented by Town Counsel could include all engineering and drafting services for roads. Can these funds be spent on debt service for road work? - yes, as long as there is a TM vote for this purpose. Each year the TM would be asked to appropriate funds from the Stabilization fund. Each year the BOS would vote to continue to raise funds into the stabilization fund and put funds onto the TM for an appropriate vote. Can the funds be carried forward each year if not expended? Counsel stated yes. This "yes" assumes that the full amount is appropriated by the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting, and the Department to which it is appropriated merely fails to spend it in one fiscal year. If the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting fail to appropriate the full \$3 million for and from the Stabilization Fund, the omitted amount does not carry over but must be re-voted as an override.

At the conclusion of Mr. Younger's report, it became apparent that certain members of the Warrant Committee had a different impression concerning some of the matters touched upon by Town Counsel, and that further inquiry would have to be made before the matters were fully understood.

Next, Mr. Jones turned to Mr. Clancy, who had come prepared with a PowerPoint presentation. Rather than take the time for a PowerPoint presentation, however, Mr. Clancy distributed in hardcopy the slides that he had prepared. During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made. In recent years, the Capital Budget Committee has funded programs for Town roads that are not included in the usual

definition of “pavement management”. For fiscal 2007, for instance, there are pending requests to fund projects concerning Trapelo Road and Pleasant Street that are not considered part of “pavement management.” In addition, there have been sources of funds for additional road work that has come from sources other than the general tax levy, (for instance, the so-called “chapter 90 funds”). Mr. Jones assured the meeting that the proposal does not have anything to do with projects that are funded from other sources than the general tax levy. Members of the Capital Budget Committee iterated the point that if \$1 million were taken from the usual \$2 million devoted to capital projects from the general tax levy then the non “pavement management projects” would have to be funded from a reduced capital budget.

Mr. Clancy explained that in the first year, Community Development could fund all projects outside the narrow reading of “pavement management” from funds and projects that were currently pending.

Members of the Capital Budget Committee protested that there are always projects to be dealt with beyond the narrow reading of “pavement management” and that the current proposal did not free up \$1 million that could be taken from the usual capital budget general levy appropriation without squeezing the full road request to say nothing of other departments in Town. At that point, some members of the Warrant Committee protested that unless the over-all proposal would result in an additional \$1 million redounding to the benefit of the operating budget, they could not support the proposal. They would call for an override for the benefit of the operating budget.

Mr. Brownsberger suggested that the proposal should be one that encompassed all roadway expenses whether within the current narrow definition of “pavement management” or not. Other members of the Warrant Committee pointed out that several years ago there had been an override in connection with which it was promised to the voters that \$1 million would be devoted to roads. Thus, a \$3 million proposal (the current one) plus the previous promise should result in \$4 million being spent on roads. It was also pointed out that in a previous appearance before the Warrant Committee, Mr. Clancy had indicated that a substantial portion of the current “pavement management” cost could be attributed to the current practice of including granite curbs and sidewalks rebuilding whenever there was “pavement management work” being done on a particular street.

The opinion was expressed that the obligations facing the Town were such that the taxpayers in Town could not pay for such a program, and that curbing and sidewalk replacement would have to be abandoned. Others expressed the opinion that curbing was a part of a sound pavement management program and that only the sidewalk portion should be abandoned. Others pointed out the importance of sidewalks to some townspeople.

Members of the Warrant Committee iterated that the current proposal was only acceptable if it resulted in \$1 million more being available for the operating budget. A proposal to add \$3 million for roads to an existing promise of \$1 million would not be acceptable. Another member of the Warrant Committee indicated that the override proposal could be explained to voters as a new \$2 million for road work and \$1 million for the operating budget. Thus, \$2 million could be added to the existing \$1 million for roads, resulting in \$3 million for roads and \$1 million more could be provided to the operating budget. The ensuing discussion made it clear that there was a consensus that

the \$3 million road budget should be an all-in budget, for all road work, not just the narrow definition of “pavement management.” Furthermore, a consensus emerged that the proposal should be explained to voters as \$2 million more for roads and \$1 million more for the operating budget. In this way, \$1 million could be raised for the operating budget without decreasing the appropriation for capital items and funding would be available for the road work that was not within the narrow definition of “pavement management.”

Various members of the Capital Budget Committee and the Warrant Committee expressed the view that a road budget of \$3 million might not allow the Community Development Department to improve the road system in Town to the point where it could be easily maintained. In response, it was proposed that the override be increased to \$3.5 million but that proposal did not become a consensus. Mr. Clancy indicated that even though a \$3 million budget would not be enough to bring all of the Town’s road network up to a sustainable level, it would be enough to improve the arteries and collector portion of the road system, the portion that is currently being concentrated on, to a maintainable level.

A member of the Warrant Committee moved and another member seconded that a \$3 million override be recommended to the Board of Selectmen to be used to create a stabilization fund for use on road projects in the broad sense. Based upon the discussion before and after the motion this was understood to be made a proposal that \$2 million be added to the \$1 million already set aside for roads, and \$1 million be made available for the current operating budget. Furthermore, it was understood that the broader sense meant that the entire road budget should be included within the \$3 million figure and that chapter 90 funds would be outside the proposal. After the Warrant Committee and the Selectmen voted by majority vote in favor of this motion a vote was taken by the Capital Budget Committee. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 (Brusch, Bowe, Fallon and Clark) to one against (Firenze). Mr. Firenze asked to explain his vote. Mr. Firenze explained that while he agreed that the issue should be presented to the voters, he did not support the override itself.

At 9:40, a motion was made by a member of the Warrant Committee to adjourn and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark, Secretary