

**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

2014 NOV 19 AM 8:28

**OCTOBER 1, 2014, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Libenson; Members DeStefano, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Mennis, Schreiber, Starzec; BOS Chair Rojas; School Committee Rep. Lougée

Town Administrator Kale

Members Absent: Dash, Epstein, Grob and Sarno

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Libenson.

Chair Libenson began by turning to the first item on the agenda.

Introduction of New Members

Chair Libenson introduced the newly appointed Warrant Committee (WC) members and welcomed them to the table: Mr. Joe DeStefano, Ms. Ellen Schreiber, and Mr. Ed Starzec. Each appointee then provided brief overviews of themselves.

Chair Libenson also welcomed Board of Selectman Chair, Andy Rojas and the new School Committee Representative, Anne Lougée. He then introduced himself, as did the other Warrant Committee members.

Report of Nominating Committee and Officer Elections

Chair Libenson asked Member McLaughlin to report out for the nominating committee. Member McLaughlin informed the WC that the nominating committee met over the summer. He then offered the following nominations:

Member McLaughlin moved: To nominate Member Libenson as Chair of the Warrant Committee (WC), to nominate Member Manjikian as Vice Chair of the WC, and to nominate Member Epstein as Secretary of the WC.
The motion passed unanimously.

Warrant Committee: Role and Objectives

Chair Libenson distributed a handout and stressed that the WC's core duty is to *advise* Town Meeting members on appropriations. However, the WC may opine in other situations that have a meaningful financial impact on the town. Additionally, the WC will help to evaluate and present the budget to TM in the spring. The WC, he continued,

serves as a non-partisan, non-advocacy group – one that provides an unbiased form of guidance on financial issues that come before the town.

The WC then discussed briefly the timing of the amendments, a subject raised by Member Fallon. Chair Libenson and BOS Chair Rojas agreed that the often very short lead time presents a challenge.

Chair Libenson raised the issue of whether or not the WC report template should be modified. This is a topic that will be discussed at a future meeting.

Member Manjikian informed the WC that the annual meeting of the Mass. Association of Town Finance Committees will be held on Saturday, October 18, in Franklin, Mass. The meeting fees are covered by the town.

Also, the Board of Selectmen will offer a Precinct Meeting on Monday, October 20 to present on the topic of OPEB.

Review of 2014 Financial Results, including Revolving Funds

FY14 Revenue Analysis

Mr. Kale offered a review of the FY14 financial results. He explained the timeline for closing out the fiscal year. He informed the WC that the Financial Task Force has been meeting and will offer various recommendations toward the beginning of the year. The Task Force will be involved in some long term budget planning, as well, looking out at FY16, 17 and 18 budgets.

Mr. Kale reviewed the revenue estimates noting certain items where the revenue was adjusted. He discussed revenue with regard to: property taxes, new growth, free cash, PILOT, ALS, various fee collections across town (Treasurer's Office, Town Clerk, Library, Recreation Department, etc.)

Regarding building permits, Mr. Kale noted that this is a tough number to estimate as the number of building projects varies from year to year. He said the estimate tends to be conservative as a result of the challenge in predicting an accurate number.

Mr. Kale then reviewed the state aid figures. He explained that sometimes the state will reimburse the town for extreme weather conditions, but that the money comes in the following fiscal year.

Regarding the ultimate revenue reconciliation, Mr. Kale informed the WC that there is about \$2M in unanticipated revenue (as a result of conservative estimates) that will replenish free cash. Mr. Kale explained that he could have budgeted the revenue estimates closer to the actuals, but in that circumstance, if no money is left over, it becomes difficult to replenish free cash.

FY14 Expenditures

Mr. Kale reviewed some areas where expenditures were less than expected, which resulted from several vacant positions (salary savings), fewer elections than anticipated, etc. He then reviewed many of the town budgets, with regard to expenditures. In the end, expenditures were about \$1M less than expected.

Belmont Center Reconstruction Project

Mr. Kale reviewed potential bonding scenarios to finance the Belmont Center Reconstruction project. He noted that the town has applied for a state grant (Mass Works) and that there are other potential sources of revenue that could offset the cost of this project, but the timing of those sources is unclear.

Chair Libenson noted that the WC may need to meet with the Capital Budget Committee regarding the financing of this project.

BOS Chair Rojas said that the one-time revenue sources include the sale of Woodfall Road as well as the sale of the parking lot in Cushing Square.

Chair Libenson clarified that a total of \$3.3M will be reverted back to free cash (once it is certified by the state). Mr. Kale then reviewed the free cash balances, noting that there will be money available to fund a one-time project, such as the Belmont Center Reconstruction project.

The WC discussed the financing of the Belmont Center project.

Revolving Funds

Mr. Kale informed the WC that the Revolving Fund accounts stayed within the expenditure limits.

FY14 School Department Financial Review

SC Rep Lougée began by stating that the budget was balanced and that the reserve fund transfer helped the schools in balancing the budget. She added the certain freezes and some attrition also assisted the school budget. Roughly \$6K is being returned from the budget. She explained the impact of maternity/paternity leaves on the budget. Regarding unanticipated expenses for FY14, she reviewed that 18 FTEs who were brought in (in the form of SPED aides), the fuel conversion at the high school (came in higher than expected), and the repairs to the Higginbottom pool were among the unintended expenses that impacted the FY14 budget.

Chair Libenson raised the topic of the school's SPED stabilization fund. He said this will be a topic that the WC will revisit, especially with regard to the circumstances under which this fund will be tapped into.

The WC asked several clarifying questions.

Chair Libenson asked about the increased enrollment. SC Rep Lougée said 113 new students are in the system, noting that this impacted several grades.

Chair Libenson noted that, at the October 29 WC meeting, he would like to review the Q1 numbers for FY15.

Subcommittee Assignments

Chair Libenson distributed a handout detailing the 2014/15 subcommittee assignments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 6/11/14 will be resent to WC members and voted at the next meeting.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, Planning Board, and Minuteman

Minuteman: Member McLaughlin brought the WC up to date on the amending of the Minuteman District agreement. Belmont voted to “pass over” because the plans for the new school remain unclear, the non-member towns are not contributing to capital costs, and it is unclear how many towns will try to leave the district.

He then stated that Minuteman had, over the summer, revised the amended district agreement. He explained some of the changes, including letting non-member towns “reserve seats” as well as member towns becoming non-member towns and then also reserving seats.

Regarding the size of the school, it has been determined that it will be a 628 student school. Member McLaughlin then proposed his vision for Minuteman.

Board of Selectmen: BOS Chair Rojas reported that the BOS is hosting a Precinct Meeting on Monday, November 3 (at the Chenery Middle School) to discuss the post closure of the incinerator site. Remediation of the site as well as post closure uses will be explored. He provided some background information on the survey, the appraisal, and the sale of the site.

BOS Chair Rojas and Chair Libenson encouraged the WC to attend the October 20 Precinct Meeting which will explore issues relating to OPEB.

School Committee: SC Rep Lougée reported that eight families needed to be re-directed away from their local schools. She then touched on the staffing changes throughout the system. She provided an update on contract negotiations and noted that one contract

remains to be ratified (AFSCME). She noted that the Leadership Council (led by Superintendent Phelan) met and established three goal areas for the year: safety, addressing the increasing enrollment, and enriching the social and emotional curriculum (especially at the elementary levels).

Planning Board: Member DeStefano reported that the PB is meeting to try to expedite the Cushing Village project. He said they are also working to streamline the General Residency process.

Chair Libenson said that the WC will likely meet again on Wednesday, October 15. He said the WC will need to review minutes and review the WC template to see if it requires modifications.

Public Contributions

There were none.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:31 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary