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**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
FINANCIAL TASK FORCE
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Friday, January 9, 2015
8:15 AM**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Financial Task Force (FTF) was called to order in open session at 8:19 a.m. by FTF Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Town Administrator David Kale was present, as was Assistant Town Administrator Phyllis Marshall.

FTF Members Present: Superintendent Phelan, Mr. Tony DiCologero, Mr. Justin Amico, Mr. James Williams, Ms. Anne Marie Mahoney, Mr. Paul Lisanke, Ms. Laurie Slap, Mr. Floyd Carman, Mr. James Tzouvelis, Ms. Anne Helgen, Mr. Charles Laverty, Mr. Angelo Firenze, and Mr. Daniel Dargon

Members Absent: Ms. Laurie Graham, Mr. Charles Clark, Mr. Andrew Levin, and Mr. James Conroy

Chair Paolillo reviewed the agenda and noted that the meeting would begin with the Education working group's executive summary report. Mr. Carman and Ms. Mahoney will also report out this morning on the Revenue and Capital summaries, respectively.

Chair Paolillo stated that the Town Government report should be summarized next Friday, 1/16. The WC (among others) has provided feedback to the report. The numbers are pretty solid. A vote will be taken with regard to putting an override on the ballot for the spring. The Board of Selectmen meets on Monday, 1/26, at 8:00 a.m., and the FTF will be in attendance. The Board will not vote at that meeting on the FTF report, but they may give feedback and ask questions. However, when they meet on February 2 at 7:00 p.m., a vote to endorse or not endorse the FTF's recommendations will be taken.

Chair Paolillo said that Precinct Meetings will likely be scheduled (one in February and one in March). These will be joint meetings with the FTF and the BOS. The FTF's recommendations will be presented. Working Group Chairs should be expected to present the work that has been done over the past year. He said it is expected that the conversation is fact-based and not emotionally driven.

Reports by Sub-Committee (Working Groups) Chairs

Education – Modeling Report

Superintendent Phelan began with the Modeling Group's Executive Summary in draft form. He reviewed the eight modeling groups and touched on the projected needs based on the highlights from the eight reports. The Leadership Council, within the School Department, offered

recommendations in the areas of increased enrollment, budget shortfalls, and space needs. Space and enrollment are the two biggest pressure points for the system, which leads to the need for more staff. Several such positions, directly related to enrollment and social/emotional learning, were laid out.

Superintendent Phelan provided more details on the staffing needs (detailed on page 4 of the draft report). He underscored the fact that increased enrollment is driving the need for additional staff.

With regard to the high school, there are hundreds of students at any given time who are not involved in classroom activities. The Superintendent explained that space is a critical issue at the high school as well as at the middle and elementary schools. Space needs, along with staffing needs, are a result of the burgeoning enrollment.

Superintendent Phelan noted that two additional ELL teachers will be needed and are mandated by the state. If funding for these two positions is not made available, other staff will need to be let go in order to hire the two ELL teachers.

Superintendent Phelan then discussed that revolving accounts and LABBB credits are now exhausted, yet there are outstanding bills that need to be paid.

In conclusion, the Superintendent reiterated that the space needs are dire, as are additional staffing needs – to address enrollment as well as to address the needs of students who are struggling.

FTF members asked clarifying questions and offered comments. Specifically discussed was the salary number of \$67K used in determining the “average” teacher salary. Superintendent Phelan explained the process regarding hiring staff. An applicant’s experience and what is specifically required for a position is looked at first, then their education level and years of experience are slotted in.

At this point, the FY15 School Budget is currently running at a \$500K deficit. The Superintendent reviewed the measures being used to contain the budget. At this point, the conversation cycled back to the increasing enrollment. Enrollment data, by grade, will be pulled together.

Mr. Firenze noted that, while there is a sense that more money could be spent, every year, Belmont does well and remains a strong school system. The Superintendent offered that the strength of the families and a strong teaching staff are keeping the system strong. Children in this district are “well fed and well bred,” he said. However, the enrollment numbers will surely challenge the status quo of the strong system. The students need to be engaged in more enriching academic experiences during the school day.

Revenue Opportunities

Mr. Carman noted that the report consists of an analysis of potential revenue opportunities:

1. town fees – we are doing well overall and Belmont fees are comparable with other like communities
2. parking revenue – \$50K in revenue will be coming in from new parking fees
3. PILOT programs – \$37K is presently coming in, he is working with Belmont Hill School to explore opportunities
4. new growth opportunities – in areas of Town such as South Pleasant Street, etc.
5. sale of town-owned property – several major pieces of property that are being explored (Woodfall Road, Wellington School land, Snake Hill Road plot, Mill Street barn)
6. cellular antennas – they are currently on the assessors books
7. naming rights – Chair Paolillo expressed a desire to move forward on this topic
8. facility fees
9. Parks and recreation revenue opportunities – Ms. Helgen noted that she looked at other similar towns to see how the recreational departments are run, e.g., charging fees, raising income. Other towns have a Recreation Enterprise system – which generates about \$350K per year more than Belmont. Belmont manages the programs in a fragmented, ad hoc manner. Things to look at include charging market rate fees to use the pool, rink, field house, etc., leveraging the assets we have, and creating efficiencies with our assets.

There are four Recreation revenue recommendations:

1. hire a professional, experienced Recreation Director who understands how to run a department, how to generate revenue, etc.
2. consolidate town and school recreation assets
3. permit town and recreation fees through the recreation department
4. create a Field Management Task Force to manage field fees

These recommendations could generate about \$350K over the first three years. Hiring a Recreation Director and combining town and school recreation operations are the two critical pieces.

Capital Budget Projects

Ms. Mahoney informed the FTF that the major projects and the year-to-year capital requests were analyzed. Location and necessary funding are keys to anything going forward.

She reviewed what has been accomplished over the past decade, e.g., fire station, Harris Field, Wellington, Underwood Pool, new Light Department, and the Belmont Center Reconstruction Center.

The items that still need to be done include: Belmont High School (BHS), the Incinerator site, DPW, Library, Police Station, the Skating Rink, and the White Field House. Figuring out potential locations and identifying the costs are the next steps for each of these projects.

The concern with a new BHS is the high cost. If this moves forward, will anything else be able to get done? Concerning the Police Station and the DPW – locations for both of these remain challenging. The Library site also remains an issue, as does its dependency on the state grant cycle. Synergy, with regard to what would work well together, was looked at. A new Minuteman Voc. Educ. Building will be a cost for Belmont, but its location is determined.

Regarding Pavement Management, there is never enough money to fix the roads. The elementary schools will need renovation at some point (it has been 35 years) and additional space may be required as well. The rink needs work, hopefully not using taxpayer funds.

Ms. Mahoney then reviewed the priority list, noting that the actual prioritization totally depends what *criteria* is being applied.

- 1 – BHS
- 2 – Incinerator site
- 3 – DPW
- 4 – Library
- 5 – Police Station

The financing was then examined. Ms. Mahoney stated that these projects are expensive. How much can the community support?

She then reviewed smaller capital needs, e.g., a BHS alarm system, school maintenance needs, etc. The Capital Budget needs more consistent money so that maintenance needs can be attended to before the need grows very large, thus making the project much more expensive. In other words, deferred maintenance causes us to pay more.

Town Government and the Financial Projection Model

Mr. Kale will review these reports next week.

Next Meetings

Friday, January 16 at 8:00 a.m.
Friday, January 23 at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes of December 19, 2014 were not approved at this meeting.

The FTF moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 a.m.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator