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BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

FINAL

JUNE 15, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Alcock, Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Lisanke, McLaughlin, Sarno, Schreiber; Selectman Baghdady; School Committee Rep. Burgess-Cox

Town Administrator Kale

Members Absent: Helgen, McVay, Mennis, Starzec

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Libenson.

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

Approval of Minutes

One set of minutes had been previously approved without taking into account certain edits, so there was a vote to reconsider that set to allow a re-vote with the new information:

Member Gammill moved: To reconsider the minutes of 5/25/16.
The motion passed unanimously.

The full minutes of 5/25/16 were then approved with one abstention.

The minutes of 6/6/16 were approved with two abstentions.

The General Government Subcommittee minutes of 5/2/16 were unanimously approved by that subcommittee.

Debrief on Fiscal Year, WC Role, WC Survey

Chair Libenson stated that the WC will take up the end-of-year survey, but first will engage in a debriefing of the past year.

Member Epstein proposed that the WC might want to reconsider voting on zoning articles. The WC, he said, should perhaps only vote on articles where there is an explicit appropriation or expenditure of funds, and otherwise vote only where there is a financial impact where the direction is readily known, even if not quantifiable. The WC, therefore, ought not to routinely vote on zoning articles.

Member Dash said that it might be helpful for TM to have the WC's insight on zoning

articles. Member Epstein replied that WC members are often well-informed about non-financial articles and could speak up at TM as individuals. Member Gammill said that he is sympathetic with this view but perhaps the WC could be more selective in which zoning article it opines on. Member Fallon said she struggles with the WC making recommendations on amendments to the zoning articles given that there is often no time to dive in and make a thoughtful recommendation. Member Epstein said he would like to offer changes to the policy around submitting amendments before TM. Allowing amendments only three days before TM does not allow for careful consideration.

Member Sarno added that the financial implications of zoning articles might not be clear to Town Meeting, and it might therefore be useful to have the WC weigh in – there may be value in adding the WC’s analysis, even if it is not unanimous. Member McLaughlin agreed that the WC should weigh in on all zoning articles because they all have a financial impact.

Member Libenson stated that, when there is not time to thoroughly analyze a zoning article, perhaps that should be explicitly stated when the WC’s vote is reported at Town Meeting. Member Fallon suggested that the WC have a liaison to the Planning Board in order to provide more information on the various articles. Member Libenson said that he tried to have a PB member attend WC meetings, but that it did not work out this year. Selectman Baghdady agreed that it is helpful to have cross representation. He added that the WC may want to continue to weigh in on zoning articles on a case-by-case basis.

Member Gammill noted that next fall the WC will need to address the available revenue number, which will require more complex analysis.

Discussion of Summer Work

Chair Libenson began with the “longer term financial forecast” as a summer topic. Member Epstein agreed that long-term financial modeling is something to look into and also perhaps it would be useful to meet with the “working group” that is studying pension. Member Gammill raised the rising school enrollment issue as a school budget driver that might be useful to focus on. It was noted that this issue remains pressing but that the Ed subcommittee did not have an opportunity to dive into this this past year. There is a study on enrollment that is presently underway (it was put forth by the Superintendent via the Belmont High School Building Committee).

The WC briefly discussed the process by which long-term forecasting could be explored this summer. Member Epstein will be the point person on this topic.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Minuteman

Board of Selectmen: Selectman Baghdady reported that the BOS will hold a Memorial Ceremony on Saturday, June 18. The traditional Memorial Ceremony and Parade were cancelled due to rain on Memorial Day. He then thanked the WC for a year of good work. The Pension report, he said, has been very useful, as was the Minuteman analysis.

He acknowledged Chair Libenson for his three excellent years as WC Chair.

School Committee: SC Rep Burgess-Cox reported that the SC met recently and discussed the budget. She added that an advertising policy was established. The policy will be posted on the website.

Member Schreiber requested that the Belmont High School Building Committee be added to the “updates” section. Chair Libenson stated that the new WC Chair can certainly do that. Chair Libenson then explained the process by which a new WC Chair will be selected.

Minuteman: Member McLaughlin reported that the process of meeting with Minuteman has continued. A meeting is scheduled soon with representatives from the existing member towns as well as DESE and MSBA. He then explained possible next steps. Belmont’s withdrawing from the district will likely be explored. A referendum election is possible, as well. The situation, he said, remains fluid. Member Fallon stated that, if Belmont withdraws, a plan for educating the voc tech kids will be needed. Chair Libenson said that the other six withdrawing towns may send their kids to Minuteman as non-member towns. He added that Arlington passed its Debt Exclusion, which means that Belmont is the only town that stands in the way of the new building.

Issues relating to Minuteman were explored.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 8:20 p.m.

WC Survey

Chair Libenson then requested that WC members take a few minutes to complete the end-of-year survey.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary