

Warrant Committee FY06 Meeting Minutes
March 22, 2006
7:30 p.m. Chenery Middle school, Community Room

Handout(s) distributed tonight are:

1. Information release prepared by BOS regarding the Road Stabilization override
2. FY07 "Level Service" Budget Adjustments and Other Items considered by the School Committee
3. Proposed WC article for a By Law Change to Article 18 "Recreation Commission"
4. Existing Article 18 of the Belmont By Laws
5. Association of Town Finance Committee newsletter dated March 2006

Member(s) absent: None

Also present: Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Town Administrator Thomas Younger, and School Committee Member Miller.

WC Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

Minutes of 3/15/06 – Accepted after several changes (two abstentions Members Bruschi & Oates)

Draft Letter regarding the Road Stabilization Fund

This was discussed extensively and changes were made until the document was acceptable to all present.

Budget Structure should the Override Pass

Member White stated that we originally started with a deficit of \$725K, with the inclusion of the school revolving it is reduced to \$625K. Another \$300K of expenses that had been put into the capital budget submissions and should be operating expenses brings the total to \$925K, if split equally would be a \$465K each. Member Widmer explained that last week there was another \$67K of additional expenses for the school recognized within those figures.

School Chair Gibson distributed a new exhibit on school expenses. This six page handout restores the library aides, spends \$140K in revolving accounts, recognizes increased costs for SPED tuition and custodial cleaning award, and restores a HS secretarial position. In effect these changes to the budget have absorbed the \$140K in additional revolving account funds.

Tiers of reduction have separate assumptions that match the various assumptions that were presumed by the Town. Finally Exhibit 5B shows what each budget option represents for cuts. A correction on increased revenue to \$322K should be replacing the \$359K that is being used by the charts presented by the School Committee.

Member Allison had some trouble matching the cost of each specific item within the tiers to the B-5 chart. This makes it difficult to weight the different values. Member Curtis

explained that this was a more macroscopic presentation to show what life will look at various budget levels. This is not a financial detail but a different kind of document. Member Doblin explained that the \$140K of school revolving would allow for the shortfall of \$1.1M to be split between town and school (\$550K each) and helping to mitigate the shortfall to the schools. This shifts the contribution to “before the starting point”. Member Curtis pointed out that the Summer School Revolving account does not appear on this spreadsheet but is in fact an available account. School Committee Member Miller explained that some of those funds will be also used for school athletics – not paid directly from that item but to substitute those summer school funds for funds in the school budget freeing up money for athletics.

Capital Budget Committee

Member Bruschi stated that the CBC has met with all the department heads and the CBC will be making decisions next week which is three weeks ahead of the prior years’ schedule. At last week’s meeting of the CBC there was a straw vote. Of the original \$1.9M of items that qualified for the definition of capital budget there is now \$1.2M. This was from the sheet given out several weeks ago. The next category of routine, recurring items that should be in the operating budget include software licensing issue of \$125K and all the other costs are computers for the school and do not belong in the capital budget - \$240K and a little to the library. The third item for maintenance \$365K grew to \$501K once the departments were more specific. Only \$125K was for the schools (carpeting). The two critical items are: the fire escape exit (\$35K) at the top floor of town hall and life safety (\$95K) = \$130K. The financial software is not in any of the figures given but the funding is included in the debt service. Total of these are \$480K of which \$240K is for schools and \$240K for town. Missal has stated that nothing in the capital budget rates a higher priority than his tiers. The CBC total is still higher than the funds available but decisions have not yet been made.

Member Hobbs stated that we still have an option to bond if necessary for needed capital projects. CBC has not yet done their priorities. These decisions will be made at their meeting on 3/31/06.

FY2007 Budget

How to split this \$1M shortfall and how will it effect either budget? School would be taking out all of tier 1 and about half of tier 2. Tier 2-4 were at one time broken out and are now combined.

Member Widmer reminded the Committee that free cash continues to be an option for at least a portion of this \$1M shortfall. Chair Jones asked that the school and town look at exactly what will be cut. Member Callanan would also like to see what is not funded in the capital budget. Member Doblin would like to see what the impact would be on the reserve policy should free cash be drawn down. Chair Jones was optimistic that the problem can be solved of this \$1M shortfall should the override pass.

Other

Member Brusch is concerned about the cuts to Recreation since a cut in programs should the cut impact their revenues.

Clarification of assignments for Budget Book – these were due next week but with the delay in the TM budget votes, this can be delayed.

BOS Chair Solomon would like to delay those budget votes to May 22 and May 24th which look like the most logical dates at this point. There are key TM players that cannot attend at other times. This pushes back the date that subcommittee reports will be due.

Chair Jones distributed a draft warrant article on the change of the Recreation Department head reporting to the Town Administrator rather than the Recreation Commission. This language will be discussed with the Recreation Commission before the final language is put on the warrant. There is a draft item that has been included already as a place holder for the TM. There was some concern that the Town Administrator would be appointing the Director but that the Recreation Commission would be responsible for the operations of the department. The suggested change would be to have the BOS responsible for the operations of the department and would appoint the Director. Town Administrator Younger suggested that having the operation and Director oversight be under the Town Administrator since the BOS do not meet during the summer. Member Brusch suggested looking at the structure that is used for the COA Director. Member Fitzgerald suggested changing the article to reflect that fact that facilities are now under the oversight of the public works director.

There was some question about whether there would be meeting on 4/12/06 and perhaps that meeting can be rescheduled for another evening. 4/11/06 Tuesday would be the only other date that can be used. A space will have to be reserved. (The BOS Meeting Room has been reserved for 4/11/06)

The WC has requested a draft of the TM warrant for next week. This will give WC information on the articles that will need to be opined on by the WC. Also, decisions need to be made on the items that can be delayed until the May TM. In May we have meetings scheduled on the 3rd, 10th and 17th.

For next week the Town and Schools will need to have their priorities identified of \$500K of cuts. There would continue to be an option of using additional free cash or bonding of some capital items.

Member Heigham moved adjournment at 9:32 p.m.