

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **April 28, 2010, 5:30 p.m.**

- **Belmont High School Auditorium**

- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Becker, Brusch, Callanan, Dash, Epstein, Hofmann, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, Millane, Smith; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Chair Rittenburg

- Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg, Superintendent Entwistle, BOS Paolillo

- Members Absent: McLaughlin

- The meeting was called to order at 5:37 pm by Chair Curtis.

- Chair Curtis began by informing the audience that this will be a meeting of the WC and not a public hearing.

- ***Discussion and Vote on Articles 11 and 14***

- Chair Curtis said that Article 11, which authorizes the expenditure of the revolving fund account needs WC approval.

- Member Hofmann moved favorable action of Article 11.

- Member Brusch asked for a list of the accounts. She reviewed the accounts.

- The motion passed unanimously.

- Regarding Article 14, Chair Curtis noted that the WC had asked why the proposed fee is \$15.00 and not \$30.00. The answer, he said, is that \$15.00 covers the cost of the procedure.

- Member Brusch moved favorable action of Article 14.

- The motion passed unanimously.

- ***Discussion of Town/School Revenue Allocation***

- Chair Curtis provided some background information. On March 24, the WC voted a split which allocated 57% of the available revenues to the schools, and 43% to the town. Superintendent Entwistle and Town Administrator Younger budgeted to those numbers. On April 14, those budgets were presented to the WC. Curtis stated that he asked Selectman Paolillo to meet with the town and schools to see if the allocation line could be moved – e.g., the town would explore transferring money from general

government to the school. The town was able to allocate \$300K to the school budget (\$240K from the Capital Budget and \$60K from the public safety overtime budget). The WC then asked what would be restored on the school side with this money.

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- BOS Chair Jones stated that the Board of Selectman are opposed to any additional cuts to the general government side budget. He explained that an additional request of \$370K is normal for a given year, but that this year is not normal and that money is very tight. The proposal to eliminate the COA – which equaled \$370K – is one that the Board opposes.

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- BOS Chair Jones said that both the schools and all government departments are at risk with the non-override budget. He acknowledged that SC Chair Rittenburg needs to advocate for the schools and that he himself will advocate for seniors, children, civic unity, tax payers, and a compromise. He acknowledged that the COA provides important services.

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- SC Chair Rittenburg said she advocates for investing in the community and in a full range of services for all its citizens. She said she is not advocating for taking away services, as that will be up to the taxpayers, but that she will remind citizens of the value of education.

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- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support the Board of Selectmen’s recommendation to transfer only \$300K – \$240K from Capital Budget and \$60K from public safety overtime.

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- (Discussion ensued; the actual vote is recorded below.)

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- Member Callanan asked what are the Capital Budget cuts within the \$240K reduction?

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- Member Bruschi replied that most likely the school portion of the Capital Budget will get eliminated, e.g. the high school uni-vents and/or the envelope project. Member Libenson noted that there are more services that we value than we have funds to pay for. The WC, he said, has begun looking at the budget programmatically and asking what are the core services in the town. The lack of money will force difficult choices and the program budget approach helps inform those decisions.

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- The WC discussed how the \$670K request from the school side came to be. SC Chair Rittenburg said that the \$670K list came from a WC request to list the priorities of what would be restored. Dr. Entwistle came to the table with \$670K. Member Dash asked about the Library Aids. Given that TM has placed importance on these positions, why are they omitted? Dr. Entwistle replied that the line is drawn differently this year as a result of the under-funding. The \$670K reflects the priorities to restore and this amount was a tipping point to restore a significant portion of the 25 people who would be losing their jobs.

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- Chair Curtis noted that the \$1.7M in free cash will not be used, as this money is needed as a reserve for worse times to come in the future.

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- SC Chair Rittenburg said she is not surprised that the town finds itself in such a difficult financial situation, as it has not had an operational override in years. There are painful decisions before us, she said, and we will need an infusion of revenue to support what we value as a community. Member Smith noted that, while eliminating the COA would be a dramatic cut, the school cuts are facing very serious cuts as well: teachers, guidance counselors, text books, and library aids amount to significant cuts in education.

- BOS Jones agreed and added that the Board will discuss an override proposal at its Monday night meeting at 7:00.

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- Member Hofmann's motion passed with 14 in favor and 1 opposed.

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- Member Hofmann moved to adjourn at 6:22 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

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- WC Recording Secretary