

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **May 4, 2011, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

- Present: Chair Allison; Members Baghdady, Becker, Brusch, Callanan, Dash, Epstein, Grob, Lynch, Manjikian, Sarno; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Representative Slap

- Town Administrator Younger and Town Accountant Hagg

- Members Absent: Libenson, McHugh, Millane, and Smith

- The meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm by Chair Allison.

- Chair Allison began by reviewing the evening's agenda and turning to the Special TM Warrant Articles.

- ***Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles***

- Chair Allison began with **Article 2: Snow and Ice Removal**

- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 2.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 3: Capital Expenditure Transfers of Funding**

- Member Brusch explained the Capital Expenditure process, e.g., fund reversion used for orphan projects or roads/sidewalks. There is a list of items that this money will be used for. Member Becker asked why this money is not placed back into the general fund. Member Brusch said it could be, but it is used for other projects.

- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 3.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- ***Discussion of All Remaining Warrant Articles of Annual Town Meeting***

- **Article 3: Transfer of Balances**

- Town Accountant Hagg noted that she is placing \$2M into the operating budget.

- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 3.
- The motion passed unanimously.

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Article 4: Budget Approval

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- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 4.
- The motion passed unanimously.

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Article 5 – Salaries of Elected Officials

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BOS Chair Jones said that the Board of Selectmen will vote on this article on Monday night. Regarding the Town Clerk's (TC) salary, Chair Allison informed the WC that she filed a motion as an individual to amend the salary. She noted that the WC recommended last year that the salary be \$60K. However, it appears that that salary is below the midpoint of comparable towns. The WC suggested a 4 % increase, the Town Clerk has recommended a 25% increase.

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Member Epstein recapped last year's thought process. He noted that the median for like towns with a like population was about \$60K. He said the data was categorized and analyzed along several dimension (town population, geographic location, etc.), but that the starting salary of \$60K kept coming up, so it seemed like a reasonable number. Mr. Younger asked about the survey. Member Epstein said it was data from the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA). BOS Chair Jones asked about the data on salaries over time. Member Epstein said that the "over time" piece wasn't analyzed. BOS Chair Jones said that the salary of the TC position has declined since in 1999, given that the new TC started at \$60K, which is where the previous TC started in 1999. Chair Allison said salaries for TC positions may be declining across the board. Member Bruschi explained the history of the salaries and grades starting about 10 years ago. Mr. Younger named the other Grade 18 department heads across town. He said he thought that the mid-point for that grade was about \$69K. Member Epstein said that grades aren't relevant to this position, as it is elected. Chair Allison said that none of the department heads are receiving increases, with the exception of three that are below the mid-point. Mr. Younger said that raises for department heads for FY12 will be discussed over the summer. Member Lynch asked about the budget for potential increases. He also asked what the percentage of increase was for those who are getting raises.

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The discussion continued with Member Epstein reiterating that the market data indicates that the salary figure that was put forth last year and approved by Town Meeting was appropriate. BOS Chair Jones said that the TC is getting a salary set by the WC and not the town officials, e.g., BOS Chair, HR Director, etc. Member Dash said that the WC was funding the position, not the individual person. He said the TC was getting the approximate same increase as the Treasurer. He said the grading system may need to be looked at going forward. Member Callanan said she supports what Member Epstein put forth. Member Epstein said that the WC recommended a salary but that TM debated it extensively and took a vote. Member Lynch said he was appalled that a 20% or more increase was put forth in this economic environment. BOS Chair Jones reviewed the salary increases of the TC and the Treasurer.

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- Chair Allison motioned: That Article 5 be amended to reflect a base salary of \$62,400.

- The motion passed with 12 in favor, 1 opposed.

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- Next, the WC looked at the salaries of the Town Moderator, the Board of Selectmen, etc. Member Epstein asked if the salaries have increased for FY12. The answer was no.

- Regarding the Town Treasurer, Member Epstein said that the General Government subcommittee did not discuss the Treasurer's salary. BOS Chair Jones reviewed the Treasurer's step raises. He asked for the rationale of the various increases. He said if there is a process for raises, he wants to make sure that it is followed consistently.

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- Member Lynch agreed that the process should be consistent, but if the Treasurer put forth 3%, that is what should be voted on (not 4%). Member Epstein said the process for the Treasurer position should be looked at. Mr. Younger said he would look at other communities.

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- Member Callanan moved: To approve Article 5 (with the TC salary amendment).

- The motion passed unanimously.

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Article 6 – Noncontributory Pensions

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- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 6.

- The motion passed unanimously.

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- Chair Allison noted that there is no choice but to accept this article or face litigation.

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Article 7 – Contributory Pensions

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- BOS Chair Jones noted that this is a large number and again we must contribute or face litigation. The Retirement Board, said Chair Allison, has not done a sensitivity analysis nor as yet responded to several other questions posed by the WC.

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- Member Epstein moved approval of Article 7.

- The motion passed unanimously.

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Article 8 – Highway Improvement Funds Appropriation

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- Member Brusch moved approval of Article 8.

- The motion passed unanimously.

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Article 9 – Appropriation of Capital Expenditures

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- Member Grob asked a question about the Belder Bus – is it a need or an opportunity? Member Bruschi said that \$13K would be the contribution from Belmont after the grant of approximately \$65K and it seemed appropriate to move forward, given that a new bus would be needed in a year or two. Mr. Younger said that a Lexington regionalization opportunity was being explored which could save Belmont about \$5K.

- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 9.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 10 – Storm and Sewer**

- Member Bruschi moved approval of Article 10.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 11 – Revolving Funds**

- Chair Allison confirmed that the ambulance revolving fund is no longer a part of this. BOS Chair Jones noted that the Library Trustees want to increase their possible spending from \$10K to \$15K. Member Bruschi noted that this was necessary to replace the copy machine.

- Member Bruschi moved approval of Article 11 as amended by the Library Trustees and without the ambulance revolving fund.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 12 – Cemetery**

- Member Bruschi moved approval of Article 12.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 13 – This article has been withdrawn.**

- **Article 14 and 15 – Pipeline Assistance**

- BOS Chair Jones explained the Articles.

- Member Lynch moved approval of Article 14.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- BOS Chair Jones moved approval of Article 15.
- The motion passed unanimously.

- **Article 20 – Stretch Code** – Chair Allison confirmed that the WC was unanimously opposed to this article (when the vote was taken).

- **Summary** – Chair Allison said that the WC is now ready for TM. She reviewed why the numbers look better than expected. The total savings sum is larger this year than the year-to-year increase in available operating revenues because of substantial cost savings achieved by several Town departments.

- Chair Jones said that Article 20 (the Stretch Code) will be taken up after the Budget is passed (Article 4). Member Becker noted that she was not present for the WC vote. Chair Allison will count her vote as an abstention.

The WC Report

- Chair Allison said that the WC needs to be prepared to respond to questions on the report, and that each member is responsible for responding to detailed questions on the subsection for which he/she was the primary author. The WC briefly discussed the WC report. Chair Allison thanked the WC for its work on the report and then acknowledged the extraordinary efforts of Member Epstein and Member Sarno with regard to the WC Report.

Discussion of Briefing Session

- Chair Allison asked that, other than getting more TM members to come, how could the briefing be improved for next year? Suggestions included: having a microphone for audience members, emailing TM members closer to the date of the briefing, and having the camera move to the speaker when he/she speaks. The WC agreed to hold another briefing next year.

Announcements/Updates

- Chair Allison said that pre-TM WC meetings will be posted, but that she expects those meetings will not be necessary. Regarding upcoming meetings, on May 18, Vice Chair Lynch will Chair the meeting and review the previous year. The WC will meet once in June (June 15) to review various accounts. At that time, the longer-term issues and policy recommendations raised in the subcommittee reports will be reviewed.

Approval of Minutes for 4/20/2011

- The minutes of 4/20/2011 were approved with one abstention.

Wrap-up/Adjournment

- BOS Chair Jones moved to adjourn at 8:59 pm.

- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary
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