

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room
Thursday Evening, January 8, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. (The meeting was originally posted for Room 4 of Town Hall but was held in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.) Members of the Committee present at the time of the call to order were: M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte, Jennifer M. Fallon and Anne Marie Mahoney. Also present were Thomas Younger, Town Administrator, Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee, and David Petto, Information Technology Manager. Ann Rittenburg joined the meeting during Mr. Petto's presentation. Daniel Leclerc joined the meeting just after the vote of the Committee with respect to Mr. Petto's presentation.

The Committee had the following material before it:

1. Agenda for the meeting prepared by Mark Clark, Secretary.
2. Drafts of minutes of meetings 4/3/08, 4/17/08 4/28/08 and 6/16/08.

Mr. Petto distributed two pages extracted from Capital Budget requests for FY2009 that describe the two additional programs he wished with the members of the Committee. During Mrs. Brusch's discussion of the business and schedule facing the Committee, she distributed a supplemental memorandum from the Police Department. Those two items were:

3. Town-Wide FY09 Network Technology and Core Needs Capital Requests.
4. Memo dated November 26, 2008 from Police Chief Richard J. McLaughlin to Pat Brush (sic) chairman of this Committee; subject Capital Budget Updated Review and Requests.

Organization of Committee for 2009
(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch noted that this is the first meeting of the Committee to prepare for FY2010. The first order of business is, therefore, the organization of the Committee for the FY10 season. Mr. Clark asked Mrs. Brush whether she would accept a nomination as chair. She reapplied that she would. Mr. Clark nominated Mrs. Brusch and Mrs. Mahoney seconded the nomination. There were no further nominations. Mrs. Brusch inquired whether Mr. Clark would accept a nomination as Secretary. He replied he would with the caveat that he would miss at least two meetings of the Committee. Ms. Fallon nominated Mr. Clark as Secretary and there were no further nominations. Both candidates were elected unanimously to their respective positions.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting

(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)
Meetings of 4/3/08, 4/17/08, 4/28/08 and 6/16/08

Mrs. Brusch called for consideration of pending minutes, referring to the fact that drafts of minutes of meetings at the end of the previous season were attached to the Agenda. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meeting of 4/3/08, 4/17/08, 4/28/08 and 6/16/08 were approved as presented.

Report From David Petto
(Item 5 on Committee Agenda)

Mrs. Brusch moved immediately to a presentation from Mr. Petto. With the help of descriptions extracted from FY09 Capital Requests, Mr. Petto reminded the Committee that FY09 has contained an \$80,000 appropriation for a storage and recovery program and a \$30,000 “virtualization” program. Some of the virtualization software had been purchased with other funds at the end of the previous fiscal year and Mr. Petto has found that if he moves \$20,000 from the virtualization project funding to the storage funding, he can complete the virtualization project and expand the storage project. He wishes to do so and asks for the Committee's approval.

Mr. Conte asked Mr. Petto whether there is a back-up site for the Town of Belmont (schools as well as non-school functions) outside the Town of Belmont. This lead to a colloquy between Messrs. Petto and Conte during which Mr. Petto reported that he is looking into that question now and there is a state IT group looking for a site in Western Massachusetts.

Upon motion by Mr. Clark, seconded by Ms. Fallon, the Committee unanimously approved Mr. Petto's requested transfer.

General Discussion of 2009 Schedule and General Matters
(Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

Mr. Younger reported that he had just received word that the state legislature would give the governor the power to make cuts in the current fiscal year state budget. These cuts might include local aid including school aid (*e.g.*, grants for the kindergarten program and special education). Furthermore, Mr. Younger has “frozen” all capital projects that were approved last year that had not yet been expended or committed to vendors. This “freeze” does not include the pavement management program.

Mrs. Brusch pointed out that this Committee will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen, the Warrant Committee and the School Committee at the Chenery Middle School next Wednesday (January 14) at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the FY2010 budget. She also pointed out that not much money can be expected to be gathered from the remainder of earlier capital appropriations because a thorough and vigorous effort was made to

comb through those accounts this past fall in order to capture funds to help pay for street lights dealt with at the Special Town Meeting held on December 1, 2008.

The Capital Budget portion of the FY2010 budget has not been finally set yet but tentatively the capital budget committee will receive a \$1.758 million allocation. This is to be compared with an allocation of \$2.1 million for FY2009. Since the allocation includes \$1 million for the Pavement Project, only about \$750,000 will be available for non-road appropriations.

Mr. Leclerc introduced the matter of the “stimulus” package being put together by the incoming Obama administration. He reported that Ralph Jones is working on the Belmont response but Belmont had received its request on Friday, January 2, in a letter dated December 31, 2008, and setting a deadline for responses on the afternoon of the day that the Committee was meeting, January 7. Despite a number of difficulties, Belmont will be making a comprehensive response.

Mrs. Brusch explained to Ms. Rittenburg and reminded the rest of the Committee that in June (of 2008) the Committee had made several recommendations to the Board of Selectmen concerning the process for development of the FY2010 capital budget. This recommended procedure included both a format and a schedule. In general, the development of the FY2010 capital budget is consistent with these recommendations. The process began earlier; is being integrated with the process of developing the operating budget; and Mr. Younger will offer his recommendations for the development of the capital budget. As in the past, members of this Committee will develop questions in writing with regard to the FY2010 capital requests. Mrs. Brusch will gather the suggested questions, coordinate them and consolidate them and resubmit them to the department heads. In the past, some of the department heads have responded to the questions in writing and some have delivered their answers as part of their oral presentation.

Mrs. Brusch pointed out that the Police Chief had provided a new capital budget request memo covering more of the issues called for by the new procedure and that the Library had done a very thorough job of complying with the new procedure.

During the general discussion, several topics were covered. Although the Health Department made no requests for FY2010, it will submit a five-year plan. This Committee as well as the Warrant Committee continues to be very interested in developing a vehicle policy for the Town. Mr. Younger will report on the vehicle issue to the Board of Selectman on January 26, 2009 and will distribute a list of so-called take-home vehicles. (The Board of Selectmen sets the policy for take-home vehicles, what, how many vehicles of what sort are needed and what kind of vehicles are shared.) Ms. Fallon pointed out that it is important to decide who will manage a pool of vehicles if vehicles are to be pooled. The mail pick-up routine was cited as an example of redundancy. Only a vehicle for Building Services and several for the Department of Public Works are being requested this year. It was pointed out that the mileage reported for some vehicles to be replaced seems low. In response to the question of why hybrid

vehicles are not being purchased and the prediction that the same question will be asked at Town Meeting, Mr. Younger pointed out that the pay-back period for such vehicles is very long.

The Library has received a grant from the state that will expire if not accepted by December. Acceptance would require an override and plans be developed by that time. Currently, the location of a new library for Belmont is in question. The Town will still be eligible for future rounds if we don't go forward at this time but Belmont's place in line in this round would be lost. Mr. Clark stated his view that the north side of Concord Avenue should be approached as a comprehensive unit for planning and development purposes. Very specifically, he is of the view that development of a library and renovation of the High School should be coordinated.

Ms. Fallon pointed out that once again the requests for security items are seemingly inconsistent with the plan that was described in previous years to the Committee. She indicated that the Committee needs assurance that requests are being made according to some rational and comprehensive program. By consensus, the Committee agreed.

Mrs. Bruschi pointed out that there has been some confusion about the larger groups that have met to plan for the Town's financial affairs. These have included the so-called "mega group" and the so-called "blueprint project". The membership of these two groups has not been consistent. The chairmen of the Warrant Committee and the Capital Budget Committee will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Monday evening, January 11, 2009, to discuss how to proceed. All financial committees in Town (the Warrant Committee, the School Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the Capital Budget Committee) will meet on Wednesday evening, January 14, 2009, to discuss the FY2010 budget (including the possibility of an override). This Committee has previously indicated that its portion of the annual budget should be about \$3.5 million. This includes the regular (but in doubt for fiscal 2010) allocation of about \$2.0 million so it is a increase of about \$1.5 million. That sum includes \$1 million for the roads but does not include the amount for the Pavement Management program that was the subject of last year's unsuccessful override proposal. This sum also does not include the many repetitive or smaller items that are capital from an accounting standpoint but are not treated as capital for the purposes of this Committee. This Committee believes such items should be funded but in the current operating budget, not in the capital budget. (Examples are capital maintenance, turn-out gear, hoses and police cruisers.)

The Committee turned to the matter of establishing a schedule for the winter and spring of 2009 (in preparation for the April 27 Town Meeting and FY2010). Mrs. Bruschi pointed out that the schedule she is proposing assumes that the budget for the Town will be dealt with at the April session of the Town Meeting rather than at an adjourned session in the early summer. She also pointed out that it is important to establish and give notice of a series of meetings, some of which may be cancelled later. Mr. Leclerc pointed out that he customarily teaches on Thursday evenings (from 4:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.) and

omits the mid-teaching break on those nights when he has a Committee meeting. Even so, he does not get to Belmont until 8:00 p.m. Mrs. Brusch indicated that she would try to schedule the matters in which Mr. Leclerc is particularly interested for later in the meetings. Ms. Rittenberg pointed out that the Chenery Middle School will have a number of Thursday evening concerts. Mrs. Brusch indicated that she would try to avoid those evenings or meet at Chenery so that it is possible to shuttle between the concert and the meeting. Mr. Clark indicated that he will be in Venezuela early in March.

Mrs. Brusch indicated that some dates are already established, as follows. Next week on Wednesday (January 14) is the joint meeting with the Warrant Committee, the School Committee, and the Board of Selectmen. Proposed questions to department heads are due at the end of this coming weekend. The community meeting regarding the budgets is scheduled for Thursday, January 21, but local aid numbers are not expected from the state until January 28, 2009. Although the Committee usually meets at 7:30, it will meet at 6:00 p.m. on the nights of the two meetings for when it schedules meetings with the heads of departments that are making capital budget requests. This year there are six such departments: Fire, Police, Library, Community Development, Building Services and the School Department. The Community Development request consists only of pavement management. Mrs. Brusch, with the help of Ms. Hagg, will seek to schedule interviews. Assuming that the budget will be dealt with at the April session of Town Meeting, this Committee's report would be due the third week in April. This Committee may be called upon to render its opinion with regard to Warrant articles that are not part of the capital budget as now being requested. The Committee must, therefore, reserve meeting time to deal with articles that are not now known.

After further discussion and bearing in mind all of the foregoing factors, the following schedule was established.

January 14 at 7:30 p.m., Chenery Middle School Community Room, Joint Meeting
January 21 at 7:30 p.m., Warrant Committee Budget Presentation for benefit of Town Meeting members, Chenery Middle School auditorium
January 29 at 6:00 p.m., Town Hall, departmental interviews
February 5 at 6:00 p.m., Town Hall, departmental interviews
March 5 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, (tentative)
March 12 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, preliminary prioritization
March 26 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall
April 2 at 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, warrant articles
April 16 at 7:30 p.m., Chenery Middle School, warrant articles

Mrs. Brusch pointed out that she will schedule a meeting just prior to the Town Meeting on April 27 but that usually this Committee does not need such a meeting.

Adjournment
(Item 6 on Committee Agenda)

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark