

## Minutes

### Town of Belmont Capital Budget Committee

To: Capital Budget Committee

From: Michael Speidel

Re: Minutes of November 13, 2003 meeting

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A meeting to prepare for the November 2003 Special Town Meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. in Conference Room #4 at the Town Hall by Michael Speidel, Chairman. Committee members present were Mr. Speidel, Mark Clark, John Conte, Donna Griswold and Anne Marie Mahoney. Joseph Barrell and M. Patricia Brusch were unable to attend.

After welcoming new members John Conte and Donna Griswold on behalf of the Committee, Mr. Speidel noted that it was a new fiscal year (2004) and thus the Committee was required to select a chairman. Mr. Speidel was unanimously re-elected Chairman. He also agreed to keep the minutes during FY04.

#### I. Articles 7 & 8 - Disposition of B Street land parcels

Roger Colton and Sallye Bleiberg of the Belmont Housing Trust appeared before the Committee to present Articles 7 and 8 of the Special Town Meeting. Because of the Committee's interest in the pending master plan study of the adjacent Town Yard, Public Works superintendent Peter Castanino also accepted our invitation to attend the meeting. Mr. Colton's presentation explained the layout of the two affordable housing parcels and the proposed land swap with the Town Yard (Addendum 1); the history of the proposal and the involvement not only of Mr. Castanino but of the residents of B Street in its refinement (Addenda 2 and 3); the capital structure of the \$1.4 million development including \$150,000 of State and \$100,000 of Federal funding; and the project time frame imposed by the Federal Home Improvement Partnership Program. Mr. Colton also explained the potential consequences of the Town's failure to achieve progress in meeting State-mandated affordable housing targets (Addendum 4), including ineligibility for Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grants such as Belmont's pending application for PWED funds for the Pleasant Street project.

Mr. Clark raised the points regarding the proximity to the Town Yard which Mrs. Bruschi discussed in her memo to the Committee of 11/11/03. In response, Mr. Castanino spoke of his vision of a centrally-located Public Works function on the Town Yard site, and of his support for the land swap proposal (Addendum 5) notwithstanding the timing vis-a-vis his master planning process and the net loss of approximately 3000 square feet of the 6.5+ acre Yard. According to Mr. Castanino, while he was not in a position to assure the Committee that the square footage lost would never be needed, his best judgment indicated that a) the centralized public works facility would use less land area than the present buildings on the Yard, and b) the new building(s) would probably be sited towards the rear of the site, away from the residential abutters including the B Street abutters.

The Committee's questions focused on, among other topics, the value of the land (approximately \$225,000 for each parcel), and proximity of the new housing lot on the south side of the B Street cul-de-sac to the temporary Waverley Fire Station, slated to come on line by Thanksgiving. The Committee also noted and took comfort in the fact that, while the proposed articles authorize the Selectmen to dispose of the two parcels in question, the Selectmen retain the ability to time the disposition so that the results of the April 2004 debt exclusion are known before a final decision must be rendered.

## II. Articles 5 & 6 - Disposition of Brighton Street land parcel

Mr. Colton then proceeded to describe the history of the roughly 10,000 square foot parcel on Brighton Street (the purchase of an existing school building and site by the relatively new Town of Belmont from the community of West Cambridge); the proposed gift to Habitat for Humanity for development of a single-family house; the sub-surface presence of a known petroleum spill, for which Habitat for Humanity has agreed to indemnify the Town for required clean-up costs; and the value of the parcel (approximately \$400,000 less environmental remediation costs).

## III. Article 2 - Appropriation of \$90,000 from Kendall insurance proceeds for High School renovation master plan

Co-Chairman Jenny Fallon of the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on the Future of Belmont High School (the "Advisory Committee") appeared before the Committee to present the appropriation requested under Article 2. She was accompanied by Gerry Missal, her Co-Chair and the School Department's Director of Finance and Administration; Selectman Paul Solomon; School Department

Chairman Scott Stratford; and Permanent Building Committee member Joel Mooney.

Ms. Fallon's presentation (Addendum 6) described the School Committee's historical thinking of the High School renovation as a single \$40 million project to be completed by year 2010, and reviewed the findings of prior studies of the building and its systems including the 1999 ARCADD facility audit (summarized in Addendum 7). She then explained that the unlikelihood that the Town can fund and implement such a project by 2010, as well as the inability to relocate the student population during a renovation, has caused the Advisory Committee to question whether a phased construction and funding approach might be more appropriate. The condition of certain systems may need to be addressed prior to 2010 in any case. Under the circumstances, the Advisory Committee believes that seeking professional assistance from a qualified A/E firm in the form of a master plan for the High School renovation (scope set forth in Addendum 8) would be money well spent.

Ms. Fallon went on to explain that, under the leadership of Dr. Solomon and Light Department Superintendent Tim McCarthy, the Town is engaged in a project with the Energy Services Company (the "ESCo project") wherein bids from qualified firms will soon be sought to implement energy-saving improvements to the High School and the Chenery Middle School in exchange for a share of the "payback" to be derived from lower utility bills. It is the view of the Advisory Committee, the ESCo project proponents, and the Permanent Building Committee that the overall benefit to the Town will be maximized by coordinating the master planning exercise with the ESCo project bid requirements. Thus, it makes sense to fund the master plan at this time rather than to seek an appropriation at the 2004 Annual Town Meeting in April.

The Committee's questions focused on the adequacy of the \$90,000 budget, on the need for specific examples of the link between the master plan and the ESCo project, and on the suitability of the Kendall insurance proceeds as a source of funds.

#### IV. Conclusion

After discussion, the Committee took the following votes:

- Article 2: By 5-0, with two members absent, to recommend favorable action.
- Articles 5 & 6: By 4-0, with Mr. Speidel abstaining and two members absent, to recommend favorable action.

- Articles 7 & 8: By 5-0, with two members absent, to recommend favorable action.