

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Chenery Community Room
Wednesday evening, December 14, 2005, 7:30 p.m.**

The Capital Budget Committee met in joint session with the Warrant Committee during the Warrant Committee's regular meeting in the Chenery Community Room on Wednesday evening, December 14, 2005. The only item on the Capital Budget Committee's agenda was to hear a presentation concerning town roads from Glenn R. Clancy, the Town's Director of Community Development. (There were other items on the Warrant Committee agenda.) The following members of the Committee were present: M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark and Anne Marie Mahoney. Also present, besides members of the Warrant Committee, were Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee; Jeffrey Conti, Assistant Town Administrator; and Floyd Carman, Town Treasurer.

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and then turned the meeting over to Robie White, Acting Chair of Warrant Committee. Mr. White had already called the Warrant Committee to order, and presided during the presentation by Mr. Clancey and during the question-and-answer period that followed.

Mr. Clancey began by distributing hard copies of the slides which comprised his power point presentation. Copies of his slides are attached to these minutes and made a part hereof. During his presentation, Mr. Clancey pointed out that the Town's road budget for FY'97 was \$1.2M, this same amount as for FY'05. In FY'05, however, only \$500,000 of that sum went directly into the roadway. The rest of that amount went to engineering costs, police details, sidewalks and curbing. The increase in police details is because the Town is now working on major roads and arterial roads; more officers are needed to deal with the greater traffic on these roads. (Previous paving took place on side streets where there is less traffic.) The greater cost of curbs is caused by the fact that the Town is installing granite curbing.

Mr. Clancey pointed out that he had recalculated the cost per square yard of doing road work in Town and he had discovered a startling increase. The 2002 contract was based on the estimate of \$28.00 per square yard. The 2004 budget projection was based on the estimated cost of \$38.00 per square yard. (Which implied a 15-year program to complete the collecting and arterial roads that are now being concentrated on.) In fact, the final cost for the 2002 contract was \$52 per square yard and the 2006 contract is based on estimated cost of \$83.00 per square yard. At this rate, and assuming an annual budget of \$1.2M, it would take 26 years to complete just the collecting and arterial roads now being concentrated on. The life of these major roads is only 26 years.

Mr. Clancey completed his presentation by suggesting that the annual Town budget would have to be \$3.0M per year in order to fund the road program the Town had thought it was getting for \$1.2M per year (a 13-15 year cycle). Mr. Clancey derived this number by allocating \$2M per year to the roadway itself, plus sidewalks and curbing, \$0.4M per year to engineering and police details, and \$0.6M a year to routine maintenance and repairs.

Mr. Clancey's presentation was followed by an extensive question-and-answer period, during which most of the questions were asked, and most of the comments were made, by members of the Warrant Committee. Coordination with other utility projects in Town is improving. A considered effort is being made, particularly with regard to sewers and water, to insure that any work that needs to be done after a road is rebuilt or repaved can be done without opening the road. Coordination with privately owned utilities, like Keyspan, is more difficult. The situation would be improved if Community Development could predict a stable budget for roads into the future. Oversight on behalf of the Town of road work has heretofore been done by private contractors. The Community Development Department has recently obtained authorization to increase its staff by a person capable of doing this supervision in-house. Perhaps a second could be added at some time.

The annual budget for maintenance of sidewalks has been cut in the operating budget so that rebuilding of sidewalks has fit well into the Town's pavement program. The current policy is to replace sidewalks entirely. Residents prefer uniform sidewalks, but Mr. Clancey could live with the "checker boarding" that would result from preserving the older sections of sidewalk that are still in good repair. It was suggested from the floor that sidewalk work might be eliminated altogether with the Town's budget concentrated on the roadway alone. Mr. Clancey was asked to break the \$83.00 per square yard figure down between sidewalks and roadway itself. Mr. Clancey said doing so would be difficult because so many of the costs that go into the square yard figure are not broken out that way. He estimated, however, that the cost of the roadway alone might be between \$45.00 and \$50.00 per square yard or about 55 to 65% of the total cost.

Mr. Clancey was asked how much of the increase from \$28.00 per square yard to \$83.00 a square yard within 4 years (a tripling) was attributable to actual increase in cost and how much to original underestimating. In response, Mr. Clancey said that \$52.00 a square yard is a true actual cost; but \$28.00 a square yard was an underestimate. Mr. Clancey further stated that the traffic calming and other improvements recently adopted by the Town have a price. He pointed out that a "bump-out" of curb lines costs twice than conventional curbing because it requires modifications to the drainage and catch basin system (water will not flow around a bump-out in the surface gutter next to the curb). The cost of asphalt has recently increased from \$30.00 a ton to \$65.00 a ton. A resident engineer would cost about \$50,000 for 12 months while the Town has been paying outside consultants over \$100,000 for 9 months of work.

As of November 28, 2005, the cost of bringing the Town's entire road system to a grade of 73 would be \$78.7M. (This includes patching and repaving that are needed.) Over 20 years, that would be \$5M per year. The computer program upon which this calculation rests is set to apply a 5% inflation factor when calculating how far a budgeted sum will go. The life span of a road is about 20 years, but when roads have been brought up to a reasonable grade, the Town would not have to do a complete reconstruction, and sidewalks and curbing would not have to be replaced at the same time. For example, roads being built today will allow for a grinding of one to two inches and then applying a new surface (so-called "mill and overlay"). Many of the Town's current roads would not be able sustain this process because a grinding off one or two inches would go down to dirt.

In response to several questions, the process of contracting for roadwork was reviewed in some detail. The contract is based on an estimate of materials needed to complete the work and the prices per unit of material are fixed. The lowest over-all bidder wins the contract but when the contract is actually paid, the amounts of materials actually used is the basis for the charge. That is why the Town needs a resident engineer to determine the amounts of materials actually used. Thus, the contractor bears the risk of unit costs of materials but the Town bears the risk of total quantity. It is difficult to break out the cost of sidewalks because some of the categories in the typical construction contract encompass both roadway and sidewalk work. Mr. Clancey gave as an example the line item for "hand work" in the asphalt category. This is all manual labor that is done on sidewalk and grade matching. Mr. Clancey observed that these items could be split 50/50, but he agreed to take a look at the estimates.

In response to a question concerning the way to do roadwork in the most efficient manner, Mr. Clancey observed that roadwork is dissimilar from the sort of sewer work that Ralph Jones has talked about in that it does not provide the same opportunities for efficiencies of scale. He also returned to the point that modifications in the current policies of replacing all sidewalks and doing such a complete restoration of private property would save money. Finally, there is the question of coordination of private utilities which would be enhanced by a predictable and long-range pavement management budget.

The reference to private utilities lead once again to a discussion of the difficulty cause by private utilities, particularly Keyspan, cutting into a newly reconstructed road, and the difficulty of enforcing the Town's 5-year moratorium on cutting into a newly repaved street. (Mr. Clancey gave the example of a home owner who had recently bought Belmont property and ripped out an oil-fired furnace only to discover that a permit cannot be obtain to open the street for a gas line.) In response to a question by Mrs. Bruschi, Mr. Clancey explained that he, Peter Castanino (the Director of the Town's Department of Public Works), and others are trying to establish a street-opening permit process that will ensure the restoration of any newly surfaced street. Mr. Clancey observed that there had been a court case involving the City of Somerville that established the proposition that the privately-owned utilities are entitled to a relatively uniform policy across the state. Mr. Clancey also observed that some communities have established a policy of requiring developers to "own" the frontage of the property, including concrete sidewalks and curbing.

The Town's engineering consultants are conversant with all the upgrades in new technology for road work and are able to evaluate and specify different materials for roadway construction. There is a practical limit on how much can be spent each year on roads because the Town has a limited capability of managing roadwork and the residents of the Town have a limited tolerance for the disruption caused by roadwork. Mr. Clancey estimated that \$3.0M plus a year would be manageable. That figure would be in today's dollar and would include maintenance on roadways as well as reconstruction. This amount could be increased if the Town hired more resident engineering capability and if the Town undertook a public relations program to convince residents that they could tolerate greater disruption in road accessibility.

In response to a request from Chairman White, Mr. Clancey agreed to think about how to operate differently, do the pavement management more effectively and, in general, get where the Town needs to get with regard to its street system.

Mr. Clark expressed the view that it is unrealistic for the Town to think it will ever get to a point where roadwork is done. With the Northeast weather and ongoing use of the streets, the Town can never hope to reach a finish point. The roads will continually erode. In response to a question from Chair White “how good is good enough”, Mr. Clark said that as long as the Town can get back to do repairs before the roadway deteriorates it will be the correct amount of time. This led to a discussion of the pavement evaluation system. Five million dollars over each of the next 20 years would get the entire street system in Town to a grade level of 73 (on a scale of 100) which is considered good. At this level, a roadway can be restored by a mill and overlay. Pavement with a grade below 73 requires full reconstruction. The Town’s current over-all grade level is 56.

Mrs. Brusch asked for a list of the “collectors and arterials” that are currently on the Town’s list for repair.

At 8:37 p.m., Mrs. Brusch adjourned the Capital Budget Committee and the Warrant Committee continued with its agenda.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark, Secretary