

MINUTES

Monday, December 17, 2007

TOWN OF BELMONT BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM

TOWN HALL

7:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:20 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. BOS member Leclerc was the only member not present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were no questions.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

- Board of Assessors FY09 Classification Hearing Chairman Reardon of the Board of Assessors explained that the proposed tax rate for FY08 is \$11.27, up from the current tax rate of \$10.31 per thousand. The Board of Assessors is recommending that the rate of \$11.27 be applied uniformly (single classification) to residents and town business alike. This will avoid an undue burden on small businesses (which may, in fact, help attract more business) and has a minimal impact on residents.

The Board moved: To keep the single classification of the \$11.27 tax rate for FY08.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0). It was noted that keeping a single rate does not mean the Town is losing potential revenue, as the overall levy limit remains the same either way.

Chairman Reardon discussed the possibility of a residential exemption, which would allow for an exemption from property tax of the first portion of a residential property's value, figured at 10 or 20 percent of an average residential property valued at \$774,000.00. Again, because the levy limit remains the same, the tax rate would have to be raised to make up for the revenue loss from the exemption. This would mean that businesses and taxpayers with high-value properties would pay more in taxes while low-value properties would pay less.

The Board moved: To not institute a residential property tax exemption.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

Chairman Reardon said that the excess levy capacity for FY08 is \$42,481. Residents will see a 4.25% increase in taxes. While the rate is up, property values are down. 2.5% is the levy across town plus new growth (such as the McLean housing development) in addition to the debt exclusion and overrides that are kicking in. Tax bills will go out before the end of the year, and there is a February 1, 2008 deadline to file for appeals by statute, which coincides with the tax bill due date. The Board signed the necessary documents regarding the excess levy.

(As an aside, Chairman Firenze informed the audience that BOS member Leclerc is stuck in Tampa (due to the snow storm) and therefore will not be in attendance at tonight's meeting.)

- Belmont Center Parking Group Discussion

[topic cancelled for this meeting]

- Blanchard Road Boundary Discussion

Chairman Firenze explained that there is a plan in effect by Cambridge to do construction on Blanchard Road for safety reasons. As a result of the discussions surrounding the plans for this

project, it has come out that in the 1950s, when Cambridge successfully petitioned the Legislature to change the boundary line which runs along the road, it in effect took 17,000 square feet of land from Belmont to Cambridge. The affected property owners had their Belmont tax assessments reduced but were otherwise unaware of the change until now. They are asking the Town to request the Legislature to designate the municipal boundary between the town of Belmont and the city of Cambridge at Blanchard Road between Concord Avenue and Grove Street as lying on the outer edge of the planned westerly curb of Blanchard Road. The new road construction would alter the curve of the road, and lower the speed limit to 25 miles per hour, and is supported by both Belmont and Cambridge residents. However, in order to go forward, Cambridge residents must give easement rights, and the Belmont property owners stated that their Cambridge neighbors will not grant these easements unless Cambridge agrees to the border change. Assistant Town Administrator Conti pointed out that it is not clear the residents of Cambridge will agree to do this; none are present tonight.

The Board moved: That the Town of Belmont begin the process to have legislation filed to designate the municipal boundary between the town of Belmont and the city of Cambridge at Blanchard Road between Concord Avenue and Grove Street as lying on the outer edge of the planned westerly curb of Blanchard Road.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

- Town Hall Complex Room Rental Policy

Town Administrator Younger explained that, to date, most town policies are not in writing. His office is working to create a "policy book" for the BOS which states (in writing) how each department runs. The BOS is being asked to review and approve the newly written policy for the Town Hall rental fees. Chairman Firenze asked that rental fee rates be waived at the discretion of the Town Administrator for certain groups.

The Board moved: To approve the Town Hall Complex Room rental policy.

Motion carried unanimously (2-0).

- Winter Gas Line Installation Request DPW Director Peter Castanino noted that National Grid has requested to install new gas services beyond the usual November termination date. Due to the high price of oil, there are lots of requests to change to gas. To date, there are only two requests for Belmont, Grant Avenue and Leonard Street (site of the former fire station).

The Board moved: To give Director Castanino full authority to make this decision (to extend the street-opening deadline for gas service beyond the 11/15/07 deadline this year) on a case-by-case basis.

Motion carried unanimously (2-0).

Chairman Firenze and Vice Chairman Solomon expressed their gratitude to Director Castanino for a job well done on plowing streets and sidewalks during the recent snowstorms. - Parking in Town Parking Lots The Board discussed the issue of nighttime parking in town lots during snow emergencies. Chairman Firenze noted that it is extremely difficult to plow parking lots as a result of cars parked in those lots. The police were given authorization to tow cars that were parked in lots during snow emergencies. While this worked well, it does not address the issue of those residents who have purchased monthly parking passes. Would it be possible to allow for the monthly pass people to give the police their license numbers and allow time for them to move their cars to allow for plowing? Director Castanino expressed that there was workability around this issue and hoped to be able to accommodate unique situations.

- Leaf Program The Board discussed the schedule for residents to drop off leaves at the incinerator site. Director Castanino explained that while the department tries to hold to the published leaf schedule, he has no objection to extending the deadline if warranted. This year, the decision to extend the deadline by one week cost a full week (40 hours) of one person's time

to burn the leaves. The Board agreed that this should be Director Castanino's decision (to extend the deadline or not) and not a BOS decision.

- Town Administrator's Report Town Administrator Younger reviewed briefly the following points:

o Town Counsel is reviewing Woodfall Road disposal options.

o Multiple Senior Center sub-bids came in last Wednesday and general contractor bids are due this week.

o Town Hall door restoration remains on schedule for this week.

o Harvard Lawn - Town Counsel is working on a closing agreement with the purchaser which hopefully will be complete by the end of January - Town Administrator Review

Chairman Firenze explained that a review form with 9 categories was used, and an overall rating form as well. Each Selectman as well as Mr. Younger filled out these review forms. In most cases the evaluations were consistent, with Mr. Younger receiving many 5s (highest score available on scale of 1 - 5). There were only 3 areas out of 9 that suggested room for improvement: communication, Board support, and planning.

Mr. Younger stated that he agrees with the review results, including the areas for improvement. He also commented that the budget is ahead of schedule (which was a goal of his). This will allow 6 weeks to address budget issues before hearings begin. Chairman Firenze thanked Mr. Younger and said the Board has enjoyed working with him throughout the year.

IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

- Metropolitan Area Planning Council Representative Appointment

The Board moved: To appoint Andrew McClurg as the Town's representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

V. ACTION BY WRITING

- Pleasant Street Widening - Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Clancy of the Office of Community Development asked that the BOS sign a memorandum of understanding to ensure that Pleasant Street paving gets underway.

The Board moved: To sign the memorandum.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

- Sewer System Evaluation Survey Phase I Agreement

Mr. Clancy asked that the BOS approve the sewer system phase 1 study.

The Board moved: To approve the study.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

- 2008 License Renewals - Common Victualler's

18 licenses are up for approval.

Vice Chair Solomon moved that all of the listed establishments with the exception of Belmont Hill Club be approved.

The motion carried unanimously (2-0).

Chairman Firenze recused himself from action on the Belmont Hill Club license as he is a member.

Vice Chair Solomon moved that the Belmont Hill Club be approved by action of necessity because of lack of a quorum.

The motion passed.

It was noted that Asai's seating capacity issue had been resolved, but required monitoring.

VI. OTHER - Audit Report Discussion Chairman Firenze has met with the audit committee and has reviewed the upcoming report. The audit is "clean" and offers a list of recommendations and reviews last year's recommendations, which are either resolved or partially resolved.
- BOS Minutes Recorder

Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti introduced Lisa Gibalerio. She has accepted the position of BOS Minutes Recorder on a trial basis. She is known to the Board from her work as the Warrant Committee Recording Secretary.

One matter from the last meeting needed to be addressed to correct the wording of the motion to enter into Executive Session.

The Board moved: To rescind the motion of December 3, 2007 to enter into Executive Session and correct said motion by clarifying that the purpose of entering into executive session was to discuss potential litigation, personnel issues, and value of real property.

Motion carried unanimously (2-0).

At 9:37 PM, Chairman Firenze moved to go into Executive Session to discuss litigation, and stated that the BOS will not return to open session.

Motion carried unanimously (2-0).

(During executive session, two substantive motions were made and passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 9:57 PM.)

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator