

**MINUTES  
TOWN OF BELMONT  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM  
Monday, February 8, 2010  
7:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chair Leclerc in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Firenze and Jones were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

**QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS**

Ms. Judith Feinleib, 87 Oakley Road and a Benton Library abutter, would like to see the library stay in town hands and understands that this might lead to increased traffic, although she would like the RFP to mention traffic control. Chair Leclerc informed her that on Thursday, February 25, at 7:00 pm the Benton Reuse Committee will hold an informational meeting in the Town Hall Auditorium.

Mr. Douglas Jones, Indian Hill Road, asked how people were getting informed of this meeting. Mr. Conti said that the Benton community would receive email and postcard notification. Mr. Jones said he is looking forward to the hearing.

Mr. Chris Starr, landowner in Belmont, asked about this evening's agenda relative to the municipal parking lot RFP and he then asked the Board to comment on the process going forward. Chair Leclerc said that this issue was not on the evening's agenda and that the Board is in the process of drafting a preliminary purchase and sale (P&S) agreement. Chair Leclerc said he hopes the process will move ahead and be resolved by the end of March. The Planning Board hearings will follow in April and those meetings will be public.

**ACTION BY APPOINTMENT**

**Town Meeting Warrant – Board Sets Dates to Open and Close**

Mr. Conti noted that the Warrant will open on Monday, February 22 at 9:00 am and will close on Friday, March 5, at 12:00 pm. During this time Articles for the Warrant may be submitted. These dates allow for hearings and changes for the Board to sign and approve.

*The Board moved:* To open the Warrant on Monday, February 22 at 9:00 am and to close the Warrant on Friday, March 5, at 12:00 pm.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

## **Charge to the Belmont Energy Committee**

Chair Leclerc noted that Sustainable Belmont was asked to write a charge for the Belmont Energy Committee and to suggest the composition of the committee. Chair Leclerc said that he feels the charge they created supports the spirit of the Town Meeting resolution that was passed.

Chair Leclerc noted that the charge states that the committee will be in action until 2050 with the goal of reducing Belmont's carbon emissions by 80 percent, as was supported by Town Meeting. The Energy Committee will be a permanent committee. The Board discussed the "2050" and opted to make an amendment, as the "permanent committee" designation obviates the need to state the year 2050.

*The Board moved:* To strike from the charge the words "will meet until 2050".  
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Selectman Firenze said he objects to the designation of the committee members.

*The Board moved:* To change the wording to "every effort will be made to include membership as follows".  
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Mr. John McAlpin and Ms. Jan Kruse, present and past Chairs of Sustainable Belmont, appeared to offer clarification on the charge. Mr. McAlpin stated that this charge document is meant to be used as a reference guide. Sustainable Belmont wants to give the committee the opportunity to evolve with the evolving technology.

Selectman Firenze noted that this charge is still too detailed. Is there a way to have it more flexible? he asked. Chair Leclerc said he appreciates the detail, as it gives them a specific charge – almost like a job description. Selectman Jones said that the charge could be too much of a burden on the committee. Mr. McAlpin said that flexibility would be helpful and that the specifics will evolve into the future. There are pieces of this that are very important, he said. He said he would like to add a student to the committee, as well.

*The Board moved:* To delete the word "employees" and change to "two representatives from the public school system".  
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

*The Board moved:* To accept this draft of the charge to the Belmont Energy Committee and to officially accept by the Board as instructed and informed in its current state.  
The motion passed (2-1).

## **Goals Discussion**

Chair Leclerc said that the goals discussion will be postponed until a future Board meeting. Chair Leclerc asked how the format should look? He offered three options:

- Mr. Younger and Chair Leclerc can meet to formulate the goals.
- 2 Each Selectman could submit his goals via email.
- 3 The Selectmen could meet together to discuss goals in a workshop style.

The Board chose option one, with the understanding that the other two Selectmen can make adjustments to the list of goals formulated by Mr. Younger and Chair Leclerc.

### **Town Administrator's Report**

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- The Planning Board will meet in March regarding the Comprehensive Plan recommendations. The vacant building fee could be discussed that evening, as well.
- The Board will sign a letter of support for the Governor's local aid package. This letter will be sent to Representative Brownsberger and Senator Tolman.
- A tower height balloon test regarding the state property on Rt. 2 where a cell tower has been proposed will occur this week. The ZBA will evaluate this site based on specific criteria (although aesthetics is not one of them). The Board discussed the ZBA process and if the Board has a voice in this matter. Mr. Younger noted that a substantial concern could be raised by the Board, but not a general "we don't like it." Mr. Conti said that the ZBA will notify the abutters of the meeting and that the Belmont Citizen will notify the community at large. Mr. Younger said that the Board can't go out of its way to notify the community, as this could be a point of contention down the road. Chair Leclerc expressed concern that the community will be upset if this tower is built and they don't know about it. Mr. Conti said he will pass these comments along to Community Development.

Ms. Jennifer Page, Pct. 3, said that the Board raises a good question about notification. During the McLean years, half a street was notified, and half was not. She said she would like to see the town make a greater effort to notify more than the immediate abutters so that they can have an opportunity to comment. Mr. Younger noted that notices of this type are placed on the town's website and that the footage requirements regarding notification are state law.

- The skating rink numbers are available. For the first six months, there was a net deficit of \$4K. However the bulk of revenues come in January and February, from rink rentals.
- On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Open Meeting Law changes passed by the Legislature will take effect. Town Counsel will hold training sessions. Changes will impact

agendas, and minutes will need documentation attached to them. This will impact all committees including subcommittees – who will now need agendas and minutes.

- Regarding the Trapelo Road commuter parking issue, Mr. Younger and Chair Leclerc reviewed the area and noted what was “restricted” and what was “two hour” parking. There are more spaces taken on the Watertown side.

Chair Leclerc noted that the Town’s website has five short videos on Belmont. Mr. Younger explained the process of the video development.

## **Budget Discussion**

Town Accountant Barbara Hagg appeared before the Board to contribute to the budget discussion. Chair Leclerc reviewed the process, specifically that audience questions and comments will be heard at the end of the budget discussion. Mr. Younger began the budget presentation by noting that the format has been tweaked and is now in a more “programmable” presentation. This is a *needs services* budget, not an available revenue budget. We are looking at the needs of the town, including positions that had been included in the budget before the major reductions of last year occurred. Not everything has been put back in, he said, and some things were added based on analyzing the needs regarding programming. For example, the Beech Street Center has created some needs (e.g., additional custodial staff as well as a full-time coordinator), and we are combining the Human Services outreach coordinator position with a Council on Aging social worker. We are also creating a part-time budget analyst position, and consolidation has been factored in with facilities (e.g., plowing, mowing, and mail pick-up). The Board can provide feedback to this budget, as this is the beginning of the process, concluded Mr. Younger.

Ms. Hagg highlighted the town’s revenue sources: property taxes are the largest source; state aid and motor vehicle excise tax (which has not changed much) are other sources. 95% of property tax is residential and 5% is from commercial business. Selectman Jones asked about the state aid projections and noted that, as of FY12, state funds will dry up, as they are using one-time sources of money. (This was in response to the presentation where Hagg had noted that future projections held state aid level.) Chair Leclerc asked about free cash reserves that were put aside in the event that state aid was cut. Mr. Younger noted that use of reserves could affect Moody’s AAA bond rating. Moody’s is concerned about the trend of less reserves.

Ms. Hagg continued: It is good to keep debt service at a certain level. The town side has leveled off (having completed the fire stations, Town Hall complex, etc.). The debt service is rising on the school side due to the new Wellington. The Town will begin paying back the debt on the Wellington beginning in FY11. Regarding expenses, salaries are a large portion of the budget (pension, health, etc.) and salaries are steadily rising. Non-discretionary expenditures are those over which we have no control and, as such, are not a part of true operations. The operating budget is discretionary: salaries, operating expenses, purchase of services, and utilities. Regarding staffing levels, there are 10 more

positions in FY11 (seven are restorations of positions cut last year). General government expenditures are up by 4.3% and the legal budget is up – as it is a contract negotiation year. Four positions are coming back to police and fire. Minuteman is going down 7.3%. Other budget increases include: Public Services up 4.8% (three public works positions are coming back); Human Services up 2.8%; Library is up 3.3%; and overall operating is up 8.4%. This percentage, however, includes the estimate for the schools going up 7.5%, the debt service up 23%, and the capital budget up 30.8%.

Revenues are short in this initial FY11 proposal by \$3.1M, even including the state aid fund projections (which are high right now). Selectman Jones noted that the town needs to plan too for its failing infrastructure, e.g., pool, rink, etc. Mr. Younger added additional potential failures to the pool and rink: the DPW garage, the police station, and the Library. These all have to be considered within a town-wide perspective. Selectman Jones said that this is not an aggressive needs budget. We will need to have a robust discussion about needs, revenues, programs, etc. he said.

Selectman Firenze asked if the services provided by the COA (or Public Safety, or Public Works) need to be at the level we are providing? He said a lot of senior services are fully subsidized and a lot of seniors can perfectly afford them. Mr. Younger said that some programs are mandated and some are optional. Chair Leclerc said that voters should have a say in what services are kept regardless of what the state mandates.

The Board discussed the budget process going forward.

## **ACTION BY CONSENT**

There was none.

## **ACTION BY WRITING**

### **Renewal Licenses**

The following establishments requested to renew their licenses: Cafe Fiorella, Kitchen on the Common, TCBY, Bow Tie Limousine, and Hynes Collision Center.

*The Board moved:* To approve the license renewal requests of the above named establishments.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

## **OTHER**

Mr. Younger noted that the Board has received inquiries regarding the available full liquor restaurant license but have had no takers due to the difficulty of meeting the 130 seat requirement. Mr. Younger said he would like to have the seating requirement reduced and also to increase the number of licenses available, and has asked Town

Counsel if the process could be expedited. If not, he proposes to bring the issue to Town Meeting to begin the process. The Board discussed.

Ms. Mahon, from the audience, said it was a great idea to add more revenue by adding more liquor licenses.

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:28 pm.

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Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator