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**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BEECH STREET CENTER
Monday, March 30, 2015
5:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 5:36 p.m. by Chair Rojas in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Selectmen Baghdady was present; Selectman Paolillo was not. Town Administrator David Kale and Assistant Town Administrator Marshall were also present.

Chair Rojas reviewed the agenda, noting that the Board would immediately go into Executive Session.

Executive Session I

The Board moved: To enter into executive session at 5:37 p.m. to discuss strategy sessions with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the Chair so declares. The Board will return to open session.

A roll call vote was taken: Chair Rojas said aye, Selectman Baghdady also said aye and the motion passed unanimously (2-0).

Open Session

The Board moved: To exit Executive Session and Return to Open Session at 6:14 p.m. A roll call vote was taken: Chair Rojas said aye, Selectman Baghdady and Paolillo also said aye and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Contract Approval: Belmont Center Reconstruction Project – Charles Contracting Company

Mr. Kale informed the Board that this agenda item will need to be deferred until the April 8 Board meeting.

Contract Approval: VHP Pavement Management Oversight

Mr. Glenn Clancy, Director of Community Development, appeared before the Board concerning the contract approval to VHP Pavement Management Oversight. Mr. Kale provided some

background information on this contract, as did Mr. Clancy. They informed the Board that oversight is needed for the Belmont Center Reconstruction Project. The Board briefly discussed the roads involved.

The Board moved: To approve the contract to VHP Pavement Management Oversight. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board signed the contract.

Trapelo Road Reconstruction Project – Request for Extended Work Hours

Mr. John Gleason and Mr. Ron Strangefeld, Mass DOT, appeared before the Board concerning the Trapelo Road Reconstruction Project and the request for extended work hours. Mr. Kale explained that the request is to begin work at 5:30 a.m. (instead of 7:00 a.m.) and to add Saturday hours. The impetus for adding hours is to complete the project on time.

Mr. Gleason explained that the work would be on the quiet side from 5:30 a.m. until 7:00 a.m. Selectman Paolillo said that 5:30 a.m. seems early. He then asked questions about the schedule and the anticipated finish date. The Board discussed the current dates, as well as the notification to residents, with Mr. Kale explaining the communication process to residents.

The Board expressed its wish to start slightly later on Saturday morning.

The Board moved: To approve the request for extended work hours for Newport Construction starting at 5:30 a.m. during the week and add Saturday hours beginning at 8:00 a.m. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Change order approval to contract for Facilities Condition Assessment - Symmes Maini & McKee (SMMA)

Mr. Kale reviewed the data concerning this contract for the approval of the change order for Facilities Condition Assessment - Symmes Maini & McKee (SMMA). He noted that with the change order the amount is now over \$100K, which requires the Board's approval.

Selectman Baghdady recused himself from the discussion as he has legal dealings with this company. Mr. Gerry Boyle, Facilities Director, approached the table to provide some additional information.

The Board moved: To approve the request for the change order (need motion) The motion passed unanimously (2-0).

Contract Approval: Public Works Fuel Contract Dennis K. Burke Inc. diesel and unleaded fuel

Mr. Kale explained the contract (this contract is coordinated by the town of Brookline involving

several communities) noting that the price is very good at approximately \$2.00 per gallon as it was locked in when gas was at its lowest price level. Selectman Paolillo reviewed the prices and agreed that there will be substantial savings.

The Board moved: To approve the contract for the Public Works Fuel Contract with Dennis K. Burke Inc. (for diesel and unleaded fuel).
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Approval of SEIU Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

Ms. Crimmins, HR Director, appeared before the Board concerning the approval of the SEIU Memorandum of Agreement. Mr. Kale explained the terms of the agreement, noting that it is consistent with other union contracts. The union has agreed to the contract's terms; it now requires the Board's endorsement.

Selectman Baghdady explained the health insurance change to the contract for new employees who will contribute 25% toward their health care instead of 20%.

The Board moved: To approve the SEIU MOA, the details of which were discussed in executive session.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board thanked Ms. Crimmins for her work on this contract.

Approval of Statement of Interest (SOI) Submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority

Mr. John Phelan, School Superintendent, appeared before the Board to request the Board's approval to submit the Statement of Interest (SOI) Submission to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Mr. Kale provided some background data on the SOI.

Mr. Phelan explained the current SOI and said he is hoping that, with this submission, the high school will move forward. He noted, in answer to Selectman Paolillo's question, that the issue of increasing enrollment was highlighted in the SOI. The aging fire alarm and PA systems were also discussed and highlighted in the SOI.

The Board discussed sending a letter to the MSBA to show their support for this process.

The state's answer should arrive in December.

The Board moved: That having convened in an open meeting on March 30, 2015, prior to the closing date, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Belmont, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated on or before April 10, 2015 for the Belmont High School located at 221 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority

categories for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future;

Priority 2 – Elimination of existing severe overcrowding – given that building enrollment at Belmont High School has increased by 117 students over the past five years;

Priority 3 - Prevention of the loss of accreditation – based on facilities-related conditions cited in the most recent report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), dated February 22, 2013;

Priority 4 - Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments – based on a projected increase of an additional 408 students district-wide by 2019;

Priority 5 - Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility – given that most of the system components are original to the building and are in need of replacement;

Priority 7 - Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements – given that a number of spaces have needed to be repurposed for instructional programs that are different from their original intent;

and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town or the School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Discussion: Precinct Meeting Agenda

Mr. Kale outlined tonight's Precinct Meeting approach, noting that feedback from community members suggested allowing the Q/A session to be longer, including statements from the Yes/No committees. The revised agenda would include providing only an executive summary of the FTF report, and briefly reviewing the FY16 budget for both town and school budgets. This agenda has been reviewed with the Town Counsel office to insure compliance with Office of Campaign Finance Laws.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Approval of a One Day Wine and Beer Liquor License for a Fundraising Dinner at the Waldorf School on April 11, 2015 from 6-10 PM

The Board moved: To approve the one-day license request, details noted above.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Approval of a One Day All Alcohols Liquor License for Fundraising Gala Auction at the Beth El Temple Center on April 11, 2015 from 7-11 PM

The Board moved: To approve the one-day license request, details noted above.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Approval of Meeting Minutes – postponed until the April 8 meeting.

- February 17, 2015 – Regular Meeting
- February 17, 2015 - Executive Session
- February 23, 2015 – Regular Meeting
- March 2, 2015 – Executive Session
- March 2, 2015 – Regular Meeting
- March 12, 2015 – Regular Meeting
- March 12, 2015 – Precinct Informational Meeting

Chair Rojas read the list of upcoming meetings. The Board then took a three-minute recess.

NEXT MEETINGS

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|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| • Wednesday, April 8, 2015 | 7:00 p.m. | Town Hall |
| • Tuesday, April 21, 2015 | 7:00 p.m. | Town Hall |
| • Monday, May 4, 2015 | 6:00 p.m. | High School |
| • Wednesday, May 6, 2015 | 6:00 p.m. | High School |

Precinct Meeting

Chair Rojas explained the structure of the meeting.

Financial Task Force (FTF) Executive Summary

Selectman Paolillo, Chair of the FTF, reviewed the timeline and the members of the FTF.

The working groups were made up of the following: Education, Revenue Opportunities, Capital Projects, Town Government, and Financial Projections. FTF Chair Paolillo reviewed the goals and objectives of the FTF.

Education

Selectman Paolillo noted that the Education working group’s findings will be discussed when the School Department budget is presented.

Revenue Opportunities

Mr. Kale reviewed the charge of this working group and summarized the key Revenue Opportunity findings and recommendations.

- Maximize and combine revenue opportunities for the Recreation assets (e.g., the town pools, rink)
- Hire a Recreational Manager to manage town and school programs, facilities, and fields
- Implement the Parking Management Plan for Belmont Center Parking and adopt parking fee changes – which will result in \$50K of additional revenue (to cover current expenses)
- Create a consolidated fee schedule

Capital Projects

Ms. Mahoney summarized the Capital Projects' key findings. The focus, she said, was twofold: to analyze the annual capital budget (pay as you go), and to assess the outstanding building needs.

She reviewed the funding of the annual capital budget, noting that it needs to be increased to \$3M. The current allocation of \$1M is insufficient to fund the yearly requests. As part of the proposed override, more money will come to the capital budget. She explained that the roads and the sidewalks will receive \$500K in additional funding as well as \$500K in bonding capacity.

Ms. Mahoney reviewed the capital projects that have been addressed, e.g., two fire stations, the Senior Center, Wellington School, Harris Field complex, etc. Projects that are currently in process include the Underwood pool, the Belmont Light substation, Trapelo Road, Belmont Center Reconstruction, etc.

Capital projects (which require a viable location and funding) that still need to be addressed:

1. BHS - \$70M – the location is identified, the expense is huge, and the MSBA process is hard to predict
2. Incinerator site - \$2M
3. DPW - \$28M – extreme need, site identified
4. Library - \$18M – the timing of the state grant funding is unclear, location is not solid
5. Police Station - \$20M, location is unclear

FTF Chair Paolillo added that there is a plan to address the need for a new rink (via privatization), and that the FTF will continue to meet.

Town Government

Mr. Lisanke summarized the Town Government working group's key findings. He noted that the town is running lean and efficient. The group analyzed the essential and non-essential services as well as efficiencies across town (technology, collaboration, and/or regionalization).

Staffing levels were looked at and staffing was found to be down across many departments (e.g., DPW, Police, and Fire). Arlington and Winchester were looked at for insights into how towns operate that are similar to Belmont.

There was no silver bullet in solving the town's fiscal challenges, he said, although we hoped there would be.

Recommendations include establishing an incentive bonus pool for department heads to reward them for innovative and cost saving ideas, continuing to explore regionalization/collaboration with other communities, sharing innovative ideas with other communities, and working more closely with state legislatures to lobby for state-level changes in health care, OPEB.

Selectman Paolillo added that determining the town's "essential services" is a challenging task as it is subjective.

Financial Projections

Mr. Kale noted that 80% of the budget comes from property taxes. He stated that this group not only developed a financial projection model but also included the findings of the other FTF working groups into the model. He added that the group worked with a large number of key personnel across town in creating the model and the projections.

Mr. Kale then raised the issue of the FY15 school budget deficit: \$500,000. He stated that the Superintendent will review this shortfall as well as issues relating to the SPED circuit breaker funds, LABBB credits, and revolving funds, etc.

Mr. Kale reviewed the projected *cumulative* shortfalls for the overall budget – over \$7M by FY19. He noted that the FTF included a recommendation to provide more funding into the Capital Budget; which includes \$1M financed over six years for capital projects. He reviewed additions to the school staffing to handle increased enrollment. Regarding new growth, he noted that \$475K is currently projected.

FTF Recommendations include:

1. Utilize the FY15-19 model for budget projections as a framework for future budget planning
2. Implement the Revenue Working Group's recommendations whenever possible
3. Placing a \$4.5M operating override on the April 2015 ballot (not \$7.7M, as this would place too high a burden on the taxpayer)

The operating override recommendation is \$4.5M. The plan is to extend the length of the resources out over more than two years through an override stabilization fund.

Town Budget Review

Mr. Kale then reviewed the highlights of the FY16 budget process, noting that it is collaborative

in nature and has been underway for several months. Department Heads were charged to develop an “available revenue” budget. He has been in touch with state officials concerning the fiscal scenario at the state level as well as the Governor’s budget.

Property taxes are the biggest portion of the town’s revenue – 80%. He reviewed other areas that contribute to the town’s revenue picture: state aid, building permits, other taxes, free cash, ambulance receipts.

Concerning next steps, updates will be received from the Governor’s budget.

The Superintendent will now address the need for additional staffing for the School Department to address the rising enrollment.

School

Superintendent Phelan highlighted the strategic goals and the budget goals, e.g., maintain staffing levels that are commensurate to increased enrollment, maintaining the Level 1 distinction, maintaining high quality instruction, and continuing with professional development.

Challenges (pressure points) are due to increasing enrollment, which impacts instruction as well as the social/emotional needs of the children.

He reviewed the enrollment numbers and stated that, by 2019, it is expected that there will be 725 additional students in the system (since 2009). He explained where this data point came from (NESDEC Plus 30 Index). Many of these new students are ELL students (English Language Learners). It is mandated that these students receive ELL services/instruction.

Out-of-district placements (for SPED students) are another cost driver, as 97 students are costing the system an average of \$65K a year for tuition.

Mr. Phelan then reviewed the current (FY15) fiscal deficit: \$500,000, noting that mandated services are getting more expensive.

Mr. Phelan outlined efficiency and collaboration efforts as well as per-pupil costs. Belmont spends 12% less on per-pupil costs than the state average (\$1,772 less per pupil than the state average). Surrounding communities spend more than Belmont spends on its students.

Mr. Phelan reviewed that the class sizes are increasing across the district. He reviewed the specific details of the staffing needs, noting that many of the staff additions are to provide state mandated services (ELL, for example).

He referenced the three-year plan for the infusion of funds into the budget. He reviewed the “deposits” noting that the override funding supports the enrollment demands.

Regarding the new staff, he reviewed where teachers would be provided and why they are needed. He noted the need to fill “free periods,” and to add a guidance counselor at the middle

school.

He stated that he fully supports the FTF's budget recommendation, as it supports the entire town. Concerning available revenue, the first priority is to pay the current bills, some of which resulted from the hiring of mandated ELL teachers, from transportation costs, and from contractual obligations. The identified FY16 Budget shortfall is \$1.7M based on available revenues.

Mr. Phelan noted that absent the additional funding, there will be staffing reductions that would need to happen, across the district, given the \$1.7M shortfall projected for FY16.

In conclusion, Mr. Phelan reviewed some of the "student impacts" of these reductions. He noted that the School Department fully supports the \$4.5M infusion of funds that will be added to the Town budget if the override is successful. He said he respects the process that the town is engaging in. He pledged to be fiscally responsible and to put any future budget savings from projections into a stabilization fund for future use.

Planned Override Uses

Chair Rojas reviewed where the override money would be placed, should it pass, year by year through FY18. He noted that the money will fund seven teachers in year one as well as provide funding for roads, sidewalks, and capital needs. He stated that the funding is likely to last for three years.

Override Presentation: Yes Committee

Chair of the "Yes Committee", Mr. Adam Dash, began by introducing himself (as well as the committee) and stating that, by voting Yes, the schools, roads, and sidewalks would be supported. He touched on the deteriorating condition of the roads. He noted that the override is only one of many FTF recommendations. He said the issue does not need to be further studied, but rather that action is now needed. The situation on the school side is dire. To keep Belmont desirable, we need to preserve the town.

He agreed that if this override passes, taxes will increase. However, this is the only override on the ballot. The FTF provided a long-range plan, it now needs to be enacted. The \$4.5M number allows the town to solve its problems, now and down the road.

He stated that the town is doing a good job and is managed well. Enrollment is a real challenge. The list of school cuts is very long. Roads, sidewalks, and schools all cost money. Voting yes will allow for long-term planning, will allow for the schools to stay strong, while a No vote is an unwarranted risk.

Override Presentation: No Committee

Chair of the "No Committee", Ms. Liz Allison, began by introducing herself (and members of the committee). She stated that Belmont is a wonderful town: great public safety, great schools, close proximity to Boston and Cambridge, high library use, etc.

She said that \$1.7M is clearly needed for the schools. However, a \$4.5M override is not the way to go forward. She stated that the current financial projections are too pessimistic, the \$4.5M is onerous for residents and that there will be a great deal of undesignated balances. The key school budget driver is teacher compensation. This override will hurt support for a new high school. Furthermore, the override will hurt our town's diversity.

A better choice for Belmont is to vote No and then to reexamine the revenue forecast. A new group needs to be formed to look at the revenue forecast and, if \$1.7M cannot be found, a reasonable and justified override could be put on the ballot in June.

Comments/Questions

Mr. Gregg Stone asked about the No data. Ms. Allison addressed the question of the data, as did Selectman Paolillo.

Ms. Deborah Gali inquired about the cost of a June Special Election. Ms. Allison stated that this money (\$15,000) is already in the budget.

Ms. Jamie Shea expressed concern for the cuts and asked how the high level of the schools would be maintained with the cuts. Ms. Allison said that she would commit to finding the needed money for the schools, should this override fail.

Mr. Dimetri (?) asked, if the override fails, what guarantee can the No committee give that the schools will be funded. Ms. Allison reiterated that the revenue estimates are very low and that \$1.6M can be identified just by righting the revenue estimates.

Ms. Anne Mahon asked about the 16-1 student/teacher ratio. Mr. Sarno said that this is a student to teacher ratio – meaning if you add all the staff and divide by all the students, this is the ratio. Ms. Mahon then asked about ELL education. Mr. Dash added that ELL is an unfunded mandate.

Ms. Julia Fluello asked about the impact of a No vote on students. The BHS student representative answered that the students feel they are at a breaking point. Ms. Allison said that the school budget needs would be met.

Ms. [?], junior at BHS, asked about funding the schools for next year. Ms. Allison said that a level service budget would be supported. She reiterated that the revenue estimates are low and more money will be identified.

Ms. Kursh (?) asked about the FTF's research. Selectman Paolillo said that the FTF worked for a year to come up with the \$4.5M number and they will continue to meet.

A CMS 8th grader asked about the quality of his education, given that he has four years left in the system. Ms. Allison said there is no guarantee that the override money, in future years, will keep going to the schools. Mr. Dash said that there is a history, in Belmont, of using override money where it is voted for, e.g., the money for trash pick up has never been diverted elsewhere.

Ms. Doyle, a parent of three children, raised a question about the fees. Ms. Fallon spoke to Prop. 2-1/2 having squeezed funds and that current revenue does not meet the town's current needs. Fees have attempted to address the structural deficit. Mr. Gammill said he is sensitive to the issue of fees and that will need to be addressed.

Ms. Susan Smith asked about the free periods should the override fail, noting that there is already too much free time for the high school kids. Mr. Dash agreed that there is currently a lot of free time.

Mr. James Kitch, Belmont resident, spoke to the class sizes, which are in the high twenties and low thirties. He said class sizes will only become larger if there are teacher cuts. Mr. Sarno said the premise is inaccurate; twenty teachers will not be cut. He added that the current level of cuts are not necessary — they are being publicized to promote an override.

Ms. Jessie Bennet said that Belmont's student/teacher ratios are at the bottom of the list of Massachusetts communities. Mr. Phelan provided data that corroborated with Ms. Bennet's.

Mr. [?] asked about the housing estimates, and if taxes would be increasing anyway. Selectman Paolillo explained the property tax assessment process.

Mr. Jack Weis spoke to the deconstruction of the schools (and on the town side too). He asked why not trust the officials to deal with an excess of revenue, should there be an excess, by lowering our taxes? Ms. Allison said that the town is likely to tax to the limit every year.

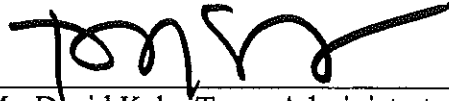
Mr. Bussiere asked about the timeline for the work of the No committee in creating a right-sized override. Ms. Allison said it would take 3-6 weeks.

Mr. Joe White endorsed the No campaign and then raised the topic of the Belmont Center Reconstruction project. Why, he asked, was a three million dollar beautification project endorsed if we were facing the current fiscal crisis? He then asked about three-year override plan. The money, he said, constitutes a permanent tax increase, but will only last two or three years.

Ms. Rachel Burger cited many things that have been lost in the schools, over the years. She asked, how does the town solve its structural deficit problem? Ms. Allison agreed that Prop. 2-1/2 creates a structural deficit.

Ms. [?] suggested that if this override does not pass, Belmont should consider doing smaller overrides every year. She asked about "time-on-learning" concept, noting that Belmont is not doing enough in this area. Mr. Phelan agreed that Belmont is at risk of doing too little "time-on-learning".

The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator

APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 5-28-2015