

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

FINAL

2017 MAY 11 AM 9:18

APRIL 26, 2017, 7:30 P.M.

CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

Present: Chair Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Gammill, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Slap; BOS Chair Williams;

Interim Town Administrator Marshall

Members Absent: Fallon, Libenson, Lisanke, Mennis and School Committee Chair Fiore

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Epstein.

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the agenda. He then turned to the first item on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 3/29/17 were approved with one abstention.

Discussion of Articles, including presentations by Article Sponsors, on the May session of the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Warrant (Articles 1-10)

ARTICLE 9: Petition to allow Board of Selectmen to Consider Waste Metering Approaches to Save Money and Reduce Trash

Mr. Kim Slack approached the WC table to discuss Article 9. Mr. Slack stated that approval of this article will help reduce the amount of carbon that Belmont produces. The cost of waste removal can be reduced by up to 10%. He explained the 1990 override, noting that \$1.8M of it is used for the current trash contract. This article will ask Town Meeting to move beyond the impetus of the 1990 override, as it negotiates its new trash contract in the fall. He explained several of the reasons to consider Waste Metering approaches, e.g., less trash overall, more recycling, positive environmental impacts, etc. He briefly explained the Pay As You Throw (PAYT) option, noting that low-income people could receive a fiscal break on the trash bags' cost.

Chair Epstein indicated that the WC would vote later in the evening on this article.

ARTICLE 10: Welcoming Town Designation

Ms. Anne Mahon approached the WC table to explain Article 10. She noted that the Police Department and she met to adjust the wording of this article. She said she felt compelled to submit this article, as children were concerned about their status in the community. However, it reaffirms what Belmont Police already do.

Chair Epstein confirmed that this article does not mandate anything new. He clarified that this designation should not impact any federal funding that Belmont receives.

The WC briefly discussed this article. Member McLaughlin suggested that the article be withdrawn. Belmont is already a welcoming town and what message does it send, he asked, if the article is defeated? He described this article as a political statement.

Chair Epstein expressed doubt that the WC had a real role to play in advising Town Meeting on this article.

ARTICLE 8: Amend General Bylaws, Section 40-200A to Increase Membership of the Board of Selectmen from Three to Five members (Substitute Motion)

BOS Chair Williams explained that the scope of the Board of Selectmen's work is fairly large (overseeing 66 committees, acting as the Light Board, as the Parks/Recreation Board, the Alcohol Licensing body, etc.) and would be better served by a five-member team. He explained the impact of the Open Meeting Law (OML) on the communication restrictions of the three-member team. He briefly touched on the advantages of the five-member team.

BOS Chair Williams explained the Substitute Motion – which he also read aloud. It basically assigns the task of exploring/studying this issue to a committee appointed by the Moderator. A written report (issued by this committee), with recommendations, will be due January 31, 2018.

Ms. Debbie Doitch (and Mr. Jack Weis in the audience), of the Ad Hoc Group, were available for questions. Ms. Doitch stated that the Ad Hoc Group is aligned with what BOS Chair Williams outlined.

The WC briefly discussed this article. Chair Epstein stated that it is appropriate for the appointed study group to explore this issue further.

ARTICLE 5: Amend Sign Zoning Bylaw

Mr. Jeff Wheeler, Town Planner, approached the table to explain this article. He noted that the Planning Board felt that it needed to examine the issue of signs, especially with the recent revitalization work done in Belmont Center. Also, there was a Supreme Court decision concerning the content of signs. The size of signs needs to be looked at, as well. Also, there are loopholes in the current bylaw, which is 30 years old. The proposed bylaw changes would bring Belmont on par with comparable communities.

Two Special Town Meeting (STM) Articles

STM ARTICLE 1 - Retail Liquor License Transferability

STM ARTICLE 2 - Restaurant Liquor License Transferability

Chair Epstein explained the two STM articles. He explained why the WC should weigh in on these articles and why they should be supported. He explained the process by which liquor licenses have been transferred. BOS Chair Williams explained what happened recently with The Loading Dock selling their license to Star Market for \$400,000. He explained the Home Rule Application error (which omitted the non-transferability clause for The Loading Dock).

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable Action on STM Article 1.
The motion passed with 9 in favor and 1 opposed.

The WC further discussed this Article. Member Lubien explain his opposing vote.

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable Action on STM Article 2.
The motion passed with 9 in favor and 1 opposed.

ARTICLE 3: Adopt MGL c. 90 § 17C – Speed Limits

Chair Epstein asked if the WC would like to weigh in on this article. It was decided that the WC will not vote on Article 3.

ARTICLE 4: Amendments to The Demolition Delay General Bylaw

Chair Epstein asked if the WC would like to weigh in on this article. Member McLaughlin said that the WC did, in fact, weigh in on this article previously.

Ms. Lauren Meier, Co-Chair of the Historic District Commission (HDC), approached the WC and explained the Demolition Delay process. She also explained the recent adjustments to the bylaw as well as the positive impact and the enhanced value of deeming homes “historic”.

Ms. Meier then explained the process (specifically the timing sequence) concerning 122 Waverley Street. The goal, she said, is to have the opportunity to explore alternatives (to demolition).

Chair Epstein informed the WC that the Planning Board liked the fact that this article has a five-year Sunset clause.

Member McLaughlin moved: Non-favorable Action on Article 4.
The motion did not pass with 2 in favor and 8 opposed.

ARTICLE 5: Amend Sign Zoning Bylaw

Member Gammill moved: To take no action on Article 5.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 6: Zoning Amendment Marijuana Establishment Temporary Moratorium

Chair Epstein stated that the WC has not studied this article.

Member McLaughlin moved: To take no Action on Article 6.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 7: FY18 Community Preservation Committee Budget & Projects

Chair Epstein noted that the WC already voted on Article 7.

ARTICLE 8: Amend General Bylaws, Section 40-200A to Increase Membership of the Board of Selectmen from Three to Five members (Substitute Motion)

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable Action on Article 8.
The motion passed unanimously.

ARTICLE 9: Petition to allow Board of Selectmen to Consider Waste Metering Approaches to Save Money and Reduce Trash

Chair Epstein clarified that the Board will look into this matter regardless of the outcome of this article. The WC discussed the 1990 override. It was determined that there is no legal impediment to pursuing PAYT; it is a political issue. Member Gammill said he views that this as a non-binding article that allows this issue to be further studied by the Board of Selectmen. The 1990 override, BOS Chair Williams said, is widely misunderstood. The Board will engage in an *exploration* of PAYT to understand its merits.

The WC discussed this issue. Ms. Marshall noted that there was a presentation made to the Selectmen on various trash removal options. More public conversations will occur before the bid goes out in the fall.

Chair Epstein stated that the Board should consider all options concerning trash removal. Belmont is unique in having had a *trash specific* override. Many people will deem PAYT as a tax increase. Other debt exclusions are coming down the pike and could be impacted if there is an increase in trash fees. Chair Epstein clarified that this vote is to endorse further study – not to endorse PAYT.

Member Slap moved: Favorable Action on Article 9.
The motion passed with 8 in favor, 1 abstained.

Article 10: Welcoming Town Designation

Ms. Mahon, again approached the WC table, and cited the beneficial fiscal impacts to this article. Chair Epstein reiterated that the article merely reaffirms current town practice.

These practices will continue irrespective of what happens with this article.

Member Crowley stated that this could impact property values deleteriously, if it doesn't pass. Member McLaughlin said that the WC is an apolitical body and that this article is political in nature, with no fiscal implications.

Member McLaughlin moved: Since there is no remote financial impact and that this article is potentially divisive and is political in nature - the WC should not take a position on this.

Member Gammill then moved to amend the motion to strike the second half of motion. The amended motion would read as follows:

Member Gammill moved: Since there is no remote financial impact – the WC should not take a position on this article.

Member McLaughlin withdrew his motion. The above motion made by Member Gammill stands and the vote was as follows:

The motion passed with five in favor, four opposed, and 1 abstention.

Subcommittees Updates on Status of Chapters for Warrant Committee Report

Chair Epstein will circulate a draft of the WC report next week.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Minuteman

Board of Selectmen: BOS Chair Williams reported that the BOS is focusing on TM Section A. Ms. Marshall noted that there will be additional (unbudgeted) money coming in from the state. The WC may meet with the Board on May 8 to discuss supplemental budget requests.

Minuteman: Member Gammill provided a brief Minuteman update.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 9:33 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary