

**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES** 2017 JUN -6 AM 9:05  
**FINAL**  
**MAY 24, 2017, 7:30 P.M.**  
**CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

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

Interim Town Administrator Marshall

Members Absent: Fallon, Libenson, and Mennis,

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 pm by Chair Epstein.

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the evening's agenda.

***Approval of Minutes***

The Public Services Subcommittee minutes of 5/17/17 were approved.

The minutes of 5/10/17 were approved with two abstentions.

The minutes of 5/17/17 were approved, as amended, with one abstention.

***Town Treasurer Presentation on Article 26***

Mr. Carman, Town Treasurer, informed the Warrant Committee (WC) that he is concerned about the timing of this article. He stated that this transfer will impact free cash and might bring it down to the 3 percent range. The rating agencies like to see a consistent, conservative approach to managing the town's reserves. The modular units (and the additional costs associated with those units) will run upwards of \$2M (possibly more). There will be a Special Town Meeting (STM) in November concerning the funding of the modular units. The Warrant Committee reserve is near depleted and that impacts free cash. There may be unexpected expenses and free cash will be needed. He said he supports transferring money into the General Stabilization Fund, he just does not support doing it in June. He stated there will be better, more certain data available at the November STM; this issue should be addressed at that time.

In answer to a question, Mr. Carman stated that the Modular units may be bonded, especially if they cost upwards of \$2M.

Mr. Carman then shared some information on Articles 23 and 24.

***Discuss and Vote Segment B Articles (Annual Town Meeting)***

**Article 23: Municipal Light Substation Project Borrowing De-Authorization and Appropriation**

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 23.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 24: Joint Public Safety Communications Center Project Borrowing De-Authorization and Appropriation**

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 24.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 25: Replacement Fire Alarm System at BHS Borrowing De-Authorization and Reduction of the Appropriation**

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 25.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 17: Authorization for Revolving Funds**

Chair Epstein explained how revolving funds work.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 17.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 11: Salary of Elected Officials**

Chair Epstein noted that the Town Moderator salary was increased from \$250.00 to \$450.00. Member Schreiber explained how this increase came about. Chair Epstein then explained the Town Clerk salary. Member Schreiber provided some background information concerning this salary, as well. Member Gammill also provided some additional information on the elected official salaries.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 11.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 12: Enterprise Funds for Water and Sewer and Stormwater Services**

Ms. Marshall noted that there is a typographical error in the capital budget report concerning water leaking into storm water lines (not water lines).

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 12 Sections A and B.  
The motion passed with one abstention.

**Article 13: FY18 Budget Appropriation and Transfer Balances to Fund the FY18**

## **Budget**

Chair Epstein stated that this article will be voted on in sections.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13A, General Government.  
The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13B, Employee Benefits.  
The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13C, also Employee Benefits.  
The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13D, Public Safety.  
The motion passed unanimously.

### *Article 13 E. The Education Budget*

*Member Gammill moved:* Favorable action on Article 13E, the School Department appropriation, based on the “draft 3” budget approved by the School Committee on Tuesday, May 23.

Member Gammill discussed how draft 3 of the budget came into being. He explained how this relates to the SPED Reserve Fund, and that the SC voted to put zero dollars into the FY18 budget line for the Fund. He referred to a recent email to the WC members from Superintendent Phelan in which the Superintendent said he wanted to delay funding the Fund to the fall. Member Gammill said he thinks the FY18 budget to be presented to the Annual Town Meeting should have a non-zero amount for this Fund, and he gave justifications for amounts of \$400,000 and \$200,000. He reminded the WC that the Superintendent had mentioned a \$200,000 amount when he addressed the WC on May 10. Member Gammill also briefly described a financial rationale for the \$200,000 amount, referring to a memo he wrote in March with the help of SC Member Burgess-Cox. He asked the members to vote “yes” if they supported the SC’s current position of not funding the SPED Reserve Fund in the FY18 budget, and he asked members to vote either “no” or to “abstain” from the vote if they wanted to signal to the SC that further consideration of SPED Reserve Funding should happen before the June Town Meeting. He said that he would vote “no”.

The WC discussed briefly this motion. Chair Epstein expressed his concern for voting down the school budget based on a small dollar (\$200K) technicality. BOS Chair Williams asked if the Circuit Breaker funds could be moved into a SPED account? Member Gammill replied yes, the money is fungible. SC Rep Fiore explained the process for approving the school budget.

Chair Epstein noted that it will be more appropriate to approve the Education budget as

written and do more analysis on SPED funding in the fall. Member Gammill withdrew his motion.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13E, Belmont Public Schools.

The motion passed with 8 approved, 1 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13F, Minuteman.

The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13G, Public Services.

The motion passed unanimously.

*Member McLaughlin moved:* Favorable action on Article 13H, Human Services.

The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13I, Debt and Interest on Debt.

The motion passed unanimously.

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 13, Authorization to Transfer Balances.

The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Article 14: Authorization for Up-Front Funds, Chapter 90**

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 14.

The motion passed with one abstention.

#### **Article 16: Appropriation of OPEB Stabilization Fund**

*Member Helgen moved:* Favorable action on Article 16.

The motion passed with one abstention.

#### **Article 18: Authorization to Establish a SPED Reserve Fund**

This article was submitted by the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Chair Epstein reviewed the article.

*Member McLaughlin moved:* Favorable action on Article 18.

The motion passed with one abstention.

#### **Article 26: Citizen's Petition: General Stabilization Fund**

Member Gammill stated that he supports this article. He noted emergencies could be funded from the annual budget. Ms. Marshall explained how unforeseen items could

potentially be funded. Member Lubien stated that the modular units will likely be bonded. He said the optics of putting the money aside make sense. Member McLaughlin stated that he supports the Town Treasurer on this issue. Other WC members also supported the Treasurer – in that there are uncertainties that are on the horizon, and free cash may not be replenished as readily. Member Helgen stated that this creates discipline for the budget. Otherwise, the money could be spent elsewhere and this money should be put aside for future operating budgets.

The WC continued to discuss issues relating to this article.

*Member McLaughlin moved:* Unfavorable action on Article 26.  
The motion passed with 8 in favor, 3 opposed, and one abstention.

### **Article 19: Authorization to Increase Retirement Board Stipend**

Chair Epstein noted that he circulated relevant data that he hoped the WC had reviewed. The WC discussed Article 19.

*Member McLaughlin moved:* Unfavorable action on Article 19.  
The motion passed with 9 in favor, 1 opposed, and two abstentions.

### **Article 21: Authorization to Increase Minimum Allowance Payable to Survivors of Members of the Belmont Retirement System**

### **Article 22: Authorization to Adjust Spousal Benefits for Surviving Spouses of Retirees**

The WC discussed Articles 21 and 22. Chair Epstein stated that he does not see the urgency to allocating very limited resources in this way. Several WC members agreed. BOS Chair Williams explained why he is supporting these articles. He stated that this will impact only four people and is not a significant amount of money, given Belmont's total budget. As a matter of policy, what the town is doing as a whole, is reasonable, added Chair Epstein. Member Helgen noted that in the private sector, retirement benefits have shrunk.

*Member Crowley moved:* Unfavorable action on Article 21.  
The motion passed 7 in favor, 1 opposed, 4 abstentions.

*Member Crowley moved:* Unfavorable action on Article 22.  
The motion passed with 7, 1 opposed, 4 abstentions.

### ***Updates: Board of Selectmen and School Committee***

**Board of Selectmen:** BOS Chair Williams reported that the BOS “is steady as you go”.

**School Committee:** SC Chair Fiore did not report.

*Adjournment*

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
WC Recording Secretary