

Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Room 1
Thursday Evening, March 22, 2007, 6:30 p.m.

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order about 6:35 p.m. The following members of the Committee were present at the time of the call to order: John Bowe, M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte, Jennifer M. Fallon and Ann Marie Mahoney. Also present were Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator, and Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee. Angelo Firenze joined the meeting during the preliminary discussion. Various other persons who attended parts of the meeting are identified below.

The Committee had the following material before it:

1. Agenda for the meeting prepared by Mark Clark, Secretary.
2. Draft of minutes 2/15/07, prepared by Mark Clark (attached to Agenda).

Other items that were examined or distributed during the meeting are identified below.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting and Preliminary Discussion
(Item 2 on Committee Agenda)
Meeting of 2/15/07

Mrs. Brusch called for consideration of pending minutes, pointing out that a draft of the 2/15/07 meeting minutes were attached to the Agenda. Ms. Fallon suggested that, in the last line of the paragraph numbered 12 on page 7 of the draft, the word "inappropriate" should be replaced with the phrase "not economically practical." Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of 2/15/07 were unanimously approved with Ms. Fallon's proposed change and otherwise as presented in draft form.

Mrs. Brusch reviewed the tasks and schedule before the Committee. The tentative budget allocates approximately \$2.3 million to the Capital Budget Committee plus the amount available under so-called chapter 90 and the amounts from enterprise funds. The Committee is scheduled to meet on March 29 but not the week thereafter. On March 29, the Committee will begin its general discussion of priorities. The Committee meets again on April 12, at which time it will review a chart prepared by Mr. Bowe. If available, the Committee will also review any articles upon which it must opine for the April session of the Annual Town Meeting. If, as appears to be the case, the agenda for the April session of the Annual Town Meeting is slim, the Committee may not need to meet on April 19. Its next meeting is scheduled after the April session of the Annual Town Meeting. The date of that meeting of the Committee is May 3, at which time the Committee will begin drafting its report to the June session of the Annual Town Meeting.

During the discussion of the Committee's tasks and schedule, Mr. Younger reported that the amount of chapter 90 road funds available for FY08 may be as much as 20% higher than the basic amount appropriated for FY07.

Mrs. Brusch indicated that in her view the amount allocated to the capital budget from the annual budget, particularly the road amount, should be escalated each year by the 2½ percent allowed under so-called Proposition 2½. The Committee can expect some change in the amount requested in the Building Services request and some re-arrangement of the allocation in that request between capital budget and operating budget. It is likely that the June session of the Annual Town Meeting will be scheduled for the Cheshire Middle School as the air conditioning at the High School has not proven adequate in the past for a June meeting.

Police
(Item 3 on Committee Agenda)

The Police Department was represented by its recently appointed Chief, Richard J. McLaughlin; its Assistant Chief, Richard J. Lane; and Lt. Christopher J. Donahue. Wm. Kevin Looney, Manager of Building Services, participated in the discussion of the request concerning a feasibility study.

During the course of the discussions with the Police representatives, they distributed three documents and circulated color pictures illustrating the current conditions of the Police Station. The three documents are a summary of information regarding the proposed feasibility study, entitled on the first page "Feasibility Study of New Police Station"; information regarding the requested fingerprint scanner, captioned on its first page "IT 500"; and information regarding the requested radio system, identified in the lower left-hand corner of the front page as the "XTS 2500."

The Committee began its discussion with the Police Department by examining the remaining balances of previous capital budget appropriations. With regard to the "Communications Upgrade," an appropriation from fiscal year 2006, the Police Chief indicated that he would ascertain the status of the project from Daniel T. Macauley, Operations Manager of Public Safety Communications. Ms. Hagg explained the negative balance concerning the "Police Phone System." After further discussion, the Committee concluded that further investigation of this item and the next ("Police Communications Console") would be appropriate, and these items should be reviewed again before the Annual Town Meeting.

The first item of discussion concerned a request by the Police Department (also made by the Building Services Department) for funds for a feasibility study concerning the current Police Station. During the discussion, the Committee viewed photographs provided by the Police representatives of conditions at the current Police Station, which was built in the 1930's, and the many short-comings of the current situation were detailed. Although there was an upgrade of the building done in 1997 for communications, the building is too small for current use; there is inadequate parking and storage; the site is too small and misshapen for adequate expansion; there is no "sally port" for safe prisoner transport; the building cannot comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act nor with the Juvenile Protection Act; there are fumes present from an old generator; working space (including prisoner processing space) and public spaces are commingled; leaks are causing mold in some areas; the HVAC is insufficient for the building; the locker rooms and bathrooms are inadequate and facilities for female police have been fashioned from areas not originally intended for that purpose; fire arms are stored in the woman's locker rooms or in office cabinets; the room for storage of legally mandated records is inadequate; the facility is not secure; and there are holes in some walls and ceilings.

Mr. Clark noted with approval that the Board of Selectmen had recently announced the appointment of a committee to assess town-wide capital needs. Mrs. Brusch explained that any feasibility study of the police station would be programmatic, and would not look only at the current building but also look for other opportunities to meet the program. Mr. Firenze wanted to be sure that there was no preconceived ideas about the final outcome of a feasibility study. He and the Chief discussed a possibility of a regional jail facility, and he outlined a suggestion whereby the current Police Station and the former Municipal Light Department headquarters might be sold and the proceeds used to acquire a new police facility. Mrs. Brusch suggested to the Chief that work begin immediately on developing a contract for a feasibility study so that final arrangements can be made promptly in the new fiscal year (beginning July 1).

Lt. Donahue made a presentation concerning the request for funds for a fingerprint scanner. He called the Committee's attention to the material he distributed. The Belmont Police Department arrests 150 people per year on average. Currently, a fingerprint of the arrestee is made by rolling the arrestee's finger on an ink pad and then on a card. The card is then submitted to the State Police and the FBI. Sixty percent of these submissions are eventually rejected. The current technique requires a skill that not all arresting officers possess. Furthermore, arrestees usually do not like the circumstances they are in and do not cooperate

with the fingerprinting process. The Belmont Police are not notified that a fingerprint has been rejected as undecipherable for as much as a week, by which time the arrestee is typically no longer available to the arresting officer.

In contrast to the current system, the proposed new technology has a rejection rate of almost zero and gives an immediate indication if a fingerprint is unclear. The arrestee can be held until he or she cooperates with getting a good fingerprint. Thus, the arresting officer can always identify who the arrestee is. The price of the recommended scanner has declined from about \$200,000 per unit to \$25,000 per unit. The current situation is dangerous for Belmont's police personnel and the public as well, due to the risk of releasing unknown and dangerous persons. Belmont's neighboring communities have already adopted this technology; the state trial courts are making a satisfactory fingerprint identification a mandatory element of a criminal prosecution and the District Attorneys will not prosecute without it. The initial request is \$20,000 for the device and \$5,000 for an upgrade of the software that will handle the record management. The maintenance cost of the unit and its lifespan are still not known. There are two vendors of the recommended scanning unit on the state bid list. Grant funding has been sought but awards are being made more slowly. This record-keeping recommendation is fully compatible with and can be integrated into the Department's existing system.

The Committee then turned to the request for new radios and Lt. Donahue called attention to the document describing the radios that the Department proposes to purchase.

The replacement of radios has been part of the Department's five-year projection for several years. The current radio in service (HT1000) has been in service for ten years. It has a predicted lifespan of seven years, and several have been retired. Easy communication both internally and externally is very important during an incident, and the proposed radio can be programmed to operate on frequencies used by neighboring communities that are part of the New England Municipal Law Enforcement Commission and the Suburban Drug Task Force.

In response to a question from the Committee, Chief McLaughlin indicated that he would prefer to acquire all needed radios this year rather than spreading the acquisition over two years. In response to a further question from the Committee, the Department representatives indicated that this is motivated by operational considerations. There is unlikely to be any financial saving from a larger, single purchase because the radios would be purchased through the state bid list. Mrs. Brusch urged the Department to contact neighboring town police departments and Belmont's own Fire Department to investigate whether a combined purchase or some other coordinated effort that would result in a cost saving is possible.

After the Department's presentation of requests, the Committee (lead by Mrs. Mahoney) inquired of Chief McLaughlin whether he had had an opportunity to rethink the Department's requests and whether he agreed with them. It was during this discussion, that Chief McLaughlin indicated that he would prefer to acquire 75 radios at once. He said that the state of the Police Station is the most pressing issue at the time, and he strongly endorses the request that the Town fund a feasibility study for the Police Station. Chief McLaughlin indicated that as far as he had been able to ascertain to this time, the Department's other requests were the ones that he would make.

Building Services (Item 4 on Committee Agenda)

The Building Services Department was represented by Wm. Kevin Looney, its Manager. Mr. Looney began by distributing a memo that is a recent revision of a memo first circulated in January of 2007. The date on the memo still reads "January 16, 2007" but the revision can be distinguished by its first sentence: "Based on conversations at the Budget Meetings a few weeks ago I have revised my Capital Budget Request for FY2008." The Committee and Mr. Looney first

reviewed the requests described in the memo and then turned to remaining balances from capital budget appropriations for previous years.

The Department's requests are not listed in any particular priority or with any particular detail. Mr. Looney mentioned each request and there was particular discussion of several. The request for a feasibility study of the Police Station is the same request made by the Police Department. Ms. Hagg indicated that it would be listed under the Building Services Department.

The \$200,000 request for a security system is a "placeholder" set at the [my notes say minimum and Barbara's notes do not indicate. Should this be maximum?] probable expense. The project will not be bid until July or August. Current plans call for a card access system that will be compatible with the system already installed at the new fire houses. There will be video cameras in IT locations. The School Department has not yet defined a position regarding surveillance because of the sensitive privacy issues. The proposed system will permit individual programming of access cards so that various individuals can be granted difference levels of access. The system will also facilitate off-hours closure.

During the discussion of the HVAC request (\$165,000) it was noted that the figures presented were difficult to reconcile and probably a misprint. The reference to "Homer Building \$124,000" should probably be a reference to "Homer Building \$127,000". The data room should probably be estimated at \$25,000 rather than \$125,000. Mr. Looney explained that there is insufficient HVAC capacity for the data room at the Town Hall. Mr. Looney reminded the Committee that a complete solution for the data room may require a back-up generator (requested separately), but the Historic District Commission is troubled by the prospect of a generator being located on the grounds of the Town Hall. Mr. Firenze reported that he is in conversation with Tim Richardson, Manager of the Municipal Light Department, concerning the possibility of the Municipal Light Department providing electricity to both the Town Hall and the Library in such a manner that the need for back-up generators will be obviated.

Mrs. Brusch urged that the Building Services Department share a van/truck with the School Department rather than requesting a replacement of the 1996 vehicle donated by the DPW (\$26,000). She also pointed out that landscaping ("to be determined") is usually considered an operating expense, not a capital item.

During the discussion of the Homer Stairs (request \$125,000) it developed that the amount requested is only a placeholder. At the date of the meeting, neither the cost of an architect, a contractor or the extent of the work (if any) required had been determined. More information was expected later in the week. During the discussion, it was pointed out that a Reserve Fund transfer might be appropriate for this item.

Before turning to the balances from previous capital budget appropriations, the Committee once again considered the Police Station. The issue was raised whether funds from the available capital budget should be retained for an appropriation at a fall town meeting, after results of a feasibility study become available. The Committee also discussed whether funds should be set aside to address pressing issues in the current police building until a more complete and comprehensive approach can be undertaken.

Finally, the Committee and Mr. Looney turned to the balances remaining on previous capital appropriations. The repointing of buildings has been completed. Therefore, balances on all appropriations from FY2006 and earlier can be reallocated except for two. Mr. Looney will expend the amount remaining under "Major Capital Project Studies" (\$5,360) and he will investigate the status of the "building-life safety" (\$24,106.80). The amount (\$30,000) appropriated for the Town Hall Stained Glass Window is for the repair of only one of three windows.

Adjournment

(Item 5 on Committee Agenda)

As the Committee was preparing to adjourn, Mrs. Mahoney indicated to the Committee her concern regarding wrought iron railings that used to adorn parts of the School Department Building at the Town Hall Complex. Mrs. Brusch reminded the Committee that it would meet at 7:00 p.m. on March 29.

The meeting adjourned at about 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark