

**THE MINUTES  
OF THE  
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 2, 2003**

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM.

Members absent: D. Hobbs and W. Hofmann

Also present: Assistant Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, Town Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner, School Director of Finance and Administration Gerry Missal, and the Capital Budget Committee

*Handout(s) given out tonight:*

1. *House and Senate Chairs of Ways and Means outline worst case local aid scenarios for FY2004 handed out by Town Accountant Hagg*
2. *FY04 Budget March 28, 2003 memo from Town Accountant Hagg*
3. *FY 2004 Budget Action March 25, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner*
4. *Town of Belmont Employees listing handed out by Town Accountant Hagg*
5. *5 handouts from the Capital Budget Committee (listed as 5A – 5E)*
6. *Final Budget Recommendations April 2, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner*

***Acceptance of Minutes***

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the March 26, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Oates seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of March 26, 2003.*

***Capital Budget Committee***

Chairman Widmer asked the Chairman of the Capital Budget Committee Mike Speidel to review his handouts. The Capital Budget Committee has not formally yet taken a position on anything. There have been informal discussions, and what he will give the Committee tonight is a sense of those discussions. The Capital Budget Committee discussed what absolutely must be funded this year and what will be left over for roads. About \$1 million of non-pavement management expenditures should be funded for FY04, leaving \$1.1 million (+ more from Chapter 90) for pavement management. This is all contingent upon the Fire Station emergency relocation issues which the Capital Budget Committee hopes will be totally funded offline through reserves. However, if the General Fund ends up funding that project, then the money for the relocation would come out of the roads funding.

With respect to the Draft Five-Year Capital Plan (*Handout 5B*), Mr. Speidel shared a few conclusions with the Warrant Committee. On page 2 under Community Development, there is a \$2 million request that will not be funded this year. He reviewed in further detail the Pavement Management project and the requests from Town Engineer Tom Gatzunis.

The cumulative five year total of \$18 million is overstated almost \$1 million. It comes to about \$3 million per year. The note on the bottom of page five includes a variety of routine capital needs/requests. It does not include any of the other major capital projects that are on the burner. It also does not include any major remedial repairs to the main Library, should that building remain in service for that (five year) period.

Mr. Speidel added the only thing that is not mentioned is the Senior Center. As people may be aware, the Fire Department has concluded and has recommended to the Board of Selectmen that they actually vacate the Waverley Fire Station in the near future and relocate temporarily (at least 3 years) to an unused portion of the Highway Department Yard. There are three options discussed in the memo from Fire Chief Osterhaus to the Board of Selectmen. The Capital Budget Committee's discussion (with no formal vote) is to agree with the Board of Selectmen. The Chief's letter goes on to discuss "emergency repairs" to the Harvard Lawn and Belmont Center Stations costing an estimated \$123K. It raises some policy decisions the Capital Budget Committee would like the Board of Selectmen to discuss. If the Fire Department is moving out of the Waverley Building, then what about the Emergency Management Office? What about the Waverley Branch Library? Someone needs to decide these issues, and the Capital Budget Committee would like to know those thoughts before they make any recommendations. The plan would be to put the building on the market, but to go through that process will take six months to a year. There will be costs involved even with that such as roof repairs and even "mothballing." The Capital Budget Committee needs feedback as to the project's funding source. Their sense is this may be an instance to go to the Kendal Fire Insurance proceeds.

Chairman Widmer clarified with Mr. Speidel the \$323K in relocation costs would be taken out of roads, if not funded by reserves. Member Callanan asked how big is the emergency that all of this needs to be done. Mr. Speidel answered the Waverley Station's issue is primarily the floor. Steel beams may be needed to shore up the floor, leaks from the roof are creating mold, and there are other air quality issues involved. The Belmont Center Station's main item is the brick falling off the building, and water is infiltrating creating mold in the building. The Harvard Lawn Station's windows are not properly fit in the frames, as well as other issues.

Member Curtis reviewed the different options for the Fire Station Relocation. Selectman Mahoney also mentioned that by doing major repairs to the buildings, you may hit an ADA issue that will increase the proposed costs. Mr. Barrell added the \$25K for the roof is just a bottom figure; it will only go up from there.

Mr. Speidel mentioned Highway Superintendent Castanino has assured the Capital Budget Committee the Highway Department could use the building after the Fire Department's use.

Member McCormick asked if there has been a structural study for the Waverley Building to determine how long the building would be safe. Member Bruschi answered there are studies regarding both the floor and the roof issues. The Committee continued to discuss the Fire Department relocation.

The Capital Budget Committee received requests from parking violation machines, to laptops, to switches for the Town's network and so on. Not only do we not really have the expertise to ascertain whether these are good requests, but even if aggregated at the department level, they start to look more like recurring operating expenses rather than capital expenses. He cited School and Town technology as an example. For next year and subsequent years, even if the Capital Budget needed to be reduced to relocate the funding, they would like to put those requests into the operating budget. Mr. Missal mentioned the Schools has about \$40K to replace some computers. Member Curtis clarified those costs are pure hardware expenses, no software licenses or consultants.

Mr. Stratford mentioned the ITAC Committee made an extensive analysis and presentation to the Board of Selectmen regarding the technology service delivery, particularly on the Town side.

There is a request for about \$1.9 million for Sanitary Sewer Program funding from Town Engineer Gatzunis. The Capital Budget Committee recognizes this is a multi-year project, whereupon one concludes, it looks like "a pay-as-you-go recurring operating-type like" expenditure. Preliminary discussions would indicate the DEP could be made happy with an annual expenditure of about \$1 million toward a program. Some preliminary numbers have been run that would indicate the \$1 million/year program would increase rates about 16% net. (If we took our existing sewer charges and had to absorb \$1 million/year indefinitely, that would create the increase.) Obviously, this requires a lot more discussion, thought, analysis and decision-making. There is still the \$1.9 million request in the meantime that needs some attention.

Selectman Brownsberger remarked the Board of Selectmen has created a committee to view the longest range possible for sewage and drainage issues. Member Flewelling asked if this was a continuation of a previous study. Selectman Brownsberger responded it is more than that.

Member Kobus clarified a portion of our immediate needs are \$1.9. It is almost a compliance issue the Town is facing. She asked about Mr. Speidel's objection for the sewer rates paying for it. He responded it is not an objection per se, it was a question of increasing the rates for a program that was not defined. He felt the program should be defined first.

Member Schafer asked what do we do in the coming year before the study is done this year? Do we know enough to spend the \$1.9 million requested this year? She also asked if that cost should be put on the property owner, and is the Town going to take that route? Selectman Brownsberger answered that so many things are actually in places where the sewer pipes are crushed down and leaking into the drainage pipes. We will tackle the issue if it is an illegal cross-connection issue, but it does not appear that is the problem. The Board of Selectmen needs to hear that number and hear more from Town Engineer Gatzunis regarding this request.

Mr. Speidel suspects the Capital Budget Committee would be willing to give this to the Sewer Board. The Board of Selectmen will follow up and get back to the Capital Budget Committee.

Mr. Speidel reviewed the memo from the Water Commissioners regarding their vote to seek Town Meeting approval for authorization to participate in the MWRA Local Pipeline Rehabilitation Program. Chairman Widmer noted this topic would be brought to the Warrant Committee next week by one of the Water Commissioners.

Member White spoke with Water Superintendent Schultz and invited him to next week's Warrant Committee meeting. Member White spoke of a proposal by Mr. Schultz that will be discussed further next week.

Mr. Speidel presented the "ruminations of the Capital Budget Committee" as they have thought about the Senior Center proposal and their part in considering the location. He also mentioned the scope of the proposed design. The Capital Budget Committee would like to see a more "robust" building that would include more than just a Senior Center. With respect to timing, this is a major concern. The idea of accelerating the Senior Center ahead of the Fire stations did not generate enthusiasm. The Capital Budget Committee would like to know more about matching funds and COA fundraising before they can make any recommendations.

Selectman Brownsberger addressed a few of those issues. The Board of Selectmen has agreed the two-story building concept for the Senior Center. There needs to be a more definitive answer from the Library Trustees on their spacing needs. Member Oates is concerned if the schematic design funds are passed, and the building is not built for a while, then the designs would be outdated. Selectman Brownsberger answered that is an issue for everything brought to Town Meeting.

Member Heigham and Member Bruschi agreed the sense of the mega-group has been the Fire Station project is the first priority. Member Oates is "aghast" that the Senior Center project would be placed on the pipeline before the Fire Station. The Fire Station Project is a service that affects every resident in Town, while the Senior Center does not have the same universal appeal to residents.

Selectman Solomon reiterated the Fire Stations are a priority for the projects in Town. “It ought to be and will be the biggest priority.” However, if the Fire Stations cannot move forward, then there is no reason to hold up the Senior Center.

The Committee further discussed Fire Station issues.

Mr. Speidel noted, with respect to Town Meeting, there are a fair amount of unknowns here. A later time in Town Meeting would be better for the Capital Budget Committee in respect to making recommendations. Selectman Brownsberger added it might make sense to think of Town Meeting as the non-money Articles being done in April, and the financial Articles (Capital Budget, Operating Budget and major projects) being discussed in late-May or early-June. The Board of Selectmen will discuss this timing issue at Monday night’s meeting.

Member Callanan thinks it would be helpful for the Board of Selectmen to indicate where their priorities are, and include a Plan A and Plan B with different scenarios as part of their discussion for Town Meeting.

Member Brusch asked if we could vote two scenarios, a conservative budget and another budget), where the Town would vote XX amount to the Stabilization Fund or Reserve Fund if the less conservative State Budget prevails.

### ***Subcommittee Report – Minuteman***

Member Oates reviewed the differences from the House 1 Budget and the Floor Budget. It is a lot more money than what was anticipated. The Town is still unsure of their portion for Minuteman. The \$432K anticipated in February is a long shot and \$617K is a worst-case scenario. Members Oates and Brusch discussed the possibility of a recalculation based on the state assessment system. Member Oates added this is a work in progress dependent on the State’s Final Budget.

### ***FY04 Budget Changes from Town Administrator Kleckner***

Chairman Widmer mentioned that after next week’s Water Department discussion, he wants to highlight any issues where the Warrant Committee disagrees with the Board of Selectmen’s budget. He asked Assistant Town Administrator Munro if she could prepare something that summarizes the Town Administrator’s budget and the series of decisions that have been made since then, basically the beginning Town Administrator’s Budget and the current Town Administrator’s budget. Assistant Town Administrator Munro then handed out (*Handout 6*) a Final Budget Recommendations April 2, 2003 memo from Town Administrator Kleckner. It presents the final picture as of today. She offered the Town Accountant could provide a current line item budget to the Committee for next week’s meeting.

Member Schafer asked Assistant Town Administrator Munro for a final set of staffing changes regarding the Town and School Departments. Member White added he would

like a column for current actual (including vacant but approved to be filled positions) as well.

### ***Salaries of Elected Officials***

Chairman Widmer reviewed last week's discussion on the classification of elected officials. Selectman Brownsberger updated the Committee on the Board of Selectmen's recent discussions as well. In the next week, the Subcommittee will work with Assistant Town Administrator Munro and Town Administrator Kleckner and come back to the Committee with a recommendation to be discussed in Executive Session.

Member Heigham has no problem with the merit decision. He does think we should be looking at salaries with other comparable towns. Treasurer Freiner has provided him the listing for treasurers of similar towns in the area. In the past, he expressed concern any increase in elected salaries may affect collective bargaining. Member Heigham will not press this issue.

The elected salaries issue will be addressed further in Executive Session at next week's meeting.

### ***Subcommittee Report – Council on Aging***

Member Brusch reviewed the COA's FY04 Budget request and current staffing levels. It is the recommendation of the Subcommittee to follow the Town Administrator's recommendation for the Assistant Director position.

Building rentals increased to \$16K/year and will stay at this level for the next three years. Fees charged cover the \$24K for Programs.

The grant issue is big for the COA. A few positions are in jeopardy due to state/federal grants being reduced. The COA Director does have an intern (unpaid by the Town) coming in the fall for one year.

The COA is comfortable in taking responsibility for only having one Holiday Party (instead of two – theirs and Recreation). The COA will be allocated a little bit extra for this party and the line item will be removed from the Recreation Department.

Member Brusch added the amount of volunteer time spent at the COA is huge.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording Clerk

Kristina E. Frizzell