

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2007
SPECIAL JOINT SESSION
COMMUNITY ROOM, CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL
7:00PM

A special meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:12 PM in the Community Room of the Chenery Middle School. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present. The Board met in joint session with members of the Warrant Committee, School Committee, and Capital Budget Committee as the "Blueprint Group" (formerly the Structural Group). The purpose of the group is to look at ways to make Town government more efficient and less costly.

Chairman Firenze briefly reviewed the subgroup areas. Mr. Younger updated the group on the progress of union negotiations with regard to health care, which are in progress. There was discussion about the implementation of plan design changes and self-insurance. Mr. Younger said the new GIC legislation is being reviewed by Cook & Company and it is hoped to have recommendations for the Board by the end of December. If the Town wished to join the GIC it would require re-opening negotiations with all the unions. Chairman Firenze suggested that the Health Insurance Group could be reconvened to comment on retiree issues and the GIC decision.

The discussion moved to the future of the Blueprint Group. Chairman Firenze discussed the example of in-house Advanced Life Support (ALS) services and the need for someone to do a detailed analysis of the pros and cons of the issue. Jennifer Fallon mentioned the idea of a study of the Town's success in obtaining grants and whether a grant writer would be an asset that would pay for itself. Liz Allison suggested that there is a middle level of projects (such as an ALS study) between the Warrant Committee's budget analyses and high-level questions of structural change and core services which might benefit from some attention.

A consensus developed that it might be helpful to maintain some of the subgroups and focus them on specific initiatives, but that the larger group could probably disband. The subgroups were asked what if anything they would like to push forward with, with the idea of turning it over to Mr. Younger to discuss with department heads whether it is feasible. If so, the subgroup would then report to the Selectmen on a plan for moving forward.

The Board recessed at 8:15 for 15 minutes.

Outsourcing: This subgroup would like to look at the ALS issue.

Regionalization: Mr. Younger reported that a group contract for office supplies has been established with W.B. Mason for a maximum of 85% off catalog prices. Belmont is also looking into a possible regional animal control facility. Mr. Younger will push ahead on this front.

There was discussion about possible regionalization of 911 dispatching. Pat Bruschi said this was looked into by Belmont, Arlington, and Lexington about 4 years ago. Mr. Younger agreed to sound out the new police chief on this question. There did not seem to be any reason to continue the existence of the subgroup.

Waste Management: The Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee can handle some of these functions. It was agreed to disband the subgroup.

School/Town Consolidation: The two issue areas that "had legs" for a feasible consolidation were Building Services and IT. The group would be willing to have a conversation with the school committee which was viewed as the next step and then make recommendations.

New Sources of Revenue: The group does not need to continue. Jim Heigham will do some independent investigation regarding grants and Mr. Younger and Chairman Firenze will continue discussions with nonprofit entities regarding PILOT payments.

Energy/Resources Savings: A database has been established on energy and water use. It will need to be updated going forward. Draft procedures have been sent to managers for comments. The committee will continue to pursue these efforts and phase itself out as staff can take over the functions.

Systems & Process Efficiencies: Chairman Firenze, Mr. Younger, and Mr. Conti will continue to work on this area.

Core Activities: The committee's findings will be put on the agenda for discussion at a future Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Younger will arrange this with Jim Staton.

Asset Management: The Committee will present the Selectmen with some estimates of how much it will cost to move forward with this.

Health Insurance: There is nothing for the committee to do at this time. The subgroup can disband but the Health Insurance Advisory Committee can remain dormant until needed.

The Board adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator