



Belmont
MASSACHUSETTS
The Town of Homes

From the Office of The Town Administrator

Belmont Bulletin

February 2024 Edition



February

Select Board Meetings

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 Select Board Meeting,
 Budget Summit

Town Offices Closed:

February 19, 2024
 (President's Day)

Contact the Town Administrator's Office

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There is a brisk chilliness in the winter breeze—it must be February! We are looking forward to another busy month here in Belmont. We wish everyone a very pleasant President's Day and a happy Valentine's Day too!

As we all strategize on the best ways to keep warm while we are out and about, take a moment to consider all the happenings around Town in this month's edition of the Belmont Bulletin.

Select Board News and Initiatives:

FY2025 Budget Summit IV – February 8, 2024

The fourth budget summit for FY2025 will take place on **February 8th**. The main policy making boards and committees will attend – Select Board, School Committee, Warrant Committee and Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee, and will continue deliberating on the size, allocation and long-term plan for an override request. The Summit will be broadcast on [Belmont Media](#) and presentation materials will be posted on the [Town Budget Information](#) webpage.

Assessors—Elected to Appointed Ballot Question Added to April Election Ballot by Special Town Meeting Vote

At a January 22, 2024 Special Town Meeting by a vote of 156-87 with two abstentions it was decided by Town Meeting Members to add a ballot question to April's Annual Town Election for the voters to decide whether to change the structure of the three-member elected Board of Assessors to an appointed body.

Public Hearing: A Discussion for the Proposed Community Path (Phase 1) Project in Belmont

On March 7, 2024 a public hearing will be held in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation at the Beech Street Center, Multi-Purpose Room at 7:00PM to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Community Path – Belmont Component of MCRT (Phase I) project. More information will become available on the [Town's website](#).

Keep Up with the Select Board



Use the links below to watch the most recent Select Board Meetings on Belmont Media's Website.

- [January 8, 2024](#)
- [January 18, 2024](#)
- [January 22, 2024](#)
- [January 30, 2024](#)

Find archived Select Board Minutes [here](#).

To view a digital version of this month's Bulletin, please scan the QR Code.

February 2024

Employee Spotlight

Deitra Barnes

Administrative Coordinator, Belmont Public Library

Each month, Town Administrator Patrice Garvin highlights a single employee whose hard work and dedication exemplifies what it means to be an employee for the Town of Belmont. In the Employee Spotlight series, we are able to shine a light on incredible employee achievements and provide an opportunity to introduce and recognize Belmont Town employees throughout the Belmont community.

In this month's Bulletin, Town Administrator Garvin would like to recognize Deitra Barnes of the Belmont Public Library. Deitra has worked for the Town of Belmont for 23 years at the library in her capacity as the Library's Administrative Coordinator. Over the years, Deitra has seen the growth of the library as a resource for the Belmont community and has become a valuable resource herself to library's daily operations.

Deitra describes her role at the library as one that provides "support" to the work of the Library Director, staff, Board of Library Trustees and the Friends of the Belmont Public Library to ensure that the library provides the "best possible resources and programs for the community and ensure that the library is a place for everyone." This work consists of a wide array of tasks that can range from drafting financial reports to fielding employee and library patron questions.

Library Director, Peter Struzziero describes Deitra as the "backbone of the library." Those who know and work with Deitra are likely to concur. Deitra brings professionalism and institutional knowledge to every challenge and finds herself being one of the first people to go to for advice on all things having to do with the library and its operations. Deitra takes her role as the "Library's Grand Central Station" head-on and with confidence as she takes in and processes work items to send back out to ensure that the job gets done.

The passion that Deitra has for the Belmont Library and libraries in general comes from days in her youth as a patron of the Central Square Library in Cambridge and the joy of reading. The first chapter of Deitra's work in Belmont begins after working as a math substitute for the Newton Public Schools and time as a computer programmer and doesn't begin at the library, but with the students at the High School. It wasn't long before she made her way to the library, where she began in a part-time role and within a few years her dedication expanded to a full-time role. The story continued to unfold over the course of many chapters and is still being written.



One of the biggest challenges that Deitra faces is her role is working with different personalities. Her advice is "be patient and focus on being a listener. People often just want to be heard. Over the years, I have learned to become a better listener to both staff and patrons." Deitra finds her motivation in knowing that "every work day is going to be a little different which keeps you on your toes and also to know that the work we do is helping people."

In an environment surrounded by books, inspiration is abundant. However, Deitra is quick to remind us that libraries are more than just the endless stacks of books and have evolved to become even broader resource centers. You will hardly ever hear a "sshh," Deitra explains: "There is always something happening that's different. I learned just a few days ago that our 'library of things' has an induction cooktop that can be checked out! There really is something for everyone at the library."

The Town of Belmont has begun working on its new library building and even though it will take a couple of years and the library staff have found temporary homes throughout Town, the excitement is palpable when looking forward to what is to come when talking with Deitra. "The old building will be missed, but the work of the Director, Trustees, Friends of the Library, and patrons to create a new library has been amazing to witness and be a part of. I have been around for several campaigns and library grant rounds over the years and have seen the energy and resources put in. To have assisted in a small way to see this goal put in motion and to know that the idea will become a reality is really rewarding."

Looking ahead, Deitra eagerly awaits the opening of the new building and the opportunity to continue working with her co-workers, including new faces at the library and getting to know some familiar faces better. Outside of her work at the Library, Deitra enjoys biking. Last year her daughter gifted her a membership to BlueBikes and Deitra has taken full advantage to explore many of the beautiful bike paths the region has to offer.

Community Updates:

Community Path Project Committee

Mark your calendar! A Design Public Hearing will be held to present the design for the proposed Community Path (Phase I) Project in Belmont, MA. **The Public Hearing will be held at Beech Street Center, Multi-Purpose Room (266 Beech Street, Belmont, MA 02478) starting at 7:00 PM on March 7, 2024.** Please see the information below.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Community Path – Belmont Component of MCRT (Phase I) project.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of a shared use path along the north side of the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line tracks and the south side of the abutting properties. The proposed improvements include accessible connections to the Clark St pedestrian Bridge, Belmont Station, Concord Avenue, Channing Road (near #7 Channing Road), and Brighton Street. The proposed path will extend the existing Fitchburg Cutoff trail which extends to the Alewife MBTA Station.

The proposed improvements also include a grade separated crossing via an underpass under the MBTA railroad tracks at Alexander Avenue. This crossing will provide pedestrian and bicycle connections from Channing Road/north side of the railroad tracks to Concord Avenue via Belmont Middle and High School. This connection will allow students to safely access the school without having to make a significant roundabout way. The bicycle accommodations consisting of a Shared Use Path have been provided in accordance with applicable design guides.

To learn more about the Community Path Project, please visit the committee's website by [clicking here](#). Furthermore, the project's website can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Belmont Public Library

The Library Building demolition is officially underway. In the last few months, we've been very busy preparing for this moment. In November, we closed the library building and in December we brought our temporary locations fully online.

In January, we completed the move out of the building and held a sale of surplus goods to the public to raise funds for the Town. We also outfitted many Belmont Public Schools and Town Departments with fixtures and equipment, saving tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars on future purchases. On January 23rd, we officially retired our building and the flags that decorated it. We had a ceremony with many friends in attendance: from our Town Administration to the Select Board, our Veterans Agent and veterans, our own Library Trustees, Friends, and more. It was a beautiful send off.

Now we look forward to what comes next. This month, the demolition of the building begins as we prepare for the groundbreaking this spring. Our timeline remains the same. We hope to open the new library on Labor Day 2025.

In the meantime, please come see us! We are fully operational at our temporary public locations at the Beech Street Center (266 Beech Street) and the Benton Library (75 Oakley Road); our hours are [listed on our website](#). This month we will bring lots of your favorite programs back online, both in person and virtually. We hope to see you soon, whether in person or online!



Belmont Fire Department

The response data from 2023 has been reviewed, and the Belmont Fire Department responded to 4053 incidents in 2023. A full annual report will be published soon, and made available online as well as at Fire Department Headquarters. With an increasing call volume, the fire department continues to maintain an adequate standard of coverage responding from our two fire stations. When responding to medical emergencies and fires, arriving on scene quickly with adequate resources is what keeps many fires manageable, and patient outcomes positive. During a recent weekday, the fire department responded to 29 incidents in only 19 hours. This included a fire in a structure, numerous medical emergencies, as well as a hazardous material incident.

During the course of their work shift our firefighters participate in regular training activities in order to retain proficiency and learn emerging best practices. This month some of this training included practice of forcible entry skills, as well as a review of self-rescue techniques when firefighters are entangled by various types of debris.

During the month of January Chief DeStefano hosted a “Coffee with the Fire Chief” event in which residents were invited to learn more and ask questions about how the Belmont Fire Department serves the community. In addition to the Chief, other members of the Command Staff were on hand to provide their insight, including Asst. Chief Tobio, Capt. DeMarco (Community Liaison) and Capt. Wollner (Fire Prevention Officer). We look forward to scheduling another event in March!

When visiting Fire Headquarters, please notice our new “QR” code information wall. Residents can obtain seasonal safety and fire department information by scanning the “QR” code with their smartphone. This is more environmentally friendly than providing paper brochures and it allows us to update the information more frequently, and at almost no cost.

Don't forget to check out the latest episode of **“HOT TOPICS”** with Chief Destefano and Captain David DeMarco available on the Belmont Media Website or by [clicking here](#).



Council on Aging

Its cold outside and one way to stay warm is to get active at the Beech Street Center, where things are always bobbing. Get ready for another month full of enlightening, engaging and entertaining events! You can visit the [Beech Street Center's website](#) for more information and a complete list of events. Check out some of the highlights below!



Council on Aging Event Highlights:

Valentine's Day Piano Concert

Fri Feb 9th 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Please join us in welcoming pianist Michael Leidig back to the Beech Street Center for this Valentine's Day concert! Michael is a classical, jazz and modern rock pianist who performs throughout the Boston area as well as Baltimore MD, Raleigh, NC and Ocala, FL He promotes musical appreciation through live performing and historical accounts of the lives of the composers. He currently teaches at Northeastern University. Please call 617-993-2970 to register.

Retirement Planning & Social Security Help

Tue Feb 13th 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Join us for an informational session with co-founder Micheline Dagher of Dagher Wealth Management. She will be presenting on retirement planning, social security, and other financial concerns for seniors. Please call 617-993-2970 to register.

Xeira the Service Dog

Fri Feb 16th 11:00am - 12:00pm

Join us at the Center to meet and spend time with Xeira (pronounced Kay-Ruh) the golden retriever and her handler. Xeira is a young adult female learning to become a full-fledged service dog and she needs your help to socialize and learn to interact in new situations. Come by and say hello between 11am and noon!

Greatest Sitcoms of All Time

Fri Feb 16th 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Award-winning author and pop culture historian Martin Gitlin hosts this fun and enlightening presentation based on his book, *The Greatest Sitcoms of All Time*. He is the only author to actually rank the best of the best, including *I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Get Smart*, *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Cheers*, *The Golden Girls*, *Seinfeld*, *Frasier* and *The Big Bang Theory*. He will show funny snippets from those shows and others, challenge patrons with sitcom trivia (including identifying cool theme songs!), discuss the criteria he used to rank 70 years of sitcoms and talk about how they have evolved over the decades in humor, presentation and content. This program is really entertaining so join in on the fun! Please call 617-993-2970 to register. This event made possible by a generous donation by the Friends of the Belmont Council on Aging.

Local Landmarks with the Belmont Historical Society

Tue Feb 27th 1:15pm - 2:15pm

Think you've got a good eye for buildings and places in the area? The Belmont Historical Society invites you to come and test your knowledge of local landmarks! The presentation will feature a series of mystery photos for you to identify. Please call 617-993-2970 to register.