

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

FINAL

JUNE 14, 2017, 7:30 P.M.

SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM

2017 OCT 12 PM 1:45

Present: Chair Epstein; Members Alcock, Gammill, Helgen, Lisanke, Lubien, McLaughlin, and Slap

Members Absent: Crowley, Fallon, Libenson, Mennis, Schreiber, BOS Chair Williams, School Committee Chair Fiore, Interim Town Administrator Marshall

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Epstein.

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the evening's agenda.

Approval of Minutes

There were none to approve.

Discuss WC Procedures, Work Product in FY17, and Explore Improvements for FY18

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the topics that the WC delved into this past year, e.g., Minuteman, Pension obligation extension, formation of the Major Capital Projects Working Group (MCPWG), Retirement Board (RB) articles, as well as the annual budget and CPA proposals.

He noted that the Pension topic analysis proved to be illuminating and that the 2029 due date is realistic – providing the investments continue to do as well as they have done. The MCPWG will issue its full report this fall. The WC, he said, provided some leadership on the RB articles.

Chair Epstein then noted that he discussed issues concerning Information Technology (IT) with Member Schreiber. She requested that the WC look at this issue, town-wide, more closely. There are many questions to analyze, e.g., software, hardware, storage, security, etc. Member Gammill suggested that this (the IT functions across town) is first and foremost an area the Board of Selectmen could focus on.

Discuss Summer Work and Ongoing Initiatives

Chair Epstein explained that the WC has, in the past, undertaken various “summer projects,” but it has become clear that WC members want to be engaged in other seasonal activities over the summer.

Future Topics

Chair Epstein noted that there is an ongoing Town Administrator search, and that he (Chair Epstein) will likely represent the WC on the search committee. Also, Pay As You Throw (PAYT) will be explored and addressed this fall.

Member Gammill raised the issue of ongoing personnel contract negotiations by the BOS and the School Committee. He suggested that the Warrant Committee could analyze the financial implications of the new contracts, once approved. This led to a discussion about the impending budget shortfall (FY20/21).

Capital Concerns

The WC then discussed the town's capital issues: Police Station, DPW, Library, etc. Chair Epstein noted that with an outlay of \$5M some of the most pressing needs could potentially be met. Solar units, the potential location of a new Police station, the Light Department Substation, and the complexity of the Community Path's recommendations for a bike path were other topics explored by the WC.

School Budget Process

Member Gammill noted that the budget process was somewhat challenging as he posed some basic questions to the School Department and to the former Town Administrator – and the answers were not forthcoming. It would be helpful to know, he said, what questions are appropriate to ask, and how to obtain relevant information, etc. He noted some of the issues that were difficult to move forward on. Member Slap provided some perspective and context on the School Committee's budget process in the past. Chair Epstein suggested that a joint meeting with the SC be held to brainstorm this issue further. Member Gammill said he would like to see the BOS keep the recent experience in mind as they consider candidates for the Town Administrator position.

Suggestions for the Future

Member Lubien suggested that the agendas be more detailed and that the topics be distributed with more advance notice. He stated that the additional time is helpful in researching the topics.

Member Lisanke stated that the pre-Town-Meeting meetings are a bit chaotic and that the logistics are challenging. Some of the last minute amendments are presented in such a way that there is little time for the WC to understand the amendment in a meaningful way. Chair Epstein agreed, and added that he would rather the WC *not* opine on a topic that it hasn't had sufficient time to explore. Member McLaughlin added that it forces WC members to merely "abstain" when a vote is taken. Chair Epstein offered that the WC may want to consider not weighing in on "non-binding" articles.

Member Slap noted that the Quarterly reports are helpful – and were not available this

year. Member Helgen added that financial documents are sometimes sent just hours prior to the meeting time. Members are not given sufficient time to even read the documents, which hinders any potential discussion.

Member Lubien added that the allotted time for some of the article presentations seemed too short to cover all the points, e.g., the Retirement Board.

Updates: Minuteman

Minuteman: Member Gammill stated that Minuteman will have an operating budget surplus of \$900K. The surplus will fall to their equivalent of our “free cash.” Also, the groundbreaking for the new school occurred this morning.

Issues relating to Minuteman’s budget were briefly explored.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary