



**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 6, 2023
7:30pm**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: December 19, 2023
TIME: 8:47 AM

To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. There were 16 voting members present

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Melissa Morley	Yes
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Yes	Lynn Peterson Read	Remote
William Anderson	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Remote	Jack Weis	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Yes
Deepak Garg	Yes	Meghan Moriarty, Ex-officio, School Committee	Yes
Anne Helgen	Yes		
Staff			
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Director	Yes

1. Continued Discussion of FY25 budget, Free Cash Usage, and Override

High Level Concepts: Mr. Rickter reviewed the latest version of the High-Level Concepts and highlighted what had been changed. There was a discussion of the concepts, and more changes were recommended.

Modeling Tool Updates: Mr. Caputo outlined the most recent changes made to the model, explained how each of the scenarios work and their impacts, and explained the new Free Cash analysis and how the thinking about Free Cash has changed.

Mr. Caputo went on to speak about the impact of various levels of Free Cash usage on the next and future overrides. A discussion of the information and impacts followed.

Mr. Caputo explained and reviewed several of the scenarios, which were discussed:

- FY25-19 Override Budget
- FY25 Level Services + Historical Growth
- FY25 Level Services + Moderated Growth
- FY25 Level Services + Moderated Growth + Revenue Growth
- FY25 Override” + Moderated Growth + Revenue Growth

There was a discussion of revenue growth including the McLean development and economic growth, including investments that could be made in FY25 that will lower costs in the future.

Per Household Impact: Click [HERE](#) to see the slides. Ms. Hewitt explained that the Select Board approved the FY24 tax rate and that information was used to do this analysis. She added that the updated FY24 values for individual households will be available to residents in their tax bills that will be mailed January 2, 2024. She also noted that the rate went down from \$11.20 in FY23 to \$10.56 in FY24 although values when up considerably.

Ms. Hewitt then explained the components of the Per Household Impact analysis and that the average single family home tax is \$17,057. She then explained that the FY25 tax rate increase without an override will be 3.17%. She reviewed the scenarios they looked at based on the size of an override.

Mr. Taylor spoke about the difference in assessments between one and two-family homes and recommended that the Committee work to help residents to understand what their values actually are because the discussions generally use phrases like “typical” or “average”, etc. which are imprecise. Ms.

37 Garvin said there is a tool on the website that residents can use to determine their value. The Committee
38 discussed this issue and the impact of valuations on individual tax bills.

39 Ms. Hewitt then reviewed 3 scenarios from the Modeling Tool and expanded it out to FY28 with varying
40 override amounts which was followed by questions and discussion. She pointed out that this is a modeling
41 exercise only.

42 Free Cash & Override: Mr. Lubien said he and other on the Committee believes the Committee should not
43 recommend what these numbers should be, but rather comment on the potential impacts and financial
44 ramifications of the numbers chosen by the Select Board. There were several questions and discussion of
45 these questions and related issues.

46 Override Comparison to Other Towns: Ms. Warner explained why and how she did this comparison. She
47 explained that Arlington is a good model for other Towns to use when they ask for an override because
48 they make a commitment to voters by:

- 49 • Giving very clear guidance to all departments on multi-year budgeting.
- 50 • Providing voters with the reassurance that there is strong fiscal stewardship in managing expenses.

51 She then went into the details of how different towns achieved overrides. There was a discussion of
52 creating a 3-year plan modeled on the information that Ms. Warner presented.

53 **Liaison Reports:**

- 54 A. Town Administrator: Ms. Garvin and Ms. Hewitt reported on the activities of the TA office.
- 55 B. School Committee: Ms. Moriarty reported the activities of the Committee.
- 56 C. Library Building Committee: Mr. McLaughlin reported on the reasons for demolishing the old building
57 before there is a construction contract for the new building. Mr. Anderson expressed his concerns about
58 this plan.

59 **Approve minutes (if any), including all outstanding subcommittee or working group minutes.**

60 November 29, 2023: Mr. Weis explained that he did not raise the question on Line 61. After review, the
61 recording is inconclusive, so the question is left vague as to who asked it.

62 *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting as
63 amended. Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.*

64 **Adjournment**

65 *Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. The motion was
66 seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:37pm.*

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68 **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 7:30pm

69
70 Respectfully submitted by,

71 Susan Peghiny
72 Recording Secretary
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