



**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee
Remote Meeting
Wednesday, January 22, 2024
5:15pm**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 25, 2024
TIME: 8:51 AM

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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 5:16pm. There were 16 voting members present.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Melissa Morley	Absent
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Yes	Lynn Peterson Read	Yes
William Anderson	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Yes	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		Others	
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Director	Yes

1. Discuss and possibly vote on move to elected Board of Assessors (BOA)

Mr. Lubien recommended that the Committee first decide if it should take a position on this issue, and then discuss that position if necessary.

Mr. Epstein explained why he believes there is a financial impact:

- The Collins Center and Division of Local Services (DLS) reports both identified the use of outdated software as a problem which introduces significant inefficiencies, which he detailed.
- Since the BOA is a non-policy making body, it does not make sense for it to be elected.
- There would be a tighter integration of the town departments if the BOA were appointed by the Select Board.
- This reform would create an efficient, well-rounded financial arm of the town.

Mr. Weis indicated that given Mr. Epstein's comments, he believes there is a reason for the Warrant Committee to take a position.

Mr. Anderson asked if there is a timeline to upgrade the software system if the article passes. Mr. Hewitt said a State reevaluation is coming in 2025 and they do not want to change the system until after that process, so the earliest there could be an update would be summer 2025. There is a placeholder in the budget for this. She pointed out that the placeholder is a high estimate and is currently at \$250,000.

Ms. Cowing asked if the move to upgrade the software would happen regardless of the outcome of the Warrant Article since Ms. Hewitt already has the placeholder for upgrading the software in the budget. Ms. Hewitt explained why she thought having the placeholder is good financial policy, regardless of this issue. However, an elected BOA could decide to not make this change. This was discussed as well as where this item would appear in the budget and how important it is to plan for this major change.

Mr. Hewitt spoke about the efficiencies the town has experienced by the move to an appointed Treasurer.

Mr. Epstein and Ms. Garvin left the meeting at 5:29pm.

Ms. Warner explained that she is trying to decide if this is a political/structural decision or a financial one. This was discussed.

Mr. Caputo explained that he believes the Committee should take a position on this and explained why.

Mr. Croy asked for clarification on the reasons the Warrant Committee would vote on an article, which Mr. Lubien explained.

Mr. Rickter explained that he supports voting on this article and pointed out that the Committee voted 13-1 in favor of the move from an elected to an appointed Treasurer.

The Committee decided that it should take a vote on the Warrant Article.

The members discussed why they would or would not support this Warrant Article.

Ms. Helgen moved to change the election of the Board of Assessor to appointed. Mr. Garg seconded, and the motion passed 14-1-1 by a show of hands vote with Ms. Croy opposed and Ms. Cowing abstaining.

Adjournment

Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Mr. Rickter seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:57pm.

Next Meeting: date/time

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary