

BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2018, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

2018 APR -5 AM 9:06

Present: Chairman Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Libenson, Lisanke, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Slap, Weis; School Committee Chair Fiore;
Selectman Dash (arrived at 7:38); Town Administrator Garvin.
Members Absent: Helgen

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chair Epstein.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 02/14/2018 were approved without further discussion by a vote of 13-0, with 1 abstention (Fiore).

Discussion: CPC & CPA

Margaret Velie, Chairman of the CPC, gave a brief overview of the CPC. She described the organization as containing 9 members who represent different boards and commissions in the town. They reviewed 6 projects this year. The CPC reviews projects to make sure that they are in eligible for CPA categories, i.e., open space (including outdoor recreation), historical preservation, or community housing. They also consider how the projects benefit the town, preserve town-owned assets, have community support, and are consistent with other Belmont planning objectives. They also look for support from other town bodies and whether projects leverage funds.

- Projects this year total a little over \$1.5 million
- As of July 2017 our CPA fund balance was \$996,000
- The state match in November 2017 was \$189,000
- Anticipated CPA revenues for this fiscal year are \$1.1 million

Chairman Epstein observed that \$15,000 has already been spent on feasibility work for the McLean Barn project funded by the CPC administrative budget and asked what was done with this money. Ms. Velie answered that each year the committee can request to appropriate up to 5% for administrative expenses and that the administrative budget can include due diligence for proposed projects. In this case the work was a conditions assessment and stabilization study to see what work needed to be done to stabilize the barn.

Chairman Epstein then asked about other general questions the Warrant Committee had about use of CPA funds. One question was whether the CPA could be used to defray rebuilding of athletic fields as part of the high school project. Member McLaughlin clarified to ask more specifically if the CPA could be used to move Grant Memorial Baseball Field when the existing high school is demolished, and whether CPA could pay

to replicate the Claflin room in a new town library. Town Treasurer Carman indicated that the baseball field could be a possible use but not the Claflin room.

Member Fallon asked about the possible use of CPA funds for the Community Path. Treasurer Carman indicated such uses were speculative at this time but some parts of the path might be eligible. Chairman Epstein asked if CPA money could be used to acquire rights of way for the path. Treasurer Carman said the specifics of a project would have to be vetted with the state level CPA organization.

Chairman Epstein asked that given the upcoming debt exclusions for the high school and other capital and operating budget requirements would the CPC support or entertain a reduction in the percent of the surcharge for the CPA particularly now that the matching grant is such a small fraction?

Ms. Velie answered she would not support a reduction.

Selectman Dash stated he, too, would not support a reduction. The voters approved it and we've done the things that we said we were going to do with it. We wouldn't have done the pool or digitizing public records without it. We didn't adopt the maximum surcharge as it is.

Member Crowley asked about the process of CPA funding and if there was a possibility of taking longer term view of major town needs that potentially could be offset in part by the CPA. Member Weis was concerned that the CPC was reactive to proposals and whether the CPC could be more active in proposing specific projects.

Selectman Dash commented that Town department heads have advocated certain CPC projects.

Member Fallon stated that from her perspective as a member of the Capital Budget Committee the CPA projects have been important because they otherwise would not have received priority for funding.

Member Schreiber asked again about the process to ensure that the projects were the best and most appropriate projects we should be spending money on. Is there a big picture or strategic perspective on planning, like the process used by the Capital Budget Committee?

Selectman Dash stated that the board has been talking about the possibility of setting aside money every year and deliberately not spending it. He is also in favor of coming up with a series of policies about how it all works so that when private money comes in we know where it goes, maybe the town should be holding it, instead of requiring neighborhood groups to create their 503c with all the cost and hassle. For the next year the process may be different.

Discussion: Payson Park Music Festival

Tomi Olsen presented for the Payson Park Music Festival. She gave an overview of the history and purpose of the Festival. The proposal is for \$5,000 to do initial planning for a stage structure for performances. The goal would be to get a buildable design that can be used to get construction bids. The construction cost is expected to be approximately \$50,000.

Treasurer Carman explained one goal in doing the planning is to get agreement from the Payson Park abutters.

Chairman Epstein stated that he wanted to hear the presentations but did not want to have the Warrant Committee vote on the projects at the same meeting.

Discussion: Veterans Memorial

Angelo Firenze presented for the Belmont Veterans Memorial Committee. The Veterans Committee was concerned that there were no memorials in town honoring Vietnam Veterans and that they were interested in a central location to honor all Belmont veterans. They are proposing a project to renovate the existing flagpole site on Underwood St. that was originally dedicated as a veterans memorial in 1940. The design for the renovated memorial will be incorporated into the intergenerational walking path to be installed around Clay Pit Pond. They have raised just under \$250,000 including a \$100,000 matching grant. The CPA request for \$103,000 will add to the amount already raised.

Discussion: Town Field's Playground Restoration

Stephanie Crement presented for the Town Field Playground Restoration Project. The goal is to remove and replace the playground equipment at Town Field. The playground has not been worked on since approximately 1997. The equipment is old and there is a lack of shade. The fence will be replaced.

Chairman Epstein asked who was planning the project and identifying the equipment to select. Ms. Crement explained there was a citizen committee of five, working with Jay Marcotte from DPW as well as Andy Rojas, landscape architect and former Selectman. They are also consulting with professional designers and the budget includes design fees. Treasurer Carman and Selectman Dash explained that ultimately Jay Marcotte and his staff would have oversight.

Discussion: McLean Barn Stabilization

Ellen O'Brien Cushman presented on behalf of the Land Management Committee, accompanied by Lisa Harrington of the Historic District Commission. Ms. Cushman explained that the Land Management Committee had revenue of only about \$1,200 per month from renting the cell phone tower on their land. That is not enough to do the contemplated work on the McLean Barn. They believe the barn has great historic and visual value. The goal at present is to stabilize the structure to make sure it will not

continue to deteriorate. Afterwards the Land Management Committee will lead a community-wide conversation about the right use for the barn. The conservation restriction only allows two uses: an environmental use related directly to the open space or auxiliary cemetery use. The Land Management Committee prefers to find such uses before considering revising the conservation restrictions.

Chairman Epstein explained the Warrant Committee concern that it could cost several million dollars to convert the barn from an abandoned structure to a useful space. Ms. Cushman stated the sponsors agree and that they do not have an answer. They do not see that the barn will necessarily become an active usable space. They feel they have 2 choices. One is to do nothing and let it deteriorate. They think that would be a tremendous loss to the town. The other choice is not to let it go.

Chairman Epstein: About the particular stabilization proposal, the actual construction work totals \$117,000 but then with contingencies and add ons it becomes \$200,000. In the line items there's almost \$24,000 allotted to architectural and engineering expenses which translates to 130 hours or 1 month of architect time. Is that really necessary? Ms. Harrington answered that the cost is not atypical. It's developing a scope of work that is biddable to a contractor. In order to bid the work there need to be contractors to compare apples to apples. A lot of time goes into preparing those drawings and specifications.

Member Weis asked whether that work has been done already as part of the \$15,000 that was spent for the feasibility study. Ms. Cushman and Ms. Harrington indicated that the estimates had seemed high, but that when they asked the cost estimates to be reviewed by the consultant, they remained in the ballpark.

Chairman Epstein asked about a \$20,000 line item for restoring doors and hardware. Ms. Harrington indicated that the line item has been replaced with a new estimate. Ms. Cushman also stated with regard to the architect there were no existing plans for the building and that architectural drawings were necessary to bid the work.

Member McLaughlin opposed spending \$200,000 to mothball the structure when in the absence of a plan it would likely remain idle for another 20 years and continue to deteriorate.

Ms. Harrington stated that the town would be in violation of a legal agreement because the town is burdened with the responsibility of maintaining the building.

Member Crowley asked about potential uses for the building as a community center. Ms. Cushman stated that whether as a community center or some other use such as a farmer's market, potential uses would have to be reconciled with the terms of the deed restrictions.

Discussion: Housing Trust

Judy Fine, Co-Chairman of the Housing Trust and Rachel Heller, Member of the Housing Trust, presented.

The proposal is a request for \$250,000 to be set aside to capitalize on opportunities in the real estate market and work with developers to get more affordable housing generated.

Chairman Epstein asked about whether having funds on hand really matters if the Housing Trust would need to go back to the CPC when funds are needed, since the project would still need to be justified. What is the difference the delay entailed between that and going back to the town for funding through the regular budget process? Ms. Fine replied she expected an agreement would be developed with the CPC, the Town, and the Housing Trust to avoid further review by the CPC or Town Meeting for authorization of a specific project. Ms. Heller indicated that this is a common way CPA funds are used with housing trusts.

Member McLaughlin said this would give the Housing Trust a “bank account” to purchase a unit or a piece of land. Ms. Fine agreed the Housing Trust would have all the decision making authority.

Member Lisanke asked whether this would be an annual recurring request. Treasurer Carman stated that if a CPC project has not spent its budget within 30 months the money returns to the CPC. Ms. Fine indicated that the Housing Trust would repeat the request if they could show they were spending the money effectively and made progress on their goals.

Member Weis stated it made more sense to him to draft the agreement before allocating \$250,000. The process is putting the cart before the horse. Ms. Heller said the Housing Trust was ultimately answerable to the Board of Selectmen.

Discussion: Grove Street Park

Donna Ruvolo, Friends from Grove Street Park and Anthony Ferrante, Recreation Commission Representative, presented.

The project is an intergenerational walking path to go around the park. It would also improve accessibility and landscaping. There will also be improvements to the baseball fields and regrading. The width of the path was reduced from 8 feet to 6 feet to save approximately \$200,000.

A question was raised about \$74,000 for a project manager. Treasurer Carman had recommended having a project manager for the park. Because neither DPW nor Community Development has spare project manager capacity, it was desirable to add that service to the contract as opposed to creating a new staff position.

Chairman Epstein commented that there are two primary issues—1) accessibility, and 2) the walking path. He asked if accessibility is a different issue than the path? Ms. Ruvolo said that the park truly is inaccessible and that the primary goal with the intergenerational walkway is to improve access to all the parts of the park where activities take place. Mr. Ferrante said that it is important to open up recreational activities to everyone and that the park should be accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Warrant Committee Report

Chair Epstein explained that he would email each subcommittee chair a template for their portion of the text of the report and preparation of the associated tables. He reminded the subcommittees that the final report needs to be submitted to the Town Clerk by May 13th or May 14th.

Chair Epstein also stated he would circulate a spreadsheet identifying line items in the town budget flagged by our thresholds of changing by more than \$10,000 and by more than 10 percent.

Chair Epstein also explained that the executive summary will discuss health insurance because the allocations to individual departments were not useful for purposes of the report.

Town Administrator Garvin also stated that she would like to attend the meetings of the subcommittees with the department heads if her schedule permitted.

BOS Updates

Selectman Dash report that the town signed a new trash and recycling contract with Waste Management that will run for the next 5 years. Residents will get 2 bins: 1 for trash, 1 for recycling. The town is switching to single-stream recycling in the new contract, which starts on July 1. Yard waste collection will continue with no changes.

The town is considering a ban on plastic bags used at check-out in stores. There will be an exception for dry cleaning and food packaging.

The Belmont Light Screening Committee went through the first round of resumes for the General Manager hiring process.

Selectman Dash said there should be a discussion of how to recycle old recycling bins.

Member Weis asked about the status of the report on the number of selectmen. Selectman Dash answered there would be a citizen's petition to increase the BOS to 5 members. The citizen's petition is on the warrant so it will be discussed in due time.

Town Administrator Updates

Warrant closes on Monday, March 5th

Growing list of articles on the warrant

Once the warrant closes a draft warrant will be sent around

First budget presentation is tomorrow night at 7:00pm

Joint with WC, School Committee, and BOS

John will be presenting his budget as well

School Committee Updates

None.

Motion to adjourn at 9:41 PM.

Submitted by Sable .