

DATE: April 1, 2022
TIME: 9:12 AM

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, February 9, 2022
7:30pm**



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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Andrew Levin	Yes
Christine Doyle, Vice Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Elizabeth Dionne, Secretary	Yes	Lynn Read	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Paul Rickter	Yes
Jennifer Fallon	Yes	Ellen Schreiber via phone	Yes
Elizabeth Goss	Yes	Laurie Slap	Yes
Daniel Halston	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Anne Helgen	Yes	Adam Dash, Ex-officio Designee - Select Board	Yes
Staff		Jamal Saeh, Ex-officio, School Com. Chair Appointee	Yes
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes		

1. Discuss Long-Term Capital Planning Committee Bylaw Change

Ms. Doyle reviewed the history of the proposed bylaw change, and the committees they had approached when creating the proposal. She explained that the Bylaw Review Committee had seen the proposal and given feedback and the Long-Term Capital Committee will review February 10, 2022. She then outlined the reasons and rationale used to make the proposed bylaw change.

Ms. Doyle then outlined the comparison of the existing Capital Budget Committee vs the proposed Comprehensive Capital [Planning] Committee. She explained how the composition of the group was determined, and how it might function with the CPC.

Ms. Helgen said the SCIG received a suggestion that the Capital Budget Committee look more deeply at the financial impact of different capital purchases to see if the Town should lease, finance, use free cash, etc. She asked if the CBC was considering this. Ms. Doyle said the suggestion would be folded into the considerations and approaches the committee would use. Ms. Doyle said they have worked on how to prioritize and weigh projects for planning purposes. Weighing the projects might fall under Ms. Helgen's suggestion.

Ms. Helgen said it would be helpful to see what the Town spends on capital in total for the year, in addition to discretionary and random expenditures. Ms. Doyle said she hopes this will be incorporated.

Mr. Dash said the Select Board regulations have the vice-chair serving on the Capital Budget Committee and suggested this be changed on the proposal, which was agreed.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if the 5-year plan would be voted on at Town Meeting. Ms. Fallon said they already do the 5-year plan, but that a vote would not be binding, only an acceptance of the plan and what will be coming. They will share the 30-year plan with Town Meeting but not ask for a vote.

Mr. Caputo expressed concern that the workload of the Capital Budget Committee and asked if anything was being removed from their process. Ms. Doyle said the long-term committee will discuss adding to the bylaw, and that in the first year the committee will do 1- and 5-year plans but delay the 30-year plan until the next year. She also said it is an increase of workload which is one of the reasons more people would be added to the committee. They would likely work longer than the current committee.

Ms. Doyle explained that the new committee would need increased staff support. Ms. Fallon said staff and committee work will be heavy in the first two years. Mr. Caputo expressed concern about the availability of staff.

Ms. Garvin said she is not too worried as they are in the process of hiring a new Assistant Town Administrator/Finance Director. This will be one of the main duties and responsibilities of that role. She added that there is a state grant that could be used to hire a firm for the heavy lifting during the first year.

Ms. Doyle explained that an inventory will be needed as well, which was discussed.

Mr. Weiss asked what would happen if Town Meeting voted no on the 5-year plan. He also strongly supported including the word "Planning" in the name of the new committee. Ms. Doyle responded that a "no" vote would indicate there was a problem with the plan and might trigger reprioritizing projects or altering funding proposals.

Ms. Doyle reviewed the contents of the various sections of the proposed bylaw including some of the feedback from the Bylaw Review Committee.

Ms. Helgen asked if CPC funds are included in Section C "Capital Sources Planning", which Ms. Doyle confirmed. There was a discussion of the CPC funding and activities.

Mr. Lubien said the Committee would vote on the final version before Town Meeting.

2. Vote on Financial Indicators Report

Ms. Schreiber explained the details of the revised recommendations from the report:

1. That the report be updated annually in the early Fall before the beginning of budget season.
2. That a committee be put together to create a framework for a Fall budget summit where the trends, outlooks, and priorities can be discussed. This summit would be designed to inform and engage Town Meeting Members and residents in the budget process.

Ms. Schreiber outlined some other projects that the Communications Subcommittee has been working on, including their first "one pager" which is on ARPA.

Ms. Helgen pointed out that the report aligns with the financial modeling that happens at budget time.

Mr. Lubien explained that the proposed committee would not only be Warrant Committee members, but needs to be across the town (Schools, Town Administrator, Police, Capital Budget, etc.). He went on to say that there is no desire to create another sub-committee but hoped that it could part of the Modeling Sub-Committee. Other people would need to join the sub-committee for this initiative only.

Mr. Weiss asked if the amount of work done this year would be needed each year. Ms. Helgen explained that they have the basic data so going forward updating for the current year is what would need to be done.

Mr. Weiss asked for clarification of Mr. Lubien's comment about using the information for the budget process, which Mr. Lubien provided. There was a brief discussion of this.

Mr. Caputo asked for clarification of the formality of the committee. Mr. Lubien said he envisioned it as a more informal working group. It was decided to consider it a 'group', rather than an official committee.

Mr. Caputo asked how the insights and interpretations discussed previously would be generated. Ms. Schreiber said her view is that the data is prepared, and then the appropriate bodies use that information to do the analysis and create presentations for the Summit. But she feels this needs to be defined by the group. There was a discussion of this issue.

Ms. Garvin explained the process her office uses to build the budget, and how the data and assumptions could be incorporated into that process.

Mr. McLaughlin said that in his opinion when the proposed group meets it will be subject to the Open Meeting Law, require minutes, etc. Mr. Dash confirmed this and explained the requirements of creating the group.

Ms. Fallon suggested that the group take the framing of the discussion from staff and that it should be clear that this is coming as a presentation from someone without prior shaping. Ms. Schreiber recommended that the new group determine how these things should happen.

Motion: *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the Financial Indicators Report as amended. Ms. Slap seconded.*

Mr. McLaughlin moved to amend the motion to “adopt the Financial Indicators Report, as amended”. Ms. Helgen seconded the amendment.

Mr. Weiss asked for clarification on how creating the working group agrees with the current recommendation and how creating the group would be done. Ms. Lubien said his understanding is that by supporting the report the Warrant Committee suggests that this is something that should happen, and Mr. Lubien will then work to members to the Modeling Subcommittee for this purpose. That group then decides what the next steps will be.

The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. Hint: the amendment should have been voted on first, and THEN there should have been a second vote on the motion as amended.

3. Review and Discuss 2022 Calendar

There was a discussion of the winter/fall calendar, including Town Meeting and the budget format.

4. Reports from Select Board, Town Administrator, School Committee and Liaisons.

Communications Working Group: Mr. Rickter reported that the first “one pager” on ARPA is being released. Ms. Helgen asked for people to share this information to their networks.

Select Board: Mr. Dash provided an update of the activities of the Select Board. He also read the statement from the Select Board in response to letters from the Union that were sent to Town Meeting members:

“Some Town of Belmont Unions recently send two letters to Town Meeting Members. In these letters disparaging remarks were made regarding Town Administrator Patrice Garvin. We strongly condemn personally attacking a member of Town administration or any employee who is doing their job on behalf of the residents of Belmont. We strongly support Town Administrator Patrice Garvin. She works very hard for the Town and always conducts herself in a professional manner. Very truly yours Adam Dash, Chair; Roy Epstein, Vice Chair; and Mark Paolillo, member”.

Motion: *Mr. McLaughlin moved that the Warrant Committee adopt the Select Board’s statement of support of Town Administrator Patrice Garvin. Ms. Dionne seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.*

Town Administrator: Mr. Garvin thanked the group for their support and advised that the budget would be delivered to Committee members on Friday.

Middle/High School Project: Mr. McLaughlin reported that there is shortfall of about \$4 million that is directly related to Covid. He said that West of Harris Field is unlikely to be completed in the budget. There WILL be solar panels on the building, but they are struggling with how to do this. There is some discussion of using some of the Middle School budget, but this compromises the educational standards of the school. They are looking at other funding sources as well.

Ms. Dionne reminded the group that CPC funds can be used for school fields and explained the process.

Mr. Weiss said he was surprised for the sudden shift in the budget message of the school. Mr. McLaughlin explained that they had paid overtime to get the school done in time for last fall, which is the major portion of the \$4 million shortfall. There as a discussion of why the shortfall suddenly occurred.

Ms. Weiss asked if ARPA funds could be used for this. Ms. Garvin said the Town needs this money to fund the Operating Budget Deficit. There was a discussion of how the ARPA funds would be used and ideas to help fund the solar panels.

5. Minutes Approval

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the **October 6, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended.

Mr. Weiss confirmed that he was in attendance at the meeting.

Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote with Ms. Slap & Mr. Rickter abstaining.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the **November 3, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended.

Mr. Weiss said in line 38 the phrase “which continued the trend of the last 10 years or so” is factually incorrect and asked that it be removed.

Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote with Ms. Slap & Mr. Levin abstaining.

Motion: Ms. Dionne moved to approve the minutes of the **November 17, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended. Ms. Slap seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote with Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Saeh & Ms. Helgen abstaining.

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the **December 1, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended.

Ms. Dionne said she was absent from this meeting. Mr. Halston said there are some non-substantive corrections needed to the approval of the Public Safety Committee Minutes which he would share.

Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote with Ms. Dionne & Mr. Saeh abstaining.

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the **December 15, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended.

Mr. Halston said that Ms. Fallon’s comments on page 2, paragraph 5 appear to be missing text. Ms. Fallon said the wording “there’s nothing in the presentation” should be added.

Mr. Halston said during the Select Board report he would like to add “and there was enthusiastic support from the committee” to Mr. Epstein’s announcement that Ms. Garvin would remain Town administrator.

Ms. Helgen said she made the motion to approve the June 19, 2021 minutes.

Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed by roll call vote with Mr. Dash abstaining.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the **January 26, 2022** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended.

Ms. Fallon asked if she should have also been shown as a member of the Capital Budget Committee. It was decided that people who are on joint or other participating committees should be shown under each committee.

Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

6. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved the adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. NAME seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at TIME.

Next Meeting: date at 9:28pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary