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**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

**FEBRUARY 26, 2014, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Allison, Baghdady, Bruschi, Dash, Epstein, Fallon, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Sarno; Selectman Rojas; School Committee Representative Slap

Town Administrator Kale

Members Absent: Mennis

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

Chair Libenson began by introducing Ms. Anne Paulson, Chair of the Underwood Pool Building Committee, who promptly called the Underwood Pool Building Committee to order. Next she introduced members of the committee: Ms. Ellen Schreiber, WC Member Dash, Mr. Tom Scarlata (the principal designer from B, H & A), and Ms. Deborah Marai (Owner's Project Managers from Pinck). Mr. Gerry Boyle, Director of Facilities, and DPW Director Peter Castanino were also in attendance.

Community Preservation Acts (CPA) Projects Discussion

Underwood Pool

Member Dash reviewed the charge of the Underwood Pool Building Committee. He noted that three public meetings were held and all were well attended. The community stressed the need for a multi-generational pool. Member Dash reviewed the issues concerning the Underwood Pool. He noted that the pool received a permit to open last year, but that the opening of the pool will be, going forward, on year-by-year basis.

He noted that the proposal includes two pools, a diving area, lap lanes, and a family pool area. He reviewed parking lot changes, sidewalk adjustments, and landscape improvements. A safe pathway from the Wellington down to the pool will be created and the skating area will remain intact.

He then discussed the benefits of the two-pool design, i.e., if one side needs to be shut down, the other pool would remain open. He explained that the diving area would be compliant and that the lap lanes could be adjusted, depending on the demand.

Given the size of the pool, two bath-houses were required. He explained the pool filter improvements, noting that the new filtration system is above ground level. He touched on the new design and pointed out that the buildings are small and fit the residential space appropriately.

He then touched upon the plumbing requirements and explained how these requirements influenced the design of the two bath-houses. The bath-houses have been designed to be more family friendly.

Regarding costs of the preliminary design, Member Dash explained why the fee for the pool went up from the feasibility study. He provided a breakdown of the costs, including information on maintenance, water, chemicals, and staffing. The cost of a membership could be raised, resulting in increased pool revenues, but that decision is up to the Recreation Department.

Member Dash noted that the total projected construction cost (which includes all expected fees and contingencies) is a little over \$5.2M. He added that CPA funds would offset some of the \$5.2M projected cost.

WC Discussion

Member Bruschi asked about the total cost of swimming and camp programs. She then asked about the T Bus stop – could it be moved up one block? Ms. Paulsen said that there are so many driveways, that it will be difficult to move. Furthermore, not having cars there helps the visibility for cars exiting Cottage Street.

Member Allison noted that 80% of the operating costs are due to staffing. She inquired about the statement that staffing costs will not go up. Mr. Castanino said that the new design will not require additional staffing. Member Epstein said that the new facility could probably justify higher membership fees to cover desired programs. He also said that higher fees may be justified to help offset the debt exclusion. Mr. Kale suggested creating a stabilization fund to help with future pool repairs. Member Grob asked about the construction schedule and the earmarking of the CPA funds. Mr. Scarlata explained the construction schedule.

Member Baghdady asked about the money allocated for the Project Manager and asked if this was necessary, given that the project is fairly straightforward. Member Bruschi said it is not optional; it is state law.

Member Sarno asked about the scope of the project vis-à-vis the numbers of people using the pool. Usage is a key number, he said, which drives the plan. He said that the average daily use is lower than what has been projected – based on his extrapolations. Why, he asked, is the pool being designed for a usage estimate that is unlikely to be met? Ms. Schreiber said that the pool, at peak times, feels very crowded. The numbers, she said, are legal capacity guidelines, but that the pool is crowded with fewer than the legal numbers. This topic was discussed. Ms. Schreiber said that there is data to suggest that the usage pattern will increase. “If you build it, they will come.”

Selectman Rojas discussed some of the pool numbers, noting that he remains concerned about the \$600K increase as well as the contingency amount. Given that this is a

preliminary design, he stressed concern about this number carrying the project through to the end. Ms. Marai spoke to the schematic design estimating process. She said escalation estimates and unforeseen conditions have been built in.

Member Gammill said that he feels comfortable with the scope of the pool, given the existing footprint. Member Manjikian asked about the taxpayer impact of the debt exclusion. Town Treasurer Carman said that the average homeowner would pay about \$48 a year over 15 years – less for a less-than-average-priced home and more for a \$1M home.

Member Libenson suggested that the WC *not* take a vote on the pool this evening. About half of the WC agreed; the vote did not occur.

First Time Homebuyers Assistance Program

Ms. Alicia Gardner-Todreas (Chair of the Belmont Housing Trust) and other BHT members approached the WC table. Member McLaughlin expressed several concerns about this proposal.

Ms. Gardner-Todreas explained how the process will work. Member McLaughlin said the proposal was *de minimis* in terms of reaching a 10% affordable housing stock. Regarding diversity, he said that Belmont does extremely well when compared with Winchester and that we are similar to Arlington. He said that Belmont has always been diverse as a result of the two and three family houses. The \$375K is taxpayer money, he emphasized. This project, he said, sends the wrong message to residents and puts into question whether the leaders in this town are good stewards of residents' money.

Ms. Judy Feins, BHT member, said that the money will benefit more than 3 households. Ms. Fallon said that Belmont is low with regard to affordable housing. She asked about affordable home-ownership versus affordable rentals. The BHT stated that the proposal was efficient. Member Gammill confirmed that this is a template for going forward. He asked why now?

Member Allison raised several questions about this project, e.g., lottery selection, application process, income acceleration once in the affordable housing, and re-sale at affordable housing market price. She said that the fiscal impact on the town is a calculation that the WC should look at more carefully. She then raised concerns regarding the assessed value of these housing units as well as the impact on the schools.

Mr. Carman said that while tax revenue is not lost on these units, others (across town) will make up the difference. Member Brusch raised a question about the impact of the proposal on housing values.

Member Epstein said that he finds this proposal perplexing. He asked whether a Belmont senior who sold their home in Belmont would qualify for the subsidy. The BHT said no. He asked whether the CPA Advisory Committee considered any other alternatives to

promote additional affordable housing in Belmont. Mr. Carman replied no. He then asked about re-sale. The BHT explained that the town would require the resale not to exceed the affordable price in the future. Member Sarno asked about similar programs in Newton and whether there would be local preference.

Member Libenson asked about the larger plan. Members of the BHT expressed several avenues that are being explored, e.g. the inclusionary by-law, etc.

Chair Libenson said that this issue will be voted on next week.

Minutes Approval

The minutes of 2/12/14 will be reviewed next week.

Free cash will be discussed next week and Chair Libenson requested that free cash questions be sent in by noon on Friday.

He said that the WC Spring schedule will be forthcoming.

Updates: Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board

This item was tabled until next week.

Public Contributions

There were none.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:43 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary