

Town of Belmont
Public Services Subcommittee of the Warrant Committee

DATE: March 28, 2023
TIME: 1:24 PM

Minutes: Subcommittee Meeting

Thursday, March 16, 2023. 8:00 am
Select Board Room, Town Hall

Committee Attendees: Bill Anderson, Laurie Slap, Marie Warner, Jack Weis.

Also attending: Patrice Garvin, Department Heads Glenn Clancy, Brendon Fitts, Jay Marcotte and Assistant Department Head Mike Santoro

The meeting was called to order at 8:06am

8:00 am The Subcommittee met with Community Development, Glenn Clancy. Discussion included the impact of their open positions and consequent short staffing. Clancy indicated that there was no active code enforcement.

The challenges of attracting and retaining staff. Clancy indicated that other communities paid more, and similar roles had fewer responsibilities. Due to short-staffing, employees in this department must perform multiple job duties. Since housing is so expensive in Belmont, staff live in other towns, making job opportunities in closer to their homes more attractive.

Clancy also expressed concerns regarding succession, as long-tenured department members approach retirement. Glenn discussed how the department functioned with reductions in staff from FT to PT.

Open Roles: "Limitations are strictly staffing," said Clancy. Key position in Building Inspection was filled in February. There is a backlog in inspection of public buildings due to the time this inspection role has been open.

There is no funding for a Resident Engineer, which results in lack of oversight in construction projects with external contractors – roads, sewer for example.

Economic Development Coordinator – No funding for this role, which has been recommended by the EDC, and which would promote commercial growth.

Grant Writer and Administrator – Many projects are matching grants, so need seed money.

Discussed were risks and unknowns – changing DEP and MS4 compliance requirements.

Conclusion: Programs and Services offered can't expand with current constrained structure. This will result in unmet expectations in what residents want done.

9:30 Recreation Department: Subcommittee met with Brandon Fitts. Fitts described the expansion of programs and new services offered by the Department, including pre and post-COVID programs, and consequent finding changes/needs.

The Subcommittee discussed the transition in the budget from current General Fund accounting to a Revolving fund, and ultimately Enterprise Fund so that revenue/fees can match program costs.

Rink budget was a “plug” from last year’s budget, although it is known that the operation and this department’s involvement will change. Subcommittee asked for budget scenarios reflecting a passed Debt Exclusion (demolished rink); Rented Ice with scaled down program; “Band-Aid” rink with failed vote, using current rink.

Challenges: The Subcommittee discussed utilization of pools and fees and hiring challenges for Lifeguard staff.

\$14,000 for Financial Aid for Summer Programs; Fitts expressed that they don’t want to turn anyone away, but there is no policy in place for financing nor refund requests.

Overall: Rec Department is a service in town and is not self-supporting in fees.

11:00 – Department of Public Works Marcotte stated that the 14 different divisions touch every person in town.

Staffing/Hiring Needs: Marcotte stated that the department has eight open positions, and the department is down from a high of 65 staff to the current level. This shortage means their activities are more reactive than proactive. Examples were street sweeping and cache basin cleaning.

Hiring is a challenge, and Garvin, town administrator indicated a compensation study was underway.

Potentials/unknowns: - New compliance issues on disposal of organics.

Potential areas for fee offset: - Mattress and bulky item pickup – Discussed was the potential to make this service cost neutral, and consequently reduce the budgeted cost.

Marcotte reviewed specific line-item questions and will share actual overtime costs incurred, and responses to specific line-item questions submitted earlier.

Need for outside contractors: Union employees may decline overtime, plus department job openings have created the need for external contractors.

Forestry: Tree inventory is done by the external consultant, but there is no warden in the budget. Marcotte and Santoro continue to function in that role with a stipend. Discussed was whether acquisition of trees be a capital budget item or remain in DPW. The Commemorative Shade Tree Project has been a source of donated trees.

Hazardous Waste: Continued challenges and increased costs in recycling were discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

Submitted by Marie Warner