

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
FINANCIAL TASK FORCE
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Wednesday, February 26, 2014
8:00 AM**

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BELMONT, MA.
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CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Financial Task Force (FTF) was called to order in open session at 8:10 am by Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Town Administrator David Kale, Assistant Town Administrator Marshall and Mr. Daniel Dargon were also present.

FTF Members Present: Mr. Charles Laverty, Ms. Anne Marie Mahoney, Mr. James Williams, Mr. Paul Lisanke, Dr. Kingston, Mr. DiCologero, Ms. Laurie Slap, Mr. Floyd Carman, Ms. Anne Helgen, Mr. Angelo Firenze, Mr. James Tzouvelis, Laurie Graham and Mr. Justin Amico

Members Absent: Mr. Charles Clark and Mr. Andrew Levin

Chair Paolillo reviewed the agenda, noting that the Education Working Group would be the primary presenters.

Report by Sub-Committee Chairs

Dr. Kingston noted that four of the eight school-department-sponsored modeling groups would be presented this morning. He touched on what a modeling group is and why they were formed.

Instructional Modeling Group

Technology, he said, has become an integral part of the instructional system. There may be a cost saving factor to moving toward increased use of technology. Dr. Kingston then discussed factors related to the further inclusion of technology into the educational system, e.g., implementation of hardware, staff training, and Common Core standard alignment. He said that, while the report is finished, the work in this area is not.

Enrollment Modeling Group

Dr. Kingston read a summary paragraph from the report, highlighting the enrollment growth, notably a growth of 599 K-12 students over the past 15 years. He then discussed the NESDEC growth projection of 600 students over the next 10 years. These numbers do not include the Uplands and the Cushing Village developments. He noted the long-term fiscal implications of the growth numbers. Chair Paolillo commented that this impact is untenable for the budget. Mr. Firenze commented that the pupil school assignments could be tweaked which would allow for more flexibility in handling the increasing enrollment. Ms. Mahoney noted that the NESDEC projections have been, in the past, lower than the actual enrollment reality. Mr. Williams asked about the percentage of houses that have children in the school system. He also asked if the Tier

1 designation (Belmont had been Tier 2) has had a significant impact. Dr. Kingston replied that parents may not be keenly aware of that designation, but that they are attracted to this community because of its reputation for academic excellence as well as its proximity to Boston and Cambridge.

Student Life Modeling Group

Dr. Kingston said that the schools have taken on the social and emotional health of its students. Initiatives like bullying awareness have been undertaken without any funding to support them. The role of counseling students has grown in recent years. He noted that while adding an SRO would have benefits, it comes with costs as well.

Instructional Technology Modeling Group

Dr. Kingston said that the system's technology focus is in a maintenance mode and is not as progressive as it could be. He said technology is an agent in the curriculum and that it has a financial impact. Chair Paolillo agreed that the delivery of education through technology is a reality. This topic was discussed. Mr. Firenze raised the issue of technology's impact on the union, specifically on teacher positions.

There are four more School Modeling reports that will be forth-coming.

Revenue Opportunities

Mr. Carman said that the group has met and is over a month away from finalizing the fee structures across town and from other communities. He said much of this information is not documented. Regarding parking fees, recommendations are forthcoming. Regarding other fees, he stated that information is still being gathered. The group will continue meeting until June 2015 because the scope of revenue-gathering possibilities. He said the group has not yet dived into PILOT payments. Mr. Firenze raised the topic of charging fees to non-taxpaying entities (Belmont Hill School, etc.), for ambulance, fire services.

Capital Budget Committee (CBC)

Ms. Mahoney said that the CBC has created a document to prioritize the outstanding capital projects across town. Meetings are scheduled with various departments to discuss capital projects. Mr. Kale said that the Board of Selectmen voted to put the Underwood Pool debt exclusion on the ballot in April. Regarding the incinerator site, he said that the process is moving forward with regard to determining the appraised value as well as potential post-capping uses.

Town Government

Mr. Kale said that he is gathering additional information (via a survey to department heads) on statutory requirements for service delivery from certain departments. He said the survey also inquires about services that departments wish they were able to provide. Ms. Helgen requested

knowing the mandated fees that the town is required to pay.

Schedule follow-up meetings

Next FTF meeting: Friday, March 28, 2014 at 8:00 a.m.

Other Items of Business (FY15 Budget Update)

Chair Paolillo stated that the FY15 budget presentations are underway. He said that the preliminary numbers reflect additional funding received from the state.

Mr. Kale briefly reviewed the FY15 budget numbers. He noted some of the adjustments to the original projections, e.g., increased state funding and a Minuteman assessment reduction. The budgets, he said, are in balance. In answer to a question from Mr. Firenze, Mr. Kale reviewed the free cash numbers, how it is used, and the sources of free cash. Chair Paolillo said that free cash will end up being about \$4M after the use of \$1.8 million included in the FY15 Budget and approximately \$250,000 for funding the OPEB policy and before any revenue or expenditure replenishments. The Warrant Committee is looking to see what guidelines other communities are using, noting that Belmont is in the "4% of total budget" range that the DOR recommends. Mr. Carman added that Belmont has a 10% reserve fund policy. Mr. Firenze asked how the Board planned to use the Woodfall Road funding. Chair Paolillo said that it is hoped that this money could be used for capital needs.

Ms. Mahoney noted that, of the \$2.5M allocated to the CBC, only \$780K remains – for which there are over \$4M in requests. Therefore, over \$3M in requests will need to be denied. Chair Paolillo agreed that there is not sufficient funding for the town's extensive capital needs.

In answer to a question from Mr. Firenze, Dr. Kingston stated that the increased enrollment impacted the FY14 budget by about \$500K.

SC Chair Graham noted that the SC will hold budget forums for the community, in the upcoming weeks.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from January 31, 2014 will be approved at the next FTF meeting.

The FTF moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 am.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator