

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
FINANCIAL TASK FORCE
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Thursday, September 25, 2014
8:00 AM**

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA
2014 NOV -4 AM 8:30

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Financial Task Force (FTF) was called to order in open session at 8:06 a.m. by FTF Chair Paolillo in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Town Administrator David Kale was present as was Assistant Town Administrator Phyllis Marshall.

FTF Members Present: Superintendent Phelan, Mr. Tony DiCologero, Mr. Angelo Firenze, Mr. Charles Laverty, Mr. Daniel Dargon, Ms. Anne Marie Mahoney, Mr. Paul Lisanke, Ms. Laurie Slap, Mr. Floyd Carman, Mr. James Tzouvelis, Ms. Laurie Graham, Ms. Anne Helgen, and Mr. James Conry

Members Absent: Mr. Charles Clark, Mr. Andrew Levin, Mr. Justin Amico, and Mr. James Williams

Chair Paolillo reviewed the agenda and then began with the Education working group. He welcomed the new Superintendent of Schools to the FTF.

Reports by Sub-Committee (Working Groups) Chairs

Education – Modeling Report

Ms. Slap informed the FTF that the Compensation modeling group report is in process and will be ready for submission in the next few weeks. Superintendent Phelan added that the seven reports that have been completed are currently being reviewed by the Leadership Council. He said he will provide an executive summary of all eight Modeling Groups once the Compensation report is complete.

Revenue Opportunities

Mr. Carman noted that the draft report will consist of an analysis of town fees, parking revenue, PILOT programs, new growth, the sale of town-owned property, and parks and recreation revenue opportunities. He said he expects a report will be available in early November.

Capital Budget Projects

Ms. Mahoney informed the FTF that the department heads have been interviewed. Also, the group has met with Belmont Savings Bank regarding a private/public funding partnership. Challenges for the major projects include site location and funding. Major projects include Belmont High School, the Incinerator site, DPW, Library, Police Station, and the Skating Rink.

Town Government

Mr. Kale said that the report will review collaborations that already exist as well as departmental requirements and services that are provided. The exercise presented – “if you created a department today, what would you have?” – proved to be a meaningful one. Mr. Lisanke spoke about the essential services that the town is providing, noting that there is no panacea around cost savings. He added that the group has interviewed Arlington and Lexington.

Chair Paolillo underscored the importance of identifying efficiencies, but he agreed that doing so would not yield huge cost savings. He noted that department heads clearly identified the need for more personnel to deliver essential services. Chair Paolillo then raised the topic of succession planning. Capturing the “institutional knowledge” is important when department heads retire.

Mr. Firenze raised the issue of the barn (on Mill Street) as well as the electric light building that has been sitting there for many years. He said there should be a plan regarding these buildings. Chair Paolillo spoke to the electric light building being used for either the town’s current needs or for a commercial possibility. He touched upon the need to replace the Police Station.

Mr. Kale agreed that the light station needs to be “decommissioned” before a plan can be made for it. Also, the light station is considered “historic” and uses for it will continue to be explored. Regarding the barn, there are restrictions placed on it with regard to its use. There are also structural issues that need to be considered. The town will need to decide how much money it would consider investing in the barn to fix and maintain it. Mr. Carman added that it would be expensive to fix it.

Ms. Helgen asked about efficiencies with regard to technology (using the web, using technology to do things more quickly, etc.) Mr. Kale noted that the Town Clerk’s Office and Building Services are using more technological efficiencies. However, there are costs associated with the technology.

Financial Projections

Mr. Kale spoke to the model of strategic planning for long-term finances. He noted that school enrollment has continued to increase. He is working with the Superintendent to plan for this. He said he is also working with the Assessors to determine new growth estimates and their impact on revenue projections as this relates to the development of the FY16 budget.

In answer to a question raised by Mr. Firenze, Mr. Dargon spoke to the process of estimating new growth figures. Mr. Kale added how new growth estimates are worked into budget (revenue) projections.

The FTF discussed Cushing Village as an example of new growth’s impact on the budget. Mr. Firenze noted that additional tax revenue from McLean did not pan out. Cushing Village is another example of a project that seems stalled. What can the town do about this? he asked. Mr.

Kale detailed what is being done to move Cushing Village forward, e.g., meeting with Mr. Starr, finalizing the sale of the parking lot based the agreement, etc. Regarding McLean, he said that they are looking for a partner to develop the land with.

Ms. Helgen raised the question of fees generated from “actual” permits. Mr. Kale noted that the estimates are conservative so that money the town doesn’t have isn’t spent. However, the town tries to estimate permit and other revenue in a way that reflects reality.

FTF Timeline for Draft Reports

Chair Paolillo informed the group that the preliminary (draft) reports should be ready by early to mid-November. A final report with recommendations will be due by the end of the calendar year.

He said the final report will need to be presented to the Board of Selectmen, as all FTF recommendations will need approval of the BOS. Perhaps the FTF will meet with the Board at the first of the year. Also, at the November 17 Town Meeting, a preliminary report will be presented to Town Meeting members.

Mr. Carman stated that the work of the FTF will need to be revisited on a yearly basis as it is a “living” document. Chair Paolillo agreed.

Next Meetings

Friday, October 31 at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes of June 27, 2014 will be approved at the next FTF meeting.

The FTF moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 a.m.



Mr. David Kale, Town Administrator