

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **December 15, 2010, 8:00 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

- Present: Chair Allison; Members Brusch, Callanan, Dash, Epstein, Grob, Manjikian, McHugh, Millane, Sarno, Smith; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Chair Rittenburg

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- Town Administrator Younger and Town Accountant Hagg

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- Members Absent: Becker, Libenson, Lynch

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- The meeting was called to order at 8:00 pm by Chair Allison.

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- Chair Allison began by turning to the first item on the agenda: announcements.

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- ***Announcements***

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- Chair Allison informed the WC that it may need to weigh in on various issues facing the town: Light Department/new substation, health care, compensation, etc. The WC may turn to some of these items in January when it begins to meet on a weekly basis. Allison also announced that The Pioneer Institute is instituting a competition for the best study done by a volunteer committee. The WC has been invited to submit its CPA study. WC members will need to supply a short bio for the submission package. Chair Allison provided members with a template for their bios.

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- Member Brusch then informed the WC that the WC and School Committee (SC) typically submit quarterly budget reports, and the recent SC report noted that the Schools have incurred \$378K in unanticipated expenses because of two items. First, enrollment in Full-Day Kindergarten is below expectations – the Schools plan to use operating funds to cover the deficit rather than raise fees to parents. Second, while the SC has some means to cover the overall sum via revolving account transfers, there is a SPED piece amounting to \$225K, and the SC may come to the WC in January to request a reserve fund transfer to cover this.

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- ***Reports of Subcommittees***

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- **Culture, Recreation (and Health):** Subcommittee Chair Smith informed the WC that the Health Department has experienced some personnel changes, specifically, that the Health Department shares a Social Services Coordinator with the COA, that there is a new Director and a new Assistant Director who was hired just recently. The Health Department is working on performance indicators and is reviewing their fee structure.

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- Regarding the COA, the staffing remains the same as last year, and last year was a transition year for this department inasmuch as they were moving into the new space. The COA expects to be able to provide activity indicators this year. Chair Allison notes that a key question about usage is its distribution – there is recurring concern that a group of about 100 seniors account for most of the usage, and it would be good to deal with that question definitely this year.

- Regarding Recreation, a consolidated profit and loss statement (P&L) which includes Public Works costs is now available. The WC will complete revenue and expense reports for the Rink, Pool, and summer programs. There are good activity indicators for each of these.

- Regarding the Library, there are no major changes and the same program categories will be in use. Chair Allison asked if there were any plans for the Library to break down its adult circulation statistics by type of collection – she said it would be useful to know more specific details about who the Library is serving with what services.

- There are no major changes overall to the departments within Culture, Recreation and Health. Town Administrator Younger clarified that Mr. McKinney reports to Mr. Younger. He also added that the “Sealer of Weights and Measures” position has been regionalized with Arlington.

- **Education:** Subcommittee Chair Bruschi began by noting that there are hundreds of employees within the school department. The Ed. Subcommittee is working with the SC on Program Budgeting. The SC will present the two requested budgets (available revenue and level service) and they may prepare a “student needs” budget as well. Regarding performance indicators, they have many reporting formats that are required by the state and federal government, and they may want to use those indicators as the activity indicators needed for the WC report.

- **General Government:** Subcommittee Chair Millane began with Finance and Accounting, noting that the new part-time Budget Analyst position has been a valuable addition to this department. Member Dash discussed the Town Administrator department noting that there have been some changes in duties including consolidating with the Town Clerk’s office on some duties, and consolidation with the schools is being explored. Legal Services has gone out to bid. The staffing has remained constant but there may be some cost savings in the hiring of a new Assistant Town Administrator. No VFW changes – it still uses a town building for free and that has remained unchanged. The Beech Street Center’s revenue increased this year as a result of rentals.

- **Human Resources Department:** Member Sarno spoke on this department, which employs three people (2.7 FTE) and covers all employees in the town and some in the school department. The total FY11 budget was \$292K for operating expenses. The activity indicators and programs will be similar to last year, with the possible elimination of recruitment as a separate category since it accounts for so little time comparatively. Handling of employee complaints were not included in last year’s report, but they may be

tracked this year. HR Director Crimmins has had a more active role in contract negotiations and she estimated that 25% of her time is spent in these meetings. HR Regionalization is difficult with other towns. Regarding within the town, she doesn't feel she has the resources to take on any additional responsibility. There has been no progress in automating the process of responding to questions about benefits.

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- **Town Clerk's Office:** Member Sarno said that this office oversees three major programs: Town Meeting, Elections, and other Town Clerk functions (licenses, information source, etc.) There are 4 staff members and a total budget of \$412K. They receive \$90K in revenue offsets. Their programs are the same as last year and the activity and program indicators are well documented. Much of what this office does is legally mandated. Some duties have changed with the new Open Meeting law, Conflict of Interest law, and Campaign Finance law. The Town Clerk will play a major roll in redrawing the Precinct lines.

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- Last year, the WC noted the lack of automation in this office. Some changes were made, including automating birth records and entering TM member emails into a database. Also, pet licensing renewals may be done online but there have been no major changes.

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- **Assessor's Office:** Member Grob spoke on this office. This department is required by law. The Assessors assess 8000 parcels. There are 3.4 employees overall, with a budget of \$371K. They are projecting a 5% increase in costs due to a revaluation in the contract for external services.

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- Member Callanan asked about PILOT payments. Town Administrator Younger replied that the major parties (private schools and churches) throughout town are not contributing PILOT payments and that they cannot be mandated to do so. Chair Jones added that the Assessors had taken the lead in this but, since little progress has been made, the BOS might take this up. He suggested that the town could add fees for police and fire services. Mr. Younger then reviewed areas that are being explored throughout next year for regionalization, including health and recreation.

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- **Public Safety:** Member McHugh noted that the Police Department anticipates about the same staffing levels this year as last year (46 positions). They are collecting data on activity indicators, and the regionalization of 911 is being explored. McHugh spoke on the Fire Department and noted that there are no changes overall here as well. There are 55.49 FTEs and the programs cover fire suppression, administration, emergency service, and community service. The department is mapping the Program costs to categories, and are tracking activity indicators to various calls (non-emergency, fire, etc.) She noted that non-operating budget costs are high for both departments, especially Fire (40% of total departmental costs are non-operating), and that they would be looking at this.

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- **Public Works/Community Development/Building Services:** Subcommittee Chair Epstein reported that Building Services has 5 FTEs. There are some questions

about efficiencies with the school consolidation, which will save a department head salary. Member Epstein noted that the Library maintenance is on its own and that the Beech Street Center is working well as a building.

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- **Community Development:** Regarding this department, Epstein continued, it is a small staff. There is a new engineer position to oversee construction projects and he is overseeing \$8M worth of work. Director Clancy is concerned about the Building Permit process and thinks it could be restructured. There has been an issue with stormwater impacting the sanitary sewer levels. There is \$700K worth of work to be done here. The town will need to address surcharges to finance this work, perhaps in rate changes.

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- Town Administrator Younger spoke about the organization of the Public Works Department. He noted that “unofficially” these departments are under him, but that there is no charter in Belmont.

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- **Department of Public Works:** Regarding the DPW, Member Epstein said that it is a large department and that there are not many changes to report. There has finally been a reduction in a senior staff position (achieved last July). The department is trying to identify the type of data that it would be sensible to collect. If they had more funding, they would hire a vehicle mechanic and a heavy equipment operator. He suggested that a time study of the usage of these vehicles would be a useful next step. The DPW would like to get resolution on the incinerator site, as it will need to be looked at within two years. Member Bruschi noted that the Capital Budget Committee (CBC) would also appreciate additional data on the DPW vehicles, including how often are they used, for what purpose, etc.

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- ***Review of Spring Calendar***

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- Chair Allison noted that starting in January the WC will begin meeting every week. She also said that the WC may receive clarity by late January on what, if any, capital projects will need to be looked at in the course of the Spring.

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- ***Approval of Minutes for 12/1/2010***

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- The minutes of December 1, 2010 were approved.

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- ***Wrap-up/Adjournment***

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- BOS Chair Jones moved to adjourn at 9:21 pm.

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- Member Dash provided the meeting summary.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
- WC Recording Secretary

