

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **March 21, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

- Present: Chair Allison; Members Becker, Brusch, Dash, Epstein, Grob, Libenson, Lynch, McLaughlin, Sarno; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Representative Slap

- Members Absent: Baghdady, Manjikian, McHugh, Millane

- The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Allison.

- Chair Allison began by reviewing the evening's agenda. She then turned to the first item on the agenda.

- ***Available Revenue Discussion, as of March 21, 2012***

- Chair Allison began by informing the WC that, with the exception of the House budget and any Health Care design changes that are forthcoming, the revenue data is coming together. She said that by next week, a single available revenue number should be available (excepting the two areas noted above). Chair Allison then reviewed the revenue estimates as they currently stand. She said that she and School Committee representative Slap will work with the Town Accountant and Interim Town Administrator on the growth numbers. She then asked Member Libenson to summarize the Fire Department revenue and overtime picture.

- Member Libenson stated that the ambulance number that has been forecasted by the WC is inconsistent the Chief's number. Libenson said \$384K represents 80% of the full year's budget, and that ambulance fee revenue has averaged approximately \$10,000 per week. This will give the Fire Department a \$30-70K positive variance. Chair Allison then asked if the Fire Department projections were consistent with a projection of no growth in trips over 2012 and no price increases? Member Libenson said that the ambulance fees should be consistent with FY12, but that it is hard to say for FY11, as the fees changed (increased) mid-year. A discussion of the compositions of the trips ensued.

- Chair Allison and Member Libenson then explored the Fire Department's budgeted overtime number of \$465K vs. \$537K. Member Libenson said that \$465K seems to be an appropriate number. BOS Chair Jones informed the WC that the Fire Department is requesting two additional employees, which may help to assuage the overtime budget. However, Chair Jones added that the trade-off is difficult to determine, as it impacts overtime. Member Libenson agreed that the employee buffer is tight. Chair Allison noted that the estimate of \$465K was based on current staffing levels and did not assume two additional positions. Member Libenson said that the life-time costs of additional employees will need to be explored and factored in. Member Lynch said that the subcommittee will be comparing Belmont's Fire Department to other towns and

looking at FTE numbers. Member Libenson said that this data is relevant and he will pursue it over the coming weeks.

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- Chair Allison asked the Public Safety Subcommittee for their consensus about the Fire Department's revenue number for FY13. The consensus was that \$500K is a reasonable estimate for FY13.

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- BOS Chair Jones said that the health care design number could be known as early as next week.

- ***Warrant Review for April Town Meeting (TM)***

- The Warrant is not ready for review.

- ***Presentation of Subcommittee Reports***

- Chair Allison noted that the Education Subcommittee will be reviewed next week.

- **Culture and Recreation:** Member Lynch informed the WC that he has a draft report from the four sections of this subcommittee: Library, Health, COA, Recreation.

- Chair Allison distributed the Library draft report. She highlighted the department budget summary numbers for the Library. The WC then discussed the accompanying graphs. Member Lynch noted that a migration to online checkout would impact the budget, since circulation is a major cost driver. The WC discussed the value of the various graphs.

- **General Government:** Member Dash noted that there will be two reports this year, one covering financial departments (Treasury, Accounting, Assessors) and one non-financial (HR, Town Clerk, and Town Administrator). He said the reports will deal with the Town Clerk's salary, the pay classification report, and the \$80K earmarked for the BOS distribution. BOS Chair Jones clarified the fact that these monies will be allocated among town departments before the budget is finalized.

- **Public Safety:** Member Libenson reviewed what is being looked at for Fire and Police. He said the groundwork is underway, it just needs to be converted into the appropriate format. He said regionalization is being discussed and he explained why it is difficult to obtain comparative data.

- **Public Works:** Member Epstein reviewed that draft reports that have been completed for Public Works, Community Development, and Building Services.

- Chair Allison asked for draft reports by the weekend, noting that they will be helpful and used only for planning purposes.

- ***BOS and SC Updates***

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- BOS Chair Jones noted that the Board reviewed the Departments' supplemental requests. He said half of the requests will be considered. He said the Board intends to use the \$80K to cover some of these requests as well as the town's share of the health design savings.

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- SC Rep. Slap noted that the school budget gap has grown larger as a result of the need to increase the legal services retainer (\$50K) and because SPED estimates have been revised upward. The out-of-district placements are expected to go up, thus offsetting any savings from those SPED students who are aging out. She said a stabilization fund for SPED has been discussed, as well as potential innovations generated by Dr. Kingston for education.

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- ***Letter #3 to TM: Review of Draft***

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- Chair Allison requested that WC members take a moment to read the draft letter intended for TM members. She asked the WC to review this draft and offer feedback. A revised version reflecting the discussion will be sent to Town Meeting members next week.

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- ***Public Contributions***

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- Mr. Owens asked whether the WC is recommending a consolidation of the Health, COA, and Recreation Departments. Member Lynch said that recommendations have been made that this level of consolidation be analyzed, and that such a consolidation has been recommended in the past. However, at this point, there is no final recommendation. He briefly reviewed the process: the draft reports will go back to the department heads to review prior to final drafts being submitted by the subcommittees. BOS Chair Jones said this topic has been postponed until the new Town Administrator is hired. Mr. Owens then asked how the vacant Recreation Department Director salary has been spent. Mr. Castro will provide a response.

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- ***Wrap Up Announcements***

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- Chair Allison said that the statistical profile developed by the Census Bureau is included in the Committee's materials.

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- ***Approval of Minutes for 3/14/2012***

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- The minutes of 3/14/2012 were approved, with three abstentions.

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- ***Adjournment***

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- Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 8:46 pm.

- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
- WC Recording Secretary