

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **March 30, 2011, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

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

- Town Administrator Younger and Town Accountant Hagg

- Members Absent:

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

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

- ***Discussion of Warrant Articles***

- Chair Allison noted that she would approach the articles in a two-step process. The first step is to ask if the WC should report on the article. Next, the WC will review in more detail those articles it has selected to report on. Additional information may need to be gathered. The WC reports on financial articles, she informed the WC, but it also reports on articles wherein a process or structure would have significant financial consequences.

- **1. Should the WC Report?**

- Article 1: “Reports” – The WC will not report on this article.

- Article 2: “Authorization to Represent the Town’s Legal Interest” – The WC will not report on this article.

- Articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 – The WC will report on these standard budget articles.

- Article 13: “Butler School Boiler Replacement” – This Article will be withdrawn.

- Article 14: “Pipeline Assistance Loan Program” – The WC will report on this.

- Article 15: “Authorization to Participate in the MWRA I/I Local Financial Assistance Program” – This will be discussed at the May TM, noted Mr. Younger.

- Article 16: “Approval of Application by Library Trustees to the State’s Library Construction Grant Program” – Member Brusch offered that the WC should report on

this, as, while the article is about the application process, it will involve an eventual large expenditure of money. Member Lynch agreed that over time this will have a big financial impact and therefore the WC should report. The WC agreed.

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- Article 17: “Creating an Appointed Municipal Light Board” – The BOS would appoint a Board. Member Bruschi said that this does have a financial impact and that the WC has opined with other appointed Boards in similar situations. The WC agreed that the WC should report.

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- Article 18: “Addressing Standards & Regulations” – The WC agreed that it will not report on this on this article.

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- Article 19: “Tree Preservation and Maintenance By-Law” – The WC discussed if it should opine on this, as it implies that the town would have to replace trees when town property has construction done on it. Member Lynch spoke to the enforcement mechanism, which will have a financial impact for the town. The WC agreed that it will report on this article.

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- Article 20: “Adoption of the Stretch Energy Code” – Member Epstein said that, since the code is unknown, it would be difficult for the WC take a position on this. Chair Allison noted that this will make initial construction more expensive and, since this article impacts the climate for development in Belmont, the WC should report. The WC agreed that it should report on this. Member Baghdady said that the PB will vote on this article in April.

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- Article 21: “Creation of the Community Preservation Committee” – Member Dash noted that this article pertains to who goes on the Board and since the WC already opined on the financial impact, perhaps it doesn’t need to report further. Member Bruschi said that the composition of the committee may be important, as it decides where the money is spent. Member Lynch agreed, noting that this article has a fiscal impact and the WC should weigh in. Member Epstein asked: what would the WC advise, as this article basically forms the committee? Chair Allison said that these are capital projects and as such the WC will want to consider. We should ensure that the CPC reports include information on the impact on operating costs (which will not be paid out of CPA funds) and foregone revenue from conservation restrictions, for example. She suggested that, since these are capital projects, similar information should be provided. Member McHugh noted that TM will look to the WC to make sure the issues are framed with a financial perspective. Member Sarno spoke to the need for cost analysis that the WC could engage in. The WC will report on this.

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- Article 22: “Town Meeting Warrant/Reports Distribution” – Member Millane said that some people in town will need to receive the report in regular mail since they do not have access to email. The WC will report on this.

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- Article 23: “Town/School Facilities Maintenance Consolidation” – The WC will report on this article. (More information below.)

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- Articles 24 & 25: “Disposition of Town Owned Property” – The WC will report on the parcel dispositions of the town-owned properties.
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- **2. Detailed Exploration of Articles** -

- *Article 23: “Town/School Facilities Maintenance Consolidation”* -

- Chair Allison noted that Article 23 was an initiative of the WC and the BOS and others. She asked that Member Libenson (who chaired a Consolidation subcommittee) give his report.
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- Member Libenson: This issue has been discussed for years and it came before TM in the fall. The article authorizes the BOS and the SC to implement consolidation of public facilities management. He reviewed the areas that would be impacted (landscaping, grounds, snow removal, etc.). The benefits include a strong integration with leadership on both sides, an improved planning process, better bidding possibilities, shared resources, and improved efficiencies in contract negotiations. He provided a draft of an organization chart. Regarding cost savings, he said there is not an immediate savings, but money is saved via energy costs and consultant costs. Member Lynch said that some of the proposed positions should be analyzed fully with regard to the draft organizational chart.
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- He noted that long-term planning will improve once this is implemented. Also, there is hope for future long-term savings. He said that this could be a springboard for more structural change.
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- BOS Chair Jones and Chair Allison acknowledged Member Libenson for this report.
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- Chair Allison noted that the budget articles (i.e., 3-12) will probably not require outside expertise. Therefore, she suggested that the WC begin with Articles 14 and 15.
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- *Article 14: “Pipeline Assistance Loan Program”* -

- *Article 15: “Authorization to Participate in the MWRA I/I Local Financial Assistance Program”*
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- Chair Allison asked: Would the WC be ready to vote tonight on these articles, and what additional information would be needed to vote? BOS Chair Jones gave a brief overview of these articles. He said they are the best possible types of loan programs. The amount of the loans is needed prior to voting.
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- *Article 16: “Approval of Application by Library Trustees to the State’s Library Construction Grant Program”*
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- Member Epstein asked for more information on the additional commitments (requirements). Member Callanan asked about moving forward with the application given that the land acquisition issue is not resolved. Chair Allison agreed that that issue is unresolved and it would be an impediment. SC Chair Rittenburg said that the Trustees moved forward on this based on feedback from the BOS that this option would be viable. Member Lynch offered that the Library Trustees are putting a financial package together which includes private fundraising, the state grant, and a town debt exclusion. Chair Allison noted that the Library Trustees may need to present the financing details as well as a map of the time-line and decision process. Member Brusch agreed that the time-line is critical as the town is given a set amount of time to come up with the money. She spoke to fundraising efforts that (in the past) have ceased once the debt exclusion passes. SC Chair Rittenburg asked how the land issues would fit into the pieces of the costs that need to be discussed. Member Lynch will arrange to have a Library Trustee in to present to the WC.

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- *Article 17: "Creating an Appointed Municipal Light Board"*

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- Mr. Younger noted that, of the 44 light boards, 41 are appointed or directed statewide. The WC asked Mr. Younger to provide more detail on this breakdown.

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- *Article 19: "Tree Preservation and Maintenance By-Law"*

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- Member Lynch asked about precedents in other communities and legal challenges to the fiscal impact. Member Baghdady said he would like to hear from Mr. Clancy (Building Commissioner) regarding the additional workload associated with this article.

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- *Article 20: "Adoption of the Stretch Energy Code"*

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- Chair Allison suggested that the WC look at one of the presentations given on this topic previously. (See the Belmont Media Center's website, then consider what additional information it requires.)

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- *Article 21: "Creation of the Community Preservation Committee"*

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- Member Brusch asked to know what is legally required in this article. Chair Allison said that Town Counsel may need to answer that question. It was agreed that Town Counsel would be consulted.

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- *Articles 24 & 25: "Disposition of Town Owned Property"*

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- A map will be provided to show exactly where the town-owned parcels of land are located.

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- ***Review of TM Draft Letter***

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- Chair Allison distributed a draft one-page letter for TM members which highlights budget updates from the WC. The WC reviewed, and WC members made adjustments to the letter (making the report available on the town website, noting longer-term issues, contextualizing the timing points, the timing of an information session). The letter will be sent to TM members next week.

- ***Review of WC Overview Outline***

- The hour being late, Chair Allison postponed discussion of this agenda item to next week.

- ***Subcommittee Reports and Related Information***

- Chair Allison noted that the Ed-Subcommittee has a progress report.

- Member Sarno spoke to the SC budgets and provided a spending overview. The operating budget is 88% of the total budget. He noted certain funding that is no longer available, e.g., stimulus. Chapter 78 is expected to be reduced. In terms of trends, the cost of the budget has been outsourcing revenues for quite some time. He noted the specific budget growths and added that it increased about 4.4% overall each year for the past ten years.

- This year the budget was broken down into 38 programs. 37% of the school budget is going toward regular education. Special Education (SPED) is 24%. Athletics, guidance, health, library is about 8% together. He spoke to the increases and noted that many were around the 4% increase marker. However, SPED tuitions are increasing rapidly as are the transportation costs.

- Member Bruschi spoke to the long-term issues, specifically, that increases far exceed the revenue growth. Also, one-time money used for operating expenses has been a problem, but not as much for FY12. Personnel costs are an issue and the increase will be looked at. State mandates are a problem for the SC, as they are a cost driver. Maintenance has been an issue, but may improve this year with the consolidation. Recommendations going forward include the revolving accounts, the fees, the budget books, and quarterly reports that have not been timely.

- Member Callanan gave an overview of Minuteman. Minuteman is made up of 16 member towns, of which Belmont is one. The budget is \$16M – up by 1%. Belmont's assessment is \$880K, which is a 17% increase, and \$30K more than anticipated. She explained the way in which town's are assessed their fees vis-a-vis enrollment numbers. (This is a formula which is largely dependent on last year's enrollment but that also includes a complex state formula which calculates each town's ability to pay.) Belmont's enrollment numbers are up and Belmont was under-assessed last year.

- The budget lacks programmatic analysis, she noted. Regarding “right sizing” – there has been positive movement in that direction. Staff have been reduced, as have the

per-pupil costs. She touched on the cost drivers that are “true costs,” e.g., health benefits, transportation, and utility costs. Long-term issues include right-sizing, increase in tuition to non-member towns, building renovation and improvement (with an enrollment study), the member task force has been put together, and adding new towns to the consortium.

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- ***Announcements/Updates***

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- Chair Allison informed the WC that the Retirement Board has submitted some information (although not the information the WC asked for) and that the process of obtaining information will continue.

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- ***Approval of Minutes for 3/23/2011***

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- The minutes of 3/23/11 were approved with one abstention.

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- ***Adjournment***

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- BOS Chair Jones moved to adjourn at 9:40 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary