

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **April 20, 2011, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Community Room**

- Present: Chair Allison; Members Baghdady, Bruschi, Dash, Epstein, Grob, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, McHugh, Millane, Sarno, Smith; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Representative Slap

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- Town Administrator Younger and Town Accountant Hagg

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- Members Absent: Becker and Callanan

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

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- Chair Allison began by reviewing the evening's agenda.

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- ***Discussion of Article 19, Tree Preservation***

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- Chair Allison invited Ms. Ruth Foster, a representative from the Shade Tree Committee, to the WC table. Ms. Foster noted that the Shade Tree Committee voted 4-0 against the by-law as it is currently written. She offered the following reasons for this vote, as gleaned from the Shade Tree Commission's discussion: Article 19 is unenforceable, the guidelines are not well written, it is enormously punitive and unrealistic, and education is better than forcing people to save trees. She stated that the cost to homeowners is very high. She wondered if the government should be controlling residents' backyards. There is a problem, she noted, but it is with developers who "clear-cut" trees, and that is why some by-law (or regulation) is needed. However, the current by-law is not written by people who know anything about trees. She concluded by saying that this by-law is too subjective and too intrusive.

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- ***Discussion of Revised Additional Revenue Budget***

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- Chair Allison noted that this agenda item will be covered in three parts (budget adjustments, SC restorations, and town restorations).

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- **Budget Adjustments**

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- Regarding budget adjustments (December 2010 – April 2011), these numbers have been reviewed by Town Accountant Hagg. These are the numbers which will go up on the town's website. In answer to a question about the numbers, Chair Allison provided some clarifying remarks about the \$1.2M budget number. She then reviewed the adjustments to the cost side and the potential adjustments to line item costs.

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- The WC, she continued, will need to make a recommendation to TM regarding how the funds will be allocated. Budget adjustments were requested from school and town side in increments of \$250K.

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- **School Budget Restorations**

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- School Committee Representative Slap led the WC through the school's incremental restorations to the budget. She noted that the school budget is dynamic as it depends on enrollment (among other things). She said there are four phases of restorations applied across the K-12 levels.

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- She reviewed the phases of restorations. At the Elementary School level, restorations include three classroom teachers to address large classes, elementary guidance, reading teachers, nursing staff, music/art teachers, and physical education. At the Middle School level, team teachers would be added back in, foreign language restored in grade six first, followed by grade five. At the High School level, the Librarian position would be restored as well as staff for electives. District-wide restorations include technology and curriculum for quality assurance (two curriculum directors). Money was also set aside in tier 4 for benefits for aid positions that had been cut.

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- Chair Allison reminded the WC that a single revenue number would be recommended and that how the revenue is applied may or may not be reflected here. Member Libenson asked about the district-wide technology number (\$83K). What's in the \$83K? Mr. DiCologero (Finance Director) approached the WC table and explained that the \$83K would address restorations in technology but that he had no more detailed information. Member Millane commented that this budget depends on state aid coming through again strongly next year. She asked: how can we address the yearly fiscal crises that the schools are sure to be facing next April? Ms. Slap replied that there will be a SC subcommittee addressing the long term financial issues, but that it was a priority to restore these critical programs. SC Chair Graham said that this committee will be formed once this budget season is over. Member Sarno asked for updated enrollment numbers. He then asked about the health teacher position being restored – are there other positions being restored? He requested more detailed technology information. He then questioned the benefits-eligible positions. His last question pertained to SPED enrollments.

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- Member Epstein commented that the schools have requested almost all of the revenue that is available – but that the town has requested about \$300K of add backs as well. He also noted that adding back positions that require benefits may not be the appropriate direction to head in. Superintendent Entwistle noted that he has created a tier four and five in add backs (MCAS teachers and guidance counselors at CMS) and, in that program, the benefits restoration for part-time positions moves further out to tier 5 or 6.

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- Member McHugh asked about the add-back calculations with regard to unemployment costs, benefits, and salaries. Mr. DiCologero explained that the assumption is that all the teacher terminations will not have to happen. There were further questions about the methodology used to calculate salary reductions, and it was

agreed that there would be further clarification by Finance Director DiCologero and Member McHugh.

- Member Grob asked about sports – are they being added back in? Rep. Slap said that they have not. Member Lynch seemed to recall that sports were in the available revenue budget. Member Sarno confirmed and said that the difference was about \$90K in coaching stipends.

- BOS Chair Jones asked about the circuit breaker funds, which go directly to the schools.

Town Adjustments

- Town Administrator Younger reviewed the town-side budget enhancements. He said the add backs do not include personnel/benefits costs. He said that he wants to add back items that can be maintained next year. He said that if he were to add staffing, he would like to do so under a long-term fiscal plan. Member McHugh asked about the Recreation Department’s budget – is it level service? Mr. Younger replied that it is level and that he would like to make the recreation department revenue-neutral, as well.

- Mr. Younger then reviewed the highlights of the budget enhancements, which total \$300K, and were presented in three phases. Some of the highlights include: vehicle maintenance, adding Sunday Library hours, road maintenance, a fiber network design consultant to review the town’s fiber network, and the repair of one road. He said these programs are important to each of the departments involved.

- BOS Chair Jones noted that the Selectmen would like to meet with the School Department to discuss how to move forward with the budget recommendations that were unveiled tonight. Perhaps Monday morning a joint meeting would be held with the School Committee and the BOS.

- Member Sarno asked about the roads and how much is being expended in the budget already. Member Epstein asked about the tree budget (which is not reflected in the current budget numbers). Member Smith asked if these enhancements were on top of the available services budget or level service budget. The answer was that these were added to the available revenue budget.

Discussion of All Remaining Warrant Articles

- Chair Allison turned to the remaining Warrant articles.

Article 21 – Community Preservation Act

- The WC has offered an amendment to this article, which needs to be at the Town Clerk’s Office tomorrow morning. Chair Allison read the WC’s amendment (section 33.3).

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- Member Epstein moved: *To accept the amendment as read.*

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- The WC discussed the amendment. The wording was slightly adjusted.

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- Dr. Solomon approached the WC table. He said he wants, most of all, for TM to approve Article 21. He said he would prefer that this amendment not be included in the article, although he respects the WC's concerns. He said the amendment is unnecessary and that the issues it highlights will be addressed. He said that none of the other CPA communities have adopted an amendment such as this one.

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- Member Lynch moved: *To accept the motion as amended.* The motion passed unanimously.

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- BOS Chair Jones noted that another amendment will be put forth regarding adding a Recreation Department representative to this committee.

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- Member Lynch moved: *That the WC approve Article 21, as amended.*
- The vote was unclear.

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- Chair Allison again polled the members regarding Article 21, as amended.
- The motion passed unanimously.

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- **Articles 24/25 – Disposition of Town Owned Property**

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- BOS Chair Jones noted that Articles 24 and 25 will be adjusted slightly. Mr. Younger explained the adjustment.

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- Member Brusch moved: *That the WC approve Article 24.*

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- The WC discussed Article 24.

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- The motion passed with one abstention.

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- Member Brusch moved: *That the WC approve Article 25.*
- The motion passed with one abstention.

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- **Article 19 – Tree Preservation and Maintenance By-Law**

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- Chair Allison noted that this article may be revised by the by-law committee. BOS Chair Jones said there is a conflict between Town Counsel and the By-law review committee. Member Smith said it is hard to know what the WC would be voting on, since a substantial revision is forthcoming.

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- Chair Allison said the WC will need to vote on Articles 19 and 20 on Monday prior to Town Meeting.

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- ***Announcements/Updates***

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- Chair Allison announced that the WC website received a question about deferred compensation, which will be addressed in the WC's report.

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- ***Approval of Minutes for 4/13/2011***

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- The minutes of 4/13/2011 were approved with one abstention.

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

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- BOS Chair Jones moved to adjourn at 9:33 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary