

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

- **FINAL**

- **May 5, 2010, 7:30 p.m.**

- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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

- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg, Superintendent Entwistle, and School Finance Director Missal

- Members Absent: Hofmann and McLaughlin

- The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm by Chair Curtis.

- Chair Curtis began by noting that the Library's reserve fund transfer request would be addressed first.

- ***Library Reserve Fund Request***

- Chair Curtis noted that this reserve fund transfer request was approved by the BOS and that the WC's approval is the final step in the process.

- Ms. Conners, Library Director, explained that the generator is original to the building and that when it would not turn on, they learned that it could not be repaired as the parts are obsolete. A new generator was installed for \$10K. Mr. Clancy did a walkthrough, and suggested adding emergency lighting and back-up lighting in the stairwells, which costs \$4,172 and is not in the budget.

- Chair Curtis asked about additional town-wide systems that will presumably need fixing down the road. How will such requests be handled? Member Brusch replied that this is a "life safety" issue, as the building will be closed if this is not addressed. If regular equipment fails, it fails. There is no money in anyone's budget for anything unexpected. But "life safety" issues that can be addressed, will be addressed.

- Member Brusch moved approval of the \$4,172 reserve fund transfer.  
- The motion passed unanimously.

- ***Subcommittee Preliminary Reports***

- Chair Curtis noted that there will be preliminary presentations tonight of the Subcommittee reports. When possible, Curtis said, he would like to see the needs-based

budget compared to the available-revenue budget, then a review of the “add backs” that would be put in if the override budget passes. Regarding the Budget Calendar, the budget needs to be in the hands of TM members at least one week prior to TM (which is scheduled for May 25).

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- **Education Subcommittee**

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- Chair Curtis noted that, for the schools, the non-override budget is known. He asked for a review of the “add backs” should the override pass. Superintendent Entwistle said that the restoration of the \$300K and \$108K has happened, and that, even if the override passes, the school budget will still be \$1.1M short.

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- Member Allison noted that the way in which the school budget has been presented is problematic as there are missing pieces of information. She suggested the use of columns as a way to present the data. It is difficult to ask questions given the way the data is presented in the handouts. Dr. Missal replied that it is difficult with so many line items on so many programs, plus many decisions have not yet been made. With regard to restorations should the override pass, Missal said that they will be made as close as possible to the classroom.

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- Member Allison suggested that starting with the needs-based budget at one end and the available-funds budget at the other end would be helpful: it would be useful to know how what’s being proposed for FY11 compares to previous years, and that this was a reasonable question to ask. The way in which the “program categories” are presented have made doing this type of comparison difficult. Member Smith said connecting restorations and cuts into categories can’t presently be done with the information provided. He noted that he and others on the subcommittee had spent considerable time attempting to do so. Member Lynch framed it this way: the needs-based budget is the core product, the available-revenue budget shows cuts, and the override budget shows add-backs. Could the budgets be presented this way for comparison purposes?

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- Superintendent Entwistle replied that the school department attempted this year to do a program-based model approach. It was a starting point. Items were then retracted when moving away from the student-needs budget and to the available-funds budget. In looking at the override budget, he said, restorations going forward will be tracked program by program. Also going forward, he said, we may need to “rebundle” the program categories. Dr. Missal reviewed numbers and percents on the handouts including the columns “student centered” and “leadership administrative” (override and non-override versions).

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- SC Chair Rittenburg asked why this level of specificity is required in comparing this budget to past budgets when there is a new Superintendent? What is that informing? You may want to analyze the composition of the student body and the required mandates as they are what informs the school budget.

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- Member Lynch said he hopes to have the Education Subcommittee's report by May 12.

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### **Culture and Recreation**

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- Member Lynch provided a brief summary overview of Culture and Recreation, noting that the override budget would not have an impact, with the exception of the Library, which would add back weekend hours. Member Becker said that one structural change recommendation would be to combine the Health Department, the COA, and the Recreation Department under a single department head manager. Member Millane noted that there are overall benefits and cost savings to the town in doing this. She added that privatizing the pool and the rink needs to be explored (by task force) even though the age of the facilities may make privatization difficult. Member Manjikian noted that the COA is still not providing activity data, and that it may be prudent to outsource the COA's services at some point so that programmatic productivity can be assured. Member Smith said that coordination of collective bargaining between Town and Library needs to be explored, since Library employees are divided between the two groups. With regard to book selection, since each Library in the network spends time and money on this function, a joint approach may be efficient. Member Allison added that one of the Library's largest budget items is circulation, and perhaps an IT-based solution might allow savings.

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### **General Government**

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- Member Millane said there is no change to general government with the override budget. The technology there clearly needs improvement, she said, and while this requires some upfront spending, there will be long-term savings for the town (e.g., billing). The part-time budget analyst is in both budgets, as it is a necessary position. Member Dash said there is no real change in Human Resources and that the school/town combination had mixed results in other communities. The Town Administration department has had cut-backs in the last 10 years in the area of administrative support. There would be no override budget changes with the exception of the area of legal fees.

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### **Public Works**

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- Member Epstein noted that Public Works is made up of Community Development (CD), DPW, and Building Services. There are no major areas that would be impacted by an override. CD would like to digitize its engineering drawings and there is a need to maintain more engineering oversight, as there is a concern that the contractors aren't being supervised due to staffing levels. Chair Curtis asked if change was effected when there was more oversight. Assistant Town Administrator Conti said that what happens because of short staffing is that the oversight is more reactive, and not proactive.

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- As for the DPW, the 250 service calls that they handle would generate some revenue if fees were charged. Charging for yard-waste pickup could save the town

several hundred thousands of dollars, he said. Building Services is a small department, he said, and consolidation with the schools seems reasonable, especially given the number of square feet per person that Building Services tends. The Light Department, he said, operates quite separately from the rest of town.

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### **Public Safety**

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Member Libenson noted that this department lost a cruiser, 2 police and 2 fire from the needs-based budget, and some overtime funding was lost in each budget as well. The issue of regionalization continues to be explored.

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### ***Budget Calendar Discussion***

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Chair Curtis noted that the WC final reports are due next week and will be distributed to TM by Monday the 17<sup>th</sup>.

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On May 12, Minuteman will be at the WC meeting and budget articles could be reviewed as well. On May 19, the complete budget will be discussed and any remaining articles could be voted on.

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Member Brusch said that the CBC budget report can be delivered next week. The sidewalk account will be revisited as well as the “orphan projects” if the override passes.

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Chair Curtis noted that a reserve-fund transfer for snow and ice removal will not be necessary this year.

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Town Meeting will be held on May 25 and 26.

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Chair Curtis said that the WC will meet in June to finish up some business. Member Lynch said he can report out on the new “open meeting” laws.

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### ***Minutes***

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The minutes were postponed.

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Chair Curtis moved to adjourn at 9:15 pm.

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Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
WC Recording Secretary

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