

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: February 11, 2021

TIME: 9:00 AM

Structural Change Impact Group

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 7, 2021

Location – Remote Meeting on Zoom

Members present: Travis Franck, Mark Paolillo, Joe Bernard, Paul Rickter, Adam Dash, Amy Checkoway, Anne Helgen, Aaron Pikilingis, Matthew Gasbarro, Vicki Amalfitano

Members absent: none

Other attendees: Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall

Meeting called to order at 8:00am by Chair Travis Franck

Introductory Comments from Chair

- This meeting and future meetings are being recorded and broadcast live by Belmont Media Center
- Welcome new member Vicki Amalfitano
- Discussion and potential vote on December 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes will be held at the next meeting, planned for January 21, 2021

Discussion of 2015 Financial Task Force I recommendations / Discussion of Work Plan for “Preliminary Report” (due in January 2021)

- Discussion started about how we best summarize the Final Report of the Financial Task Force from January 30, 2015, and summarize the work that has since been done to implement that group’s recommendations and other reforms.
- Discussion ensued about defining the Structural Reform Impact Group’s purpose as inclusive of both short-term and long-term reforms, during which it was noted that the intended duration of the group is twelve months, but could potentially be extended, provided that we provide timely reports to the Select Board as charged.
- Discussion ensued to highlight specific areas that were included in the Final Report of the Financial Task Force, as well as new ideas to potentially include in this group’s January 2021 Preliminary Report. The following topics were included in the discussion:
 - Step and Lane System for teacher compensation, as detailed in the Final Report of the Financial Task Force
 - Consolidating labor counsel for Town and School departments, to which Adam Dash noted that the Select Board just selected new labor counsel for the Town after putting it out to bid
 - Financial impact of leaving Civil Service, which was noted to be a contentious topic
 - GIC state health plan for employees, although they are currently reorganizing their system, which makes it unattractive to join until that process is complete and the variables of the new system are known
 - Transparency of budgeting process, particularly in comparison to the budget guidelines and processes used by similar towns
 - Technology that can create efficiencies, although doing so likely present a trade-off to consider, due to costs to implement such technology

- Cost structure of Belmont's independent boards and how they compare to similar towns
- Formal effort to talk to other towns about their service delivery model and what cost-saving or revenue-generating ideas have worked well for them
- Incentive bonus pool for department heads and other employees to reward them for the development and implementation of innovative and cost-saving ideas
- Reorganizing Town Accounting department, potentially increasing efficiency
- Changing Belmont Light governance, potentially increasing efficiency
- Putting the Recreation Department into an enterprise fund, so that it pays for itself
- Created Website Renewal Committee
- Regionalization with other towns, including road salt consortium, LABBB program, ambulance services, and others
- Re-zoning efforts to increase revenue-generating opportunities

Discussion of public input process / Discussion of gathering input from Town departments, committees, and boards

- Discussion ensued about creating a dashboard/scorecard/rubric, while discussion about efficiency continued simultaneously.
 - Vicki Amalfitano noted that having a dashboard/scorecard would be very helpful for presentation to the general public; also that efficiency leads to cost savings.
 - Amy Checkoway noted the importance of clarifying the criteria that we are going to use to assess all of our options; also that a large portion of our budget is in people, and so how people spend their time is the definition of how efficient Belmont is.
 - Aaron Pikilingis noted that the rubric should measure financial impact, how hard a reform is to implement, and potential gains or costs that are not just financial; also that we could use the combination of all factors to derive a score for each reform.
- Discussion ensued about the public input process, as well as gathering input from Town departments, committees, and boards.
 - Travis Franck noted the importance of the public input process, the discussions with Town department heads, and discussion with other towns; but also noted the unlikelihood these could be done before this group's January 2021 Preliminary Report.
 - Paul Rickter noted that it would be time well spent to figure out what are the metrics we're going to use to evaluate ideas, i.e., build the rubric first and then use it to dive into individual topics.
 - Anne Helgen noted the importance of standardizing our process and analysis for evaluating reforms; also that our January 2021 Preliminary Report can include that we are going to solicit input from public.
 - Mark Paolillo noted that we should clarify the purpose of the public forum, how we structure it, and consider who would attend it.
 - Adam Dash noted that having a public forum is useful for communicating ideas to the public and it increases public buy-in even if all of the ideas are things Belmont already does or has already investigated.
 - Aaron Pikilingis noted that it would be helpful to cast a wide net that accepts all ideas without putting constraints on the inputs.

- Paul Rickter stated that the turnaround time to put together an online form is a couple of days, and noted that we should be comfortable with exactly what we're going to ask for inputs before going live with it.
- Adam Dash noted the importance of having the online form live before the public forum is held, and that this group's presentation of the January 2021 Preliminary Report to the Select Board should advertise a date for the public forum; also suggested to add the opportunity for public comment as a standing item on the agenda for this group's meetings, to which Chair Travis Franck agreed.

Discussion about next steps and how to accomplish them

- Discussion ensued about breaking into subgroups to work on the next steps, after which there was general agreement not to organize subgroups yet, but to work on next steps individually for now. The following items were assigned, to be done before this group's next meeting, planned for January 21, 2021:
 - Paul Rickter to work on a proposed online form
 - Travis Franck to work on designing the public forum
 - Amy Checkoway to work on high-level process and work plan
 - Travis Franck to get clarification on Open Meeting Law, particularly how it applies to subgroups of this group
 - Jon Marshall / Patrice Garvin to send the existing Town Administrator's list of structural reforms to this group
 - Joe Bernard to consolidate past recommendations, completed reforms, and underway efforts into a single document to be expanded upon
- Tentative date to be saved for this group's public forum is Thursday, February 25, 2021

Vote to adjourn was unanimous; the meeting was adjourned at 9:38am.