



Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, November 29, 2023
7:30pm

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: December 12, 2023
TIME: 9:34 AM

To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. There were 16 voting members present.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Melissa Morley	Absent
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Remote	Lynn Peterson Read	Yes
William Anderson	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Remote	Jack Weis	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Yes
Deepak Garg	Yes	Amy Zuccarello, Ex-officio, School Committee	Remote
Anne Helgen	Yes		
Staff		Others	
Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Director	Remote	Chris Doyle, Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee (CCBC)	Remote
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes		

1. Review Calendar & Timelines

Mr. Lubien reviewed the calendar, topics for discussion, and timelines for the remainder of the year and early next year.

2. Update from the Education Subcommittee of the Warrant Committee

Mr. Weis provided an update on the School Department's FY23 budget results. He pointed out that there was a positive variance of about \$350,000, of which \$250,000 is from Warrant Committee transfers at the end of last year. All of these funds will flow to Free Cash.

He went on to explain that although there was a positive variance, it masks what was a very difficult year for the School Department. A major difficulty was out-of-district tuitions which cost about \$2,000,000 higher than projected. He then provided details of the actions the School Department took to control costs in this and other areas.

There were questions and discussion about the results of the FY23 School Department budget and its impact on FY24 and FY25.

3. Continued Discussion of FY25 Budget, Free Cash Usage, and Override

Concepts: Mr. Rickter reviewed the changes made to the High-Level Concepts he presented at the last meeting:

- Balance public expectations of services with our dependence on residential property tax revenue.
- Maintain clarity of financial policies and statements.
- Achieve multi-year budget stability.

There was an extensive discussion of these concepts and what they're trying to communicate, with members suggesting edits and making recommendations.

32 Free Cash Model: Mr. Lubien reminded the group that more data would become available at the Budget
33 Summit the next day and that this data would be incorporated for further in-depth discussion.

34 Mr. Caputo outlined the areas of the model that were updated after the discussion at the previous meeting.
35 He also explained that the FY25 projected expenses are based on the level-service budgets developed by
36 the Schools and the Town.

37 He then reviewed the results of the changes, and the inclusion of a simple view of expected Free Cash
38 through FY28 and spoke about how this information could be used. He explained how the policy of Free
39 Cash Use is incorporated into the model.

40 There was a discussion about using the tool, using Free Cash, and making the tool available on the
41 website.

42 Override: Mr. Lubien asked what the Warrant Committee's recommendation for the use of one-time funds
43 will be if there is no override, should this be a multi-year exercise (if there is no override the following year),
44 and related follow-on questions. The Committee had a discussion about these questions, the implications
45 of no override, and how to educate the town about these implications.

46 **4. Discuss Capital Needs with Chair of the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee, Chris Doyle**

47 Ms. Doyle reminded the Board that in May the CCBC released a 5-year plan for capital needs, and
48 explained that going forward they will present 5-year "buckets" at each Town Meeting in order to have a
49 longer view.

50 She reviewed some of the capital items that were part of past overrides and suggested that including a
51 capital item in the next override will make it more attractive to Town Meeting. The CCBC recommends
52 including \$500,000 for building-envelope needs as many buildings in town need attention, which she
53 reviewed.

54 Ms. Doyle said the CCBC is also recommending using Free Cash to pay for the Chenery boiler
55 replacement since it is a one-time need and an appropriate use of Free Cash.

56 There was a discussion of the recommendations and other capital needs that are coming.

57 **Approve minutes (if any), including all outstanding subcommittee or working group minutes.**

58 Mr. Lubien recommended that Subcommittees hold hybrid meetings when possible since public participation
59 has been increasing. There was a discussion of subcommittees recordings hybrid meetings, managing those
60 recordings, and the rules around residents recording meetings.

61 November 15, 2023: A question in red on line 25 regarding what was said (the recording cut out at that time)
62 was pointed out. Mr. Lubien and Ms. Hewitt will review the recording to determine what should appear. He
63 added that line 28 should read "the amount of free cash is \$170,000 higher *than* it should be."

64 *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting as*
65 *amended. Ms. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed 14-0-1 by roll call vote with Ms. Werner*
66 *and Ms. Zuccarello abstaining.*

67 **Adjournment**

68 *Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Werner seconded,*
69 *and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.*
70

71 **Next Meeting**: Wednesday, November 30, 2023 at 7:30pm
72

73 Respectfully submitted by,
74

75 Susan Peghiny
76 Recording Secretary