

**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**SEPTEMBER 11, 2019, 7:30PM**  
**CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL, LARGE COMMUNITY ROOM**

2019 OCT 21 PM 2:07

Present: Chair Slap, Members Alcock, Dionne, Fallon, Gonzalez, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read and Weis.  
School Committee Liaison Crowley.  
Selectman Caputo. Town Administrator (TA) Garvin.  
Members Cragg and Doyle arrived into the meeting.

Members Absent: Rickter, Schreiber.

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

**I-Introduction of new members**

New members Michael Cragg and Susan Gonzalez introduced themselves to the other Committee members.

**II-Nominations and voting for officers**

*Motion (Member Helgen): To nominate Laurie Slap as Chair of the Warrant Committee. (Motion passed unanimously)*

*Motion (Chair Slap): To nominate Christine Doyle as Vice Chair of the Warrant Committee. (Motion passed unanimously)*

*Motion (Member Dionne): To nominate Geoffrey Lubien as Secretary of the Warrant Committee. (Motion passed unanimously)*

**III-Preview of Warrant Committee projects 2019-20, including updates re: a) Financial Task Force; b) Tentative FY21 budget calendar; c) Plans for Special Town Meeting, Fall 2019; d) Minuteman**

**Financial Task Force II (FTFII):**

- Caputo explained the FTFII was undertaking necessary work to prepare recommendations for addressing the likely structural gap for FY21. There was a push to explore how much belt-tightening could feasibly be done in order to potentially push back an override one more year.
- The Task Force had recently completed review of recommendations from the Financial Task Force I, identifying status (completed, in progress, etc.), reasons (if applicable) why certain items had not been accomplished and potential next steps. For example: 1) Superintendent Phelan had spoken of the value in having a clear plan for additional head count to meet enrollment growth, and had used this as an

- implementation guide in the years following the passage of the previous override.
- 2) Creation of a recreation enterprise fund was in process under new Recreation Director Jon Marshall – an update would be presented at Fall Town Meeting.
- The FTFII had discussed and planned to put forward a charge for a long-term Capital Planning Committee, to look at all capital needs across Town as well as various funding sources.
  - Substantial progress made on development of a 5 year budget forecasting model. Lubien had worked with Anthony DiCologero (School) and Budget Director Castro (Town) to update and refine the assumptions, add key growth rates/metrics. The School side now had its own linked tab with all the relevant assumptions factoring in enrollment, COLA and steps/lanes for salary. Recent FTFII appointee Mark Paolillo had agreed to assist with work on creating a realistic baseline scenario, reflecting what would be necessary for the Town to provide level services. Once the baseline scenario was firmly established, can work off it to model various scenarios.
  - Fallon asked if part of the work of the FTFII would be look at the structural/big-picture question of services the Town provides and what it can actually afford. Cragg added this was the number one issue put to him as part of his recruitment to the WC.
    - o Caputo noted the large amount of work the FTFII had to do focused on shorter-term questions, but was receptive of the feedback and would take back to the FTFII for discussion.
    - o Lubien commented the Capital Planning Committee would be a key component of addressing structural issues.

#### Budget Calendar:

- Garvin gave a rundown of the condensed budget process, which had been based on the assumption that an override vote would take place in April 2020. She had kicked off the process September 4 and departmental budgets were due October 3. TA Garvin's meetings with department heads started October 15; two meetings with the Select Board (shorter dives covering all the departments) would be held at the end of October.
  - o Chair Slap advised that the various subcommittee chairs should coordinate who will represent the WC at the budget meetings with TA Garvin; she agreed to post a joint WC meeting for the Select Board departmental meetings.
- Helgen asked whether there would be follow-up/evaluation of last year's budget; Garvin was closing the FY19 books next week, could take up at a future meeting.
- Helgen asked about Free Cash certification; the deadline was end of October, but Garvin said she hoped to get it earlier to accommodate the compressed budget schedule.

### Plans for Special Town Meeting:

- Garvin had provided an initial list of Warrant Articles for Fall Town Meeting. The Select Board would open the Warrant on September 23<sup>rd</sup> for a period of 24 hours.
  - o Included was a question to Town Meeting on whether to rescind the notice of withdrawal from the Minuteman (MM) regional school district, to be discussed subsequently.

### Minuteman:

Jim Gammill (Belmont Representative, Minuteman School Committee) joined the meeting. Gammill was requesting to work with the WC to come up with a financial model for analyzing the decision to potentially rescind the 2016 notice of withdrawal from the MM network. It was his observation that the situation since the 2016 vote had changed substantially enough that Town Meeting should take one last look at staying in the MM network as a member town – once the withdrawal is final, an amendment to the regional agreement would be required to rejoin at a later date which would require approval of all 9 member towns' Town Meetings, an onerous process.

Gammill gave a presentation covering the changes since 2016 and laying out his proposed framework for a financial model. The model consisted of

1. Fixed costs: If the notice of withdrawal was rescinded, Belmont would be required to pay \$472k in foregone debt service, since it declined to assume debt for the new school project back in 2016. Member towns were required to make debt service payments going forward, even if no students attended in a given year. (Non-member towns were also required to pay a per-student capital fee, now that the new building was in operation.)
2. Projected enrolment: Assumed 100% retention for the incoming class and attempted to project out enrolment in order to quantify the likelihood that Belmont would be frozen out as a non-member town in the future.
3. Estimating the impact to Belmont School budget as a non-member town.
4. Quantify externalities in the case the Belmont students are denied access to MM, e.g. having to find placement at another vocational-technical institute.

### Some points of discussion:

- It was widely agreed that enrolment versus the capacity of the new school was key to the analysis. How likely is it that Belmont students would be frozen out as a non-member town? Were the spikes in enrolment this year temporary (due to the new MM school building) and would fall back to historical levels once the new Belmont High School building is online?
- Gammill stressed he had pushed for closing the gap between costs for members vs. non-members (currently it cost more to be a member), e.g. non-members are now paying the capital fee. Further, DESE was opening up a process to potentially revise Chapter 74 regulations, which could impact the costing structure for vocational-technical schools and further close the gap.

Chair Slap recommended establishment of a working group to take up the modelling of a

set of scenarios based on Gammill's work, and ultimately provide a recommendation to Town Meeting. It would be necessary to establish a timeline for the analysis to include holding public meeting(s) to educate the public on the findings of the working group prior to Fall Town Meeting.

#### IV-Discussion of subcommittee and working group assignments

Contact Chair Slap on an individual basis and finalize at the next meeting.

#### V-Reports from Select Board, Town Administrator, School Committee, and liaisons

TA Garvin:

- Received a grant from Mass Trails in the amount of \$150k towards the Community Path. Nitsch Engineering was selected by the Community Path Project Committee as the design firm for the project at a bid of \$1.15m – total allocated for the project was \$1.4m, possibility of giveback to CPC.
- Submitted a MassWorks grant application for \$1.8m in work on Park Ave., including sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Police Chief Search Committee has started meeting, will begin by looking at internal candidates.

Selectman Caputo:

- The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee is undergoing another round of value engineering due to a recent cost assessment showing the project at \$19m overage. Two meetings have been held, with two left to go. The Committee is confident can get costs back in line.

School Committee Liaison Crowley:

- Total enrollment up by ~70-75 kids.
- Have had discussion on the MM question; School Committee ultimately plans to make a recommendation for Fall Town Meeting.

#### VI-Approve minutes

- June 12, 2019:  
*Motion (Member Dionne): To approve the June 12, 2019 minutes. Motion passed by acclamation.*

#### VII-Adjournment

*Motion (Member McLaughlin): To adjourn at 9:41pm. Motion passed.*

Submitted by  
Christopher S. Henry