

**Warrant Committee**  
**January 6, 2021 7:30pm**  
**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**RECEIVED**  
**TOWN CLERK**  
**BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 13, 2021  
TIME: 9:24 AM

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Members in Attendance**

**Warrant Committee:** Laurie Slap, Paul Rickter, Michael Crowley, Ellen Schreiber, Elizabeth Dionne, John Alcock, Christine Doyle, Jennifer Fallon, Elizabeth Goss, Andrew Levin, Daniel Halston, Anne Helgen, Geoffrey Lubien, Robert McLaughlin, Lynn Read, Jack Weis, Roy Epstein,

Also present: Select Board Members, Adam Dash, Tom Caputo; Town Moderator, Mike Widmer; Members of Belmont Housing Trust, Rachel Heller, Betsy Lipson

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

### **I. Approve minutes.**

There were no meeting minutes to approve.

### **II. Discuss Housing Trust proposal to extend emergency rental assistance.**

Mr. Mike Widmer, Town Moderator explained that the Housing Trust is asking for a slight modification for their proposal approved at the last Town Meeting. Mr. Widmer and the Housing Trust are before the Warrant Committee to clarify the proposed change. Though Town Counsel has made it clear that the vote at Town Meeting focuses only on appropriations and this change is allowed, Mr. Widmer is asking the Warrant Committee to make a recommendation regarding the request. The Housing Trust is asking to extend their emergency rental assistance program from three to four months.

Ms. Elizabeth Dionne explained that in 2018, Town Meeting approved the appropriation of \$250,000 for affordable housing. When COVID hit, the Housing Trust explored other ways with the CPC that they could use their funds. It was determined that it was within their permitted use to use the funds to assist residents with emergency rental assistance.

Ms. Betsy Lipson and Ms. Rachel Heller from the Belmont Housing Trust presented their proposal.

- The Housing Trust repurposed a grant award to provide the emergency rental assistance program due to the demand in need. The program offers three months of rental assistance for residents who have experienced a loss of income due to COVID-19.
- The Trust received 111 applications of which 74 were eligible and enrolled.

- Assistance is sent directly to landlords.
- An administrative fee is paid to the Metrowest Collaborative Development of \$14,800 to administer the program.
- There is about \$70,000 remaining which the Housing Trust is asking to continue to use for families enrolled in this program by offering a fourth month of rental assistance.
- The payment amounts are based on the size of the dwellings.
- The current employment status of applicants is not considered during application review, as long as applicants can show proof of loss of income as a result of COVID causing them to be behind on rent then they can qualify for the program.

The following concerns were raised by Committee and Select Board Members:

- That intent for Housing Trust funds is supposed to be directed towards permanent affordable housing units.
- Who has the authority to change Housing Trust programs?

The following support and responses were provided by Committee and Board Members:

- CPC will discuss oversight of CPC programs and standards of supervision at their next meeting.
- Continued use of these funds is within the legal right and spirit of the CPC.
- The emergency rental assistance program is a temporary function of the Housing Trust during these unprecedented times.

The Board of Selectmen voted in favor of the modification for the Housing Trust Town Meeting proposal.

*Motion: to vote to endorse the Housing Trust's modification to proposal to extend emergency rental assistance. (Motion passed unanimously, roll-call vote: Caputo, Dash, Epstein voted yes).*

The Warrant Committee voted in favor of the modification for the Housing Trust Town Meeting proposal.

*Motion: to vote to endorse the Housing Trust's modification to proposal to extend emergency rental assistance. (Motion passed unanimously, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis voted yes.)16-0-0*

### **III. End Joint Meeting with Select Board**

The Board of Selectmen voted to adjourn their participation in the Joint Meeting.

*Motion: to vote adjourn. (Motion passed unanimously, roll-call vote: Caputo, Dash, Epstein voted yes).*

### **IV. Discussion of 1/7 WC Budget Forum presentation.**

Chairwoman Slap presented a draft of the presentation for the following evening's Warrant Committee Budget Forum. The forum will dig into questions asked by residents back in December and further explain assumptions used for the financial model, use of reserves, etc.

Several members will be contributing feedback for Chairwoman Slap.

The Warrant Committee will try to meet every other week until Town Meeting.

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

The Select Board is preparing for an upcoming joint meeting with the Financial Task Force II.

The School Committee was presented the budget trajectory by the Superintendent which will be shared with Warrant Committee members.

The Building Committee reported that the Middle and High School construction is on time and on budget.

#### **VI. Adjournment.**

*Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 9:06pm (Motion passed unanimously)*

Submitted by  
Katie Luczai

#### **Documents Used:**

1. Emergency Rental Assistance Program Presentation, Housing Trust