

Warrant Committee
April 7, 2021 7:30pm
Remote Meeting via Zoom

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 29, 2021
TIME: 9:04 AM

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

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

Call to Order

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

I. Approve minutes.

1/6/21 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Crowley noted that he is listed as in attendance but not listed in the rollcall vote.

Motion: Mr. Weis moved to approve the 1/6/21 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Dash abstained)

1/20/21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. Weis moved to approve the 1/20/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Dash abstained)

2/3/21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. Weis moved to approve the 2/3/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Dash abstained)

3/17/21 Meeting Minutes

Further edits were requested by the Warrant Committee in regard to the Middle School opening date and CPC funding amounts. Revisions will be made and brought back to the next meeting.

1/25/21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the 1/25/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Dash and Levin abstained)

11/23/20 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Helgen asked to clarify the language regarding the COVID “parking lot” funds.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the 1/25/21 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Dash and Levin abstained)

General Government Subcommittee Meeting Minutes April 7, 2021

Motion: Mr. Alcock moved to approve the 4/7/21 Meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Rickter (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Rickter, Schreiber, Dionne voted yes, McLaughlin abstained)

II. Discussion/vote on FY22 CPC projects.

\$35,000 for Phase 1 of the Peyson Park Renovation Project

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to vote in favorable action of \$35,000 for Phase 1 of the Payson Park Renovation Project, seconded by Ms. Doyle (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dash, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

\$200,000 for Community Path Right of Way Acquisition

Motion: Mr. Rickter moved to vote in favorable action of \$200,000 for the Community Path Right of Way Acquisition, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dash, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

Transfer to Community Housing Trust

Motion: Ms. Fallon moved to vote in favorable action of the \$250,000 transfer to the Community Housing Trust, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dash, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

\$190,000 for Tennis Court Expansion at Winnbrook School

There has been further discussion regarding the feasibility of adding tennis courts to the High School campus. A formal report is being produced by Perkins and Will regarding the matter. The report will include cost configurations. The Warrant Committee decided to defer their vote on the tennis court expansion project until closer to the June Town Meeting session.

III. FY21, FY22 budget updates.

On Tuesday, April 6th, 2021, the vote to approve an override failed. As a result, the town will be moving forward with its “no override” budget. The “no override” budget was published in February. It is available online and includes memos from each Department head explaining how the budget would affect their Departments.

To date, there has been no further clarification regarding how the new federal aid package (‘America Rescue Plan Act’) can be used. Members recommended that recurring expenses not be funded by one-time federal aid. The town will now work to pass the FY22 budget. There was discussion that a systems manager position should still be proposed as a new position in the FY22 budget to ensure that things are running at its maximum efficiency.

Ms. Schreiber asked the town how they can procedurally deal with the COVID “parking lot” aid? How can the town appropriate the incoming aid to use for expenses? The exact allowed uses of the incoming federal aid remain vague, although some will be related to COVID expenses. Anytime the town or school endures a COVID related expense it is marked. Normally when reimbursements are available, the town would pay for the expense out of free cash and receive reimbursement for it.

Public Comment:

Ms. Allison Lenk recommended that the town use incoming federal aid wisely, suggesting that the town use the aid to close its fiscal deficit. The Warrant Committee explained that a portion of the federal aid could be used to mitigate financial deficits, but further clarity is needed regarding this use. The federal funds are one-time funds, even if they are used to mitigate the operating budget, the town will still have a structural deficit going forward.

Ms. Lisa Pargoli asked the town to look at areas where it can save money. The Warrant Committee asked Ms. Pargoli and the public at large to submit specific suggestions to the Town. The budget is available online. If members of the public have suggestions and identify waste then they can submit their comments through the website, email, or phone. The Structural Change Committee is reviewing public suggestions.

IV. FTF2 Update.

Mr. Lubien reported that FTF2 is working to pull together their policy recommendations. They will be meeting on Monday, April 12th to review their recommendations. A policy book was created by the Collins Center with policy suggestions which the FTF2 will work on. Financial modelling efforts will continue to be updated, most recently to include the latest assumptions on state aid.

Mr. Crowley reported that the School Finance Subcommittee will be discussing what reductions will need to take place following the “no override” vote. Mr. Weis recommended that the subcommittee hue as closely as possible with what the superintendent had recommended for budget cuts.

V. Review of Warrant Committee Spring calendar.

At their next meeting the Warrant Committee will explore the impact of the BRAVE ACT. Over the spring, the WC will be drafting its report for Town Meeting. The League of Women Voters will be holding a briefing on 4/15/21. On 4/21/21 the first draft of subcommittee reports will be due. Chairwoman Slap will share the previous year’s report for guidance.

The Committee recommended that the review of the town website be expedited to further public understanding and transparency regarding the town budget.

VI. Reports from Select Board, Town Administrator, School Committee, and liaisons.

Mr. Adam Dash is the new Select Board representative. Following the town election, the Select Board has reassigned liaison positions. A list is available on the town website. As a result, there is a vacancy on the Structural Change Impact group. Mr. Epstein has now been assigned to the Long-Term Capital Planning Committee. Additionally, the Select Board has renewed mutual aid for the Fire Department and reported that the new Facilities Director is in place.

The School Committee experienced membership change following the town election. They will be moving forward with the “no override” budget. Grades K-4 began full time on April 4th. Grades 6-8 will return on April 28th, with Grade 5 following a similar timeline. The High School reopening date is under negotiation.

The Capital Budget Committee will be meeting to discuss what they will be able to fund. There are many large ticket items which cannot all be funded using the Discretionary fund.

The Long-Term Capital Planning Committee is moving forward with a draft of a description of a Capital Planning Committee. This Committee would complete long term planning on an annual basis which would be presented before the Select Board.

The Structural Change Impact Group has received over 300 ideas through their public online form. They have divided into three working groups to complete an initial review of the ideas.

The BMHS Building Committee will meet April 9th.

Public Comment:

Mr. Bill Anderson asked where he can find the meeting information for the School Finance Subcommittee. All meeting information is available on both the town and school websites.

VII. Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 9:10pm. (Motion passed unanimously).

Submitted by
Katie Luczai