

Warrant Committee
March 17, 2021 7:30pm
Remote Meeting via Zoom

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 23, 2021
TIME: 9:08 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 Halson, Anne Helgen, Geoffrey Lubien, Robert McLaughlin, Lynn Read, Jack Weis, Roy Epstein, Michael Crowley

Other: Sue Croy, Linda Oates, Jon Marshall, Betsy Lipson, Rachel Heller, Russ Leino, Glenn Clancy

Call to Order

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

I. Approve minutes.

2/17/21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the 2/17/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Helgen (Motion passed unanimously, roll-call vote: Alcock, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

3/3/21 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the 3/3/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Helgen (Motion passed 14-1-0, roll-call vote: Alcock, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Goss abstained)

II. Review CPC projects.

Revitalization of Payson Park - presented by Sue Croy and Linda Oates

- This project application is a proposal for Phase 1 only of a 2-phase project for the revitalization of Payson Park. They are seeking \$35,000 to hire a consultant who will develop a conceptual design for park improvements. These improvements could include pruning, repairing entrance steps, installing fences or benches, etc. Ms. Croy and Ms. Oates have formed a Friends of Payson Park group and have actively involved abutters in the process. The second phase of the project, if approved, will include the implementation of the design based on what is needed.

- The applicants are only focusing on improving existing features in the park and not on new features, ex. bandstand.
- The Committee recommended that the applicants assume play structures will need to be replaced and invite the broader Belmont community to join in the Friends of Payton Park group.
- The CPC currently has \$95,000 to spend on administrative requests such as this. The CPC voiced support for project proposals such as this which focuses on broad planning.

Belmont Housing Trust Affordable Housing Fund - presented by Rachel Heller and Betsy Lipson

- The Belmont Housing Trust is requesting \$250,000 to help construct affordable community housing in town. A similar project request previously was approved by Town Meeting. The funds would be placed in a trust as a mechanism for the Housing Trust to use quickly. These funds can be used for activities such as pre-development due diligence, the purchase of land for housing or to buy down existing affordable housing.
- Recently, and in accordance with approval from Town Meeting, the Housing Trust has been using previously appropriated funds for emergency rental assistance which has proven to be a great need in the community. They are now shifting their focus back to constructing affordable housing units for the community.
- If there are funds left over from the emergency rental assistance program, they will be returned to the Town's CPA Fund.
- The Housing Trust can add energy goals to their RFP.

Pathway to Community Right of Way - presented by Russ Leino, CPPC

- The Community Path Project Committee is requesting \$200,000 in funds to support the initial right of way acquisition activities for Phases 1A and 1B. Phase 1A focuses on the underpass between Channing Road and the High School while Phase 1B focuses on the main part of the path from Brighton Street to the Belmont Bridge. The Committee is currently in the design phase of the project. A consultant is working with them to put together a right of way plan. As a part of this project they will be seeking temporary or permanent easements for the project's implementation which these funds support. The project is largely funded by state and federal funds but local assistance is needed for appraisal and legal costs associated with acquiring the right of way. The initial acquisition phase is a prescribed process outlined by MassDOT. These funds would not be used for the actual acquisition of land but rather the initial phases of the acquisition process. About 40 properties will be impacted by this project.
- The work is being completed primarily by Town Counsel with support by the Community Development Department staff.
- The Committee noted that it is important that project sponsors be aware of the CPC's annual funding cycle and firm deadlines for submission of project applications.

Tennis Court at Winn Brook - presented by Jon Marshall, Assistant Town Administrator

- This project seeks \$190,000 to construct one tennis court at Winn Brook in order to address the needs of the High School tennis program and town-wide demand for additional tennis courts. Meetings and public forums to discuss this project initially began

in 2019 when the problem was identified. After considering different properties across town, they decided that it would be most effective to construct an additional tennis court next to the existing courts located at Winn Brook. The pedestrian tunnel planned as part of the Community Path project will allow for a short trip for student athletes from the Middle and High School. This request is asking for \$190,000 for the construction of a tennis court and associated fencing, drainage and minor site improvements.

- The public has raised concern for the project because abutters do not want to experience additional traffic and loss of open space. Parents of student athletes have shared their preference for the addition of a tennis court at the High School which would likely cause a multi-purpose field to be eliminated.
- There is overwhelming demand in the community for additional tennis courts, especially during COVID-19.

The Committee will consider the CPC project requests and will vote on them at their next meeting.

III. Review Warrant for Annual Town Meeting.

Town Administrator Garvin presented Segment A (Articles 1-11) of the drafted warrant articles for the Annual Town Meeting. The following explanations and comments were provided:

- Article 5, Sanitary Sewer Easement - Seeks to approve an automatic sewer pump for The Commons in order to address sewer surcharging for which the Town sewer main is primarily responsible.
- Article 6 - Authorizes the Town to discontinue a portion right of way and authorizes the Select Board to convey this property for sale in order for a gas station to potentially purchase and construct a canopy.
- Article 7, Citizen Petition re BRAVE ACT - Extends town employee benefits to all town employees in the Reserves during military leaves. Currently, only Police and Fire Department employees receive any such benefits. Warrant Committee members are working with the Town Administrator to estimate the financial impact to the Town.
- Article 8, Citizen Petition - Seeks to install signs at every intersection within 1,000 feet of a town construction project. This has significant financial, labor and enforcement implications and more specific details would be helpful.

These articles need to be reviewed by Town Counsel again and the Bylaw Review Committee. Minor changes to language are expected. These drafted articles will be discussed by the Select Board at their March 23, 2021 meeting.

IV. FY21, FY22 budget updates

A new federal aid package, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, was recently passed. This recovery funding will be administered through the state. It is estimated that Belmont could receive about \$7.6 million in coronavirus local stability funds and \$1.1 million for public schools

through ESSER III funding. The town will not change their override plan because of this new information. There are still many unknowns regarding this funding and its rollout.

To note, the town purposefully left COVID related expenses out of the proposed FY22 budget in anticipation of federal reimbursement and as it is still unknown what COVID expenses will be necessary in the coming year. From these federal funds an estimated \$700,000 would be used for reimbursement of revenue lost from the operating budget due to COVID. 20% of the projected school aid is required to go to supplemental education such as summer school or afterschool programs.

V. Update re PILOT analysis - Property Tax Working Group.

Mr. Halston provided an update on the PILOT analysis. The Property Tax Working Group will explore what is possible for taxing exempt properties. They are actively working to see how they can improve systems for the Assessor's Department and communication among town departments.

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

The Select Board is focused on the new federal stimulus money.

The School Committee reported that they will be bringing K-4 students back full time in the classroom on April 5th and Middle School students back on April 28th.

The BMHS Building Committee reported that the school construction is 50% completed with 60% of the contingency intact. Construction is about 5 business days behind but the contractors expect to catch up to their timeline.

The Capital Budget Committee is working to resolve misinformation among the public regarding the Chenery Roof. The CBC is not asking for a debt exclusion for the roof repair.

The next meeting of the Warrant Committee will take place on March 31, 2021 at 7:30pm.

VI. Adjournment.

Motion: to adjourn the meeting (Motion passed unanimously).

9:44pm

Submitted by
Katie Luczai

Documents Used:

1. Proposed CPA Funds Set Aside Belmont Housing Trust Fall 2020
2. Tennis Court CPC Request (Marshall)
3. Index of Warrant Articles (Garvin)
4. American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Provides Welcome Funding to Belmont