

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 27, 2021
TIME: 9:22 AM

**Warrant Committee
September 16, 2020 7:30pm
Remote Meeting via Zoom**

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee: Laurie Slap, Ellen Schreiber, Elizabeth Dionne, Christine Doyle, Jennifer Fallon, Daniel Halston, Anne Helgen, Geoffrey Lubien, Robert McLaughlin, Lynn Peterson Read, Jack Weis, Roy Epstein, Mike Crag, Michael Crowley, John Alcock

Other: Patrice Garvin, Glenn Castro, Jon Marshall, Betsy Lipson, Anne Marie Mahoney, James Maclsaac

Call to Order

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

I. Approve minutes.

6/15/2020

Motion: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the 6/15/20 meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Dionne (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Epstein abstained)

II. Discuss and potential vote Special Town Meeting articles.

Article 2 - Adopting of a Public Way (Carlton Circle).

This article would make Carlton Circle a public way. This request was brought forth by the nine abutters who live on Carlton Circle. The most significant impact of this would be the cost of reconstructing the roadway, which has been taken care of by National Grid. National Grid agreed that they would repave Carlton Circle following extensive construction. The DPW conducted a sidewalk evaluation of Carlton Circle which found that repairs need to be made to the sidewalks. Each abutting household contributed a \$1,420 one time payment to finance the sidewalk repairs. The traditional process of acceptance would have cost significantly more.

Mr. Castro explained that neighborhood/local roads have a lifespan of 25 years. Utility work could shorten the lifespan of the roadway.

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve favorable action of Article 2, seconded by Ms. Doyle (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

Article 3 - The Authorization for Temporary Easements for the Wellington School Project

This article was initiated on the local level by the Safe Routes to School group who focuses on improving pedestrian routes to schools. A study was conducted resulting in MassDOT agreeing to fund and operate a project. This includes installing traffic lights, sidewalks and repaving of roadway within the scope of work. This would be a federally funded project. One of the requirements on the federal level is that the municipality get consent of all direct abutting property owners who will be affected by the project. Belmont is required to hire an appraiser, a review appraiser and have the funds in the event that property owners require additional appraisal. Additional appraisal for property owners would be for the portion of property affected by the project. This \$100,000 request captures the cost of appraisers and legal costs associated with this requirement. Mr. Castro does not expect the project will amount to the funds requested.

The \$100,000 has already been appropriated to the Department. This article authorizes the use of these funds for the project. The TIP Program is contributing about \$1.5 million for this project.

Motion: Ms. Doyle moved to approve favorable action of Article 3, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

Article 4 - Community Preservation Budget and Projects

4. A. Town Field Playground and Court Restoration

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve favorable action of Article 4A, seconded by Mr. Lubien (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

4. B. Homer House Window Restoration

The Belmont Women's Club has raised \$10,000 for this project. Private owners such as the Belmont Women's Club, are required to come up with 10% of the project funding. A deed restriction will be placed on this property.

Committee members provided the following comments and questions regarding the Homer House project:

- There was a question if the project estimate needs to be updated. Ms. Dionne will look into it.
- Mr. Weis recommended placing a limit to the amount of times a private sponsor can request CPC funds. Ms. Fallon disagreed with this recommendation for the Women's Club due to the unique nature of the building and its accessibility by the public.
- Generally, CPC funds are only available for the envelope of the building.
- Why place a deed restriction on a property for twenty years? Ms. Dionne assumes that the deed restriction duration is relative to the cost of the work and how it matures out.

- The Women’s Club previously received \$100,000 from the CPC for the cupola restoration in FY16.
- Private fundraising efforts can prove difficult for these types of projects.
- The land around the Hosmer House is preserved. There is a Conservation Restriction for the open space surrounding the House.
- In spirit, the Homer House is a town asset.
- Mr. Marshall has connected with the Women’s Club regarding opportunities for town use of the building.

Motion: Mr. Lubien moved to approve favorable action of Article 4B. This motion was not seconded. (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

4.C. Community Housing Fund Feasibility Study

Motion: Mr. Weiss moved to approve favorable action of Article 4C. subject to the understanding that the Feasibility Study will incorporate both the physical aspects of the property as well as the feasibility of funding any redesign or development and that the Housing Authority will not spend the \$100,000 associated with the physical design until they determine that the project is physically and financially feasible. Seconded by Mr. McLaughlin. (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

4. D. Police Station Exterior Stairs

This is an off cycle special application request. This application had to meet certain requirements in order to be considered outside of its application cycle, It was an unforeseen need and provided an opportunity to take advantage of the concurrent construction. The \$100,000 requested is supposed to be the maximum cost. The stairs were not included in the original scope of work for the Police Station construction due to active use of the building.

Motion: Ms. Doyle moved to approve favorable action of Article 4D, seconded by Mr. Crowley (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

4.E. Phase II Emergency Rental Assistance Program

This application qualified for CPC consideration for reasons of lost opportunity and unforeseen circumstances regarding emergency rental assistance. The first phase of this program brought in applications that exceeded estimations. There are insufficient funds to support the number of qualified applications that the program continues to receive. The funding is going directly to landlords. Unused funds will roll back to CPC accounts.

Motion: Mr. Rickter moved to approve favorable action of Article 4E, seconded by Mr. Crowley (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, voted yes, McLaughlin, Alcock, Craig and Weis abstained)

5. Water Enterprise Fund for Police Modular Units

This article requests the transfer of \$320,000 from the water retained earnings for the purchase of modular units currently being leased for the temporary Police Department for the use by the Public Works Department and Water Department purposes only. This motion in the final Special Town Meeting Article provided was incorrectly stated.

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve favorable action of Article 5, seconded by Ms. Helgen (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

6. Transfer Remaining Water Capital Balances

This article transfers \$137,641.09 from prior years water capital balances to the Water Main Capital Project. This article is largely an accounting clean up.

Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve favorable action of Article 6, seconded by Ms. Dionne (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

7. Transfer Remaining Sewer Capital Balances

This article transfers \$25,581.50 from prior year sewer enterprise capital balances to the Sewer Enterprise retained earnings.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve favorable action of Article 7, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

The Warrant Committee did not vote on Article 8.

9. Amend Zoning Bylaw for the McLean District Zone 3 Overlay

The Warrant Committee is free to make a recommendation for this article. This has been discussed in open forms for a long time. This article provides a positive revenue event for the town. There is an affordable housing component to the project associated with this article.

Motion: Mr. Rickter moved to approve favorable action of Article 9, seconded by Mr. Lubien (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

10. Removal from Civil Service

This article moves that the town remove the Police and Fire Departments from Civil Service Laws. Mr. Epstein provided a presentation regarding this article. The town would see cost savings associated with the removal of civil service requirements which would be realized for every new hire going out. Other towns have enacted this measure and require that candidates be Academy trained instead of following Civil Service requirements. This article is a part of the town-wide effort to find all savings where possible.

Within the Fire Department, the experience is that 18 weeks pass from when an opening is posted until a new firefighter comes on board. These openings are often triggered by retirements, allowing the recruitment process to begin before an employee's retirement date. The hiring process in the Police Department cannot begin until an employee leaves. The net effect is about \$33,000 in savings for each new employee in the Fire Department who is not hired under civil service.

Civil service involves standardized testing of new applicants, specific processes for disciplinary action and procedures for layoffs. Belmont only uses civil service for the Police and Fire Department. All civil service rights are grandfathered in for current employees. There are parallel protections for these employees through Police and Fire Unions. These union contracts remain in place if the town leaves civil service. At least 35 Massachusetts communities have left civil service including neighboring communities such as Acton, Burlington, Lexington. Other communities have never had civil service such as Concord. In civil service there is either no age restriction or age 32 for hiring criteria. By lifting civil service there will be a much wider hiring pool and greater flexibility within the hiring process. Belmont will be able to establish their own hiring criteria as well as a new, faster promotion process.

Mr. Mike Pelrine noted that the assumptions regarding shifts and paid time off may vary greatly from the figures provided in the model. Ms. Garvin responded that certain assumptions were determined for the sake of the model.

Ms. Brittany Taylor, a firefighter with Belmont noted that modern terminology should be used when discussing these matters such as firefighter and police officer. Ms. Taylor suspects that Belmont Fire Dept. applicants may not be Academy trained due to Academy sponsorship. Ms. Taylor asked why the town did not meet with the Unions to discuss this matter?

Ms. Garvin stated that she has met and engaged with the Unions multiple times. The Union responded that they were not interested in negotiating regarding this matter so the town moved forward with this article as is. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed in 2015 by the Fire Union and Belmont stating that Belmont was going to evaluate the Belmont Civil Service Model. The MOA has been discussed many times with the Fire Chief and the Union. The town has made several attempts to negotiate with these parties before bringing this issue to Town Meeting.

Mr. Richard Madden recommended that the town look into working with an Assessment Center. Mr. MacIsaac stated that Lexington uses Exam Solutions in Arlington for new hires. This does

not cost the town anything. It cost the town \$6,500 for exams through the Assessment Center for the hiring of four employees.

Motion: Ms. Dionne moved to approve favorable action of Article 10, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crag, Dionne, Doyle, Epstein, Fallon, Halston, Helgen, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes, Crowley abstained)

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

Ms. Slap will be sending around a calendar for Warrant Committee meeting dates.

The School Committee reported that school opened remotely on 9/16/21. The School has a plan to move to a hybrid model when certain benchmarks are achieved, hoping to move to hybrid by mid-October. The School Department has received much feedback from parents of students. The Committee will be receiving reports regarding air quality/circulation in school buildings soon. The Schools had \$817,000 in free cash turnbacks. Athletic fees will be reduced for students.

The Town Administrator reported that once Town Meeting is over the budget process will start. Ms. Garvin will share a schedule of her upcoming meetings with Department Heads.

The next Warrant Committee meeting is scheduled for September 30th.

IV. Adjournment.

Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 10:03pm. (Motion passed unanimously).

Submitted by
Katie Luczai

Documents Used:

1. Special Town Meeting Articles

2. Article 10 Presentation, Draft - Epstein