

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 21, 2021
TIME: 9:03 AM

**Warrant Committee
April 28, 2021 7:30pm
Remote Meeting via Zoom**

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, Adam Dash, Michael Crowley

Other: Anne Marie Mahoney

Call to Order

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

I. Approve minutes.

March 7, 2021

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the 4/7/21 meeting minutes, 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.)

March 14, 2021

A typo regarding Ms. Garvin's name was fixed.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the 4/14/21 meeting minutes as amended, 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.)

December 16, 2020

Language was added to clarify that Belmont is not a participating member of PRIT.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to approve the 12/16/20 meeting minutes as amended, 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.)

General Government Meeting Minutes

Motion: Ms. Dionne moved to approve the 4/26/21 meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Dionne, McLaughlin, Rickter, Schreiber, voted yes.)

II. Review of FY22 Capital Budget.

Ms. Anne Marie Mahoney of the Capital Budget Committee presented general remarks about the FY22 Capital Budget.

- The Capital Budget is dealing with two challenges, limited money, and limited manpower, that make it difficult for them to support the number of requests that they receive. Even if the CBC had sufficient funds to support all requests, they would not have the manpower available to complete the work associated with the requests.
- This year they have received two big additional requests from the School Dept. and Library.
- Without the sufficient funds, the CBC have had an increased reliance on borrowing.
- Spending for allocated FY21 requests was delayed.
- Belabored requests have caused estimates to become outdated. As a result, the Capital Budget Committee is asking Department Heads to submit new estimates for their requested projects.
- The Long-Term Capital Planning Committee has been exploring how the town can fund long term capital projects.
- They are recommending a radical shift in how the town funds capital. Belmont currently allocates 2-3% of their operating fund on capital while other neighboring towns such as Concord, Needham and Lexington spend 5-10% of their operating budgets on capital.
- The Capital Budget Committee reviewed a total discretionary requests of \$2,421,983. The CBC is recommending funding \$1,997,682 of those requests.
 - The funding request for the Chenery roof was taken out. They hope to address funding the project at the Fall Town Meeting.
 - Several requests were reduced to \$0 due to grants received such as the Council on Aging bus request and Police Department fingerprint system. The Town wide telephone infrastructure system upgrade will now be partially covered by grants, reducing the total amount originally requested.
 - Several items were removed or eliminated for FY22 including the Burbank and Winn Brook secure vestibules, Facilities Dept. work truck, Elementary school carpet, boiler replacement. It was determined that the town does not have the manpower or immediate need to complete these projects or that other funds or solutions were found to complete them.
- The Warrant Committee will vote on these requests when the funding amounts are finalized.
- Committee members provided the following questions or comments regarding the Capital Budget recommendations at this time:
 - Is there a preview of what the Chenery roof replacement request will look like at Town Meeting this fall?

- The Capital Budget Committee is still thinking through how they will request this item. It is not the responsibility of the CBC to create a funding plan for this item to the Town Meeting. It is unknown if the town could use federal money to support this project.
 - The amount required for this project is still being determined. Initial amounts of \$2 million were under-estimated numbers. It could be an amount closer to \$4 million but this is still just an initial estimate.
- If more money were allocated to the Capital Budget, would it be spent?
 - Department Heads have been providing limited requests, knowing that there are limited funds.
 - Given the restricted manpower, it is likely that only projects that include outside labor or vehicle or equipment purchases would be able to be completed.
- What are we not spending money on?
 - Many requests to the Capital Budget Committee are added to a waiting list. Items on this list include technology related requests and projects like the vestibules. The CBC has a 5-year list of capital projects it hopes to fund at the end of their recommendations that they publish.
 - Project funding that is not used when projects are not able to be completed within a fiscal year is carried forward until the project is complete. Unused money is returned to the Capital Budget and reallocated for other capital projects. All money allocated to capital projects remains in the capital budget.

The Long-Term Capital Planning Committee would like the town to compile a comprehensive inventory of all town assets, complete with asset lifespans. This is currently done at a Department level, but the town would benefit greatly from an all-inclusive inventory so that the town could better plan for capital requests.

- The town could use the inventory to draft a five- and thirty-year plan annually.
- They plan on recommending that the scope, responsibilities, and size of their Committee be expanded to provide improved services and planning for the town.

III. Review Q3 reports.

Ms. Garvin provided a review of the Q3 reports.

- Regarding revenues for Q3, Ms. Garvin provided the following information based on the estimated receipts the town expects to receive:
 - Last June, the Board of Selectmen reduced the state aid amount the town expects to receive. The Town received level funding state aid when the final state budget was approved.
 - The town worked with the Department of Revenue to lower the local receipt revenue estimates to realize a corresponding \$3 million which will be seen as free cash. This is a balancing to how the town balances the budget.

- Excise taxes were lower because Belmont was not able to send out second commitments due to problems at the DMV. The decrease is not indicative of what the town will receive over the next few months.
- Regarding expenditures, Ms. Garvin provided the following information:
 - The town has held a lot of vacant positions this year because of the unknown status of the override, leaving some of the salary lines lower than budgeted for.
 - There has been an organic slowdown in spending town wide. The Department Heads have been cognizant of spending.
 - Some expenses fluctuate based on the timing of when Quarter's end.

The Belmont School Q3 report was presented.

- District Support Expenses and Special Education Tuitions showed a significant deficit with the justification that they were COVID related expenditures and that tuitions have been charged to reserves over the years. There was concern that these items were being charged to the General Fund instead of external funding sources.

IV. FY21, FY22 budget updates.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the recent FY22 School Budget Presentation.

- Mr. Phelan suggested using federal funds to stall staff reductions. The School Committee will be meeting on May 11th to vote on the FY22 school budget.
- It is unknown if unemployment costs for the School Dept. reductions can be funded using ARP funds.

Mr. Crowley gave an overview of the Non-Contingent FY22 School Budget.

- Ms. Goss recommended that they flush out the narratives for how different funds are being used. The current proposal is to use funds for recovery education which needs to be made very clear. Mr. Crowley explained that the use of federal funds will not be included in the FY22 budget vote. There is still minimal guidance for how the federal funds received through the American Rescue Plan can be used.
- Mr. Lubien advised that the School Department not use one-time funds to finance recurring personnel positions.
- Ms. Helgen noted that there have been varying messages regarding school hiring for FY22. Mr. Crowley responded that there is not a plan for hiring in the school department at this time.

V. Discuss/vote on Special Town Meeting articles.

Ms. Ellen Cushman explained that Article Two of Special Town Meeting is regarding the Cemetery perpetual care fund and accounting classification errors. This is a reimbursing of funds to the appropriate accounts.

Motion: Ms. Doyle moved to bring before Town Meeting the recommendation to appropriate by transfer from the Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund Interest appropriation account the amount

\$188,826.45 to the Cemetery Perpetual Care Interest special revenue account to correct accounting errors. Seconded by Mr. Lubien. (Motion passed, roll-call vote: Alcock, Crowley, Dash, Dionne, Doyle Fallon, Goss, Halston, Helgen, Levin, Lubien, McLaughlin, Read, Rickter, Schreiber, Slap, Weis, voted yes.)

Article One of Special Town Meeting allows the transfer of funds from prior year bills.

Motion: Ms. Helgen moved to bring before Town Meeting the recommendation for favorable action on Article One of Special Town Meeting. The Town transfer from available funds as follows, for the purpose of paying prior year unpaid bills for which appropriation has been made, on file in the Town Clerk's office. 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.)

VI. Review WC report draft.

The current draft of the Warrant Committee report is about 60 pages in length. The Warrant Committee will aim to provide an overview of what the town may expect in FY23. Some areas of the report are all set now. Different groups are continuing to refine their sections of the report.

Mr. Weis suggested adding a recommendation section.

Ms. Read noted that accurately reflecting on FY21 meant also referring to FY20. This is important when providing clear descriptions in the report because of the unusual circumstances this year.

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

The Select Board met with the Fire Chief to discuss ideas for additional revenue within their Department such as changing the way ambulances are billed.

The Town Administrator reported that she is trying to fund the Systems Manager position for the FY22 budget. An update budget will be presented to the Select Board soon.

The School Committee reported that all students (who choose to be) will be back to school in person by the end of the week.

The Structural Change Impact Group had a seat added to their membership and have since appointed someone to that position.

The School Building Committee reported they toured the school recently and it looks superb.

On May 20th, the Warrant Committee and League of Women Voters will host a meeting for Town Meeting Members.

VIII. Public comment. (none)

IX. Adjournment.

Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 9:35pm. (Motion passed unanimously).

Submitted by,

Katie Luczai

Documents Used:

1. FY22 Capital Budget Request Annotation
2. Special Town Meeting Articles One and Two
3. Q3 Report (Town and School)
4. Non-Contingent FY22 Budget - Draft 2 - Federal Fund Utilization for SC 04.27.21