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BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 13, 2021  
TIME: 8:58 AM

Minutes of the  
Town of Belmont  
Warrant Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, September 22, 2021  
7:30pm



To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

**Call to Order:** Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:10pm and reviewed the agenda.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Andrew Levin	Yes
Christine Doyle, Vice Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Elizabeth Dionne, Secretary	Yes	Lynn Read	Yes
Tom Caputo	No	Paul Rickter	Yes
Jennifer Fallon	No	Ellen Schreiber	Yes
Elizabeth Goss	Yes	Laurie Slap	Yes
Daniel Halston	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Anne Helgen	No	Adam Dash, Ex-officio - Select Board	Yes
<b>Staff</b>		Jamal Saeh, Ex-officio, School Committee Chair Appointee	Yes
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator			

### I. Finalize subcommittee and working group assignments

Mr. Lubien displayed the list of this year's subcommittees and reviewed the changes. Ms. Doyle said she is on the Long-Term Capital Committee. Ms. Gross asked for at least 1-2 more people on Communications, and Ms. Dionne said she would participate.

### II. Review Fall schedule

Mr. Lubien displayed and reviewed the Fall Schedule which is currently light but should fill up.

### III. Discussion of next steps on PILOT information and charge to Property Tax Working Group

Ms. Dionne reviewed the history of the project. She explained that there have been issues getting information from the Board of Assessors. Mr. Halston explained that the goal is to understand the percentage of taxable property versus non-taxable, charitable properties. He outlined some ideas of how to access the information, including a joint meeting of the Select Board and Board of Assessors.

Ms. Schreiber asked if the group is planning to look at other towns to see what level of PILOTS they are getting, especially from private schools. Mr. Halston said that The Winsor School pays about \$100,000/year to the City of Boston, but they have not looked deeply at other towns. Mr. Halston also emphasized that this is not a silver bullet and there are not likely large sums of money at issue.

Ms. Doyle said there is a comprehensive analysis by the Town of Northampton, which has a lot of non-profits in the town, and suggested the working group read it.

Ms. Doyle asked if any other town agencies had used FOIA requests previously and suggested the question be put to Town Counsel. A discussion of public records and FOIA requests and PILOT issues followed.

Mr. Weis said that PILOTS emerged as a secondary issue from the work to find ways to provide tax relief to seniors and low-income residents. There is an open question of whether or not Belmont should pursue a home rule petition, but the group decided that the larger group should take up this question. Ms. Dionne confirmed that a home rule petition is the only option available to Belmont because of homeowner income levels.

#### **IV. Discussion of communications strategy (especially related to greater use of Warrant Committee Report)**

Ms. Schreiber provided an update of the subcommittee, describing the audience as including the community at large not just Town Meeting Members. She also outlined the process they are using to address this, including:

- Creating a yearly “State of the Town” report that looks at the historical point of view for a variety of topics (so trends are visible).
- Creating “Explainers” which might be one or two pages on a specific topic, such as ARPA, the new High School, free cash, etc. Topic ideas are welcome.
- Exploring possible use of Facebook and podcasts

Mr. Lubien spoke about:

- Precinct Meetings and suggested that a Warrant Committee member could speak on specific topics.
- Providing a verbal preview of the Town Meeting Report
- Include the PowerPoint presentation at the beginning of the Town Meeting Report.

Mr. Lubien asked how this information would be distributed. Ms. Schreiber said this is a big part of the current work of the group. There was a discussion of possibilities and how to proceed.

#### **V. Reports (if any) from Select Board, Town Administrator, School Committee, and liaisons.**

Mr. Dash gave a summary of the activities of the Select Board including mask mandate items, the DPW fuel tank Public Forum, trash complaints, the approval of the Comprehensive Financial Policies for the Town of Belmont, the TOU Public Forum and pilot program, as well as other items.

Mr. Saeh reported that the School Committee is getting ready for contract negotiations. They tried to pass an extracurricular vaccination mandate which was sent back to the subcommittee.

Ms. Dionne reminded people that preliminary applications for Community Preservation Act Funds are due October 4, 2021. She also reported that the bids for Town Field came in more expensive than expected, so there will be a big Supplemental Funding ask at Town Meeting.

Ms. Schreiber said she is on the new committee for the funding of the skating rink, and the first meeting is in a week.

Mr. McLaughlin said the school project is on time and some of the members shared the experiences their children are having in the school.

#### **VI. Approve minutes (if any)**

No minutes were approved.

#### **VII. Public comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **XII. Adjournment**

*Motion: Mr. McLaughlin moved the adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Mr. Lubien seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny  
Recording Secretary