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BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL
OCTOBER 11, 2017, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM

Present: Chair Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen, Libenson, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Weis

Interim Town Administrator Marshall

Members Absent: Lisanke, Slap, BOS Chair Williams, School Committee Chair Fiore

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm by Chair Epstein.

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the evening's agenda. He mentioned that he heard from ten WC members regarding the creation of two working groups (five for each group): the Long Range Town Budget group, and the IT group. He said there is an Open Meeting Law (OML) issue (concerning these smaller working groups) and he will put the groups on hold until that issue is resolved.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 10/4/17 were approved unanimously.

Discussion of Proposals for Special Town Meeting (STM) from the Major Capital Projects Working Group (MCPWG)

Chair Epstein provided some background information on the genesis of the MCPWG. He listed the MCPWG members, and noted that the process began with tours of the Police Station and the DPW. He noted that the MCPWG has met weekly since February to address the major projects remaining in town: DPW, Police, BHS, and Library. Projects *not* being addressed at this time include the Rink, the Community Path, the Incinerator Site, and the White Field House. The MCPWG focused its attention on the DPW and the Police Station, largely because the BHS has a building committee and the Library Trustees were overseeing the Library project. This left the DPW and the Police Station as "orphan projects" in need of shepherding.

The MCPWG, he continued, addressed the needs of these buildings with an understanding of the town's financial constraints. The plan has been to address the most pressing needs of the DPW/Police Station soon, thereby extending the life of the buildings for at least another 10 years. At that point – when the BHS and the Library are presumably completed – the town could turn to a more comprehensive re-working of the DPW and Police Station.

Chair Epstein reviewed the urgent needs of the buildings. The DPW has some facility and employee amenity needs, while the Police Station has facility (women's lockers), prisoner security, and accessibility needs. He noted that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements could be triggered, which limits the amount of work that can be done. Some ADA requirements will, in fact, be triggered (under the short-term plan), but not the maximum scope of requirements.

The ballpark of total money spent on the short-term improvements will be around \$5M.

MCPWG Chair Mahoney approached the WC table. She discussed the article that will come before the Special Town Meeting (STM) in November. She stated that the Police Station's short-term fixes will come to about \$2.7M and that the DPW's short-term fixes will cost less. The DPW fixes will be dealt with at the spring TM. In the meantime, \$350,000 will be requested at next month's STM for schematic design and construction documents. Schematic design, she explained, creates drawings and more accurate cost estimates. After that, actual project money will be requested of TM in May (about \$5M) for Police and DPW (short-term fixes).

The STM article will concern the following:

Schematic Design cost for Police Station: \$240K
Schematic Design cost for DPW: \$110K

Total: \$350K

(The proposed funding source is the Kendall Fund.)

Therefore about \$350K will be requested at the STM. Again, she stated, the goal is to move quickly and to ask for the full funding (\$5M) to do the projects at the annual TM in May.

The WC asked questions and offered comments to MCPWG Chair Mahoney. She stressed that it is the emergency items that are being addressed now, while the strategy is to address the buildings as a whole in about 10 years, at which point the town will have more financial capacity.

The short- and long-term fiscal impacts of this proposal were explored, e.g., bonding, use of the Kendall Fund, debt exclusions, operating budget shortfalls, etc.

Ms. Marshall reviewed the STM warrant articles:

- a request to fund schematic design for the Library, and to create a Library Building Committee
- a request to fund the Modular Units (placed at the Burbank)
- a request to fund schematic designs for short-term fixes for DPW and Police
- a Citizens Petition

She explained why the schematic design costs are appropriate to come out of the Kendall fund. Many options are being explored to meet the STM requests, she said, including using money from the sale of the Cushing Square parking lot or from free cash. With follow-up questions, she explained that there is \$3 million in the Kendall Fund and that free cash won't be known until it is certified at the end of the month.

Chair Epstein stated that the short-term Police Station idea may not actually work out. The Police Station's immediate needs are, threefold:

- to have a more secure way to bring prisoners into the building
- to improve locker room facilities for the women
- to improve accessibility (the building really needs an elevator).

Adding an elevator shaft to the left side of the building is proving to be very challenging. The driveway is narrow and may be made even more narrow by an elevator shaft. Emergency vehicles may have trouble accessing the rear of the buildings. MCPWG Chair Mahoney added that, if the short-term plan is not feasible, it may make sense to jump over the short-term concept and move ahead with a new building.

Long-Term Concepts for the DPW and Police

Chair Epstein briefly broached the long-term concept for the Police Station. The former incinerator site isn't desirable. The site identified thus far, he said, is the town-owned land at the end of Woodland Street, which is connected to the DPW parcel. There is ample room for putting a Police Station on this site.

Concerning the long-term plan for the DPW, the main building, on the existing site, would be remodeled. New construction would likely include office space to allow staff to move there from the Homer Building.

Member Comment on School Finances

Member Gammill offered some information on the School Department's finances. He reviewed some budget numbers from a memo he had distributed to the WC. He highlighted some take-away points since the 2015 operating override (\$4.5M), noting that in the past two years the School District has:

- matched General Fund spending with amounts appropriated by the Annual Town Meeting
- replenished supplies and replaced capital equipment at the end of each fiscal year
- collected \$1.5 million more than it spent through its Revolving Fund accounts
- accumulated \$1.1 million in its Circuit Breaker account.

WC members offered comments and asked questions concerning the data presented by Member Gammill. He requested that WC members read and think about this

information.

Chair Epstein noted that circuit breaker money can only be kept for a year or two. Member Doyle asked for clarification on how this data is connected to the Modular Units. Member Weis wondered about the embedded conclusion of this memo. He hoped that the point is not suggesting that the School Department is awash in cash. Member Crowley asked about the Revolving Funds and Circuit Breaker funds and their impact on the General Fund. Member Gammill noted that the School Department has a lot of discretion, flexibility, and authority to spend its budget as it sees fit. Member Libenson stated that, while he appreciates the work that Member Gammill has done, it does not feel it is appropriate – as a process – to explore these numbers before they are vetted by the School Department, the Finance Subcommittee, the Ed Subcommittee, etc. This is not how the WC should do its work. Member Gammill noted that the numbers presented came from the financial reports prepared and publicly reported by the School District.

Member Gammill noted that money will be requested for Modular Units at the STM in November, and that understanding the financial position of the School District was relevant to him as a TMM.

Member Schreiber noted that neither the SC Representative (Ms. Fiore) nor the Ed Subcommittee Chair (Ms. Slap) are present tonight. She said she would like to have them weigh in on this matter.

Chair Epstein thanked Member Gammill for his presentation and stated that, given Member Gammill's experience and analysis of these issues, as well as the fact that the information was being presented as background instead of for decision-making, it was appropriate for the WC to hear from him.

Chair Epstein stated that this issue will be revisited when the warrant is presented. Ms. Marshall noted that the Board will vote the warrant on Monday evening, October 16.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Minuteman

No reports.

Public Contributions

There were none.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary