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BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 10, 2023
TIME: 9:06 AM

Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 13, 2023



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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. There were 17 voting members present.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Melissa Morley	Yes
William Anderson	Yes	Lynn Peterson Read	Remote
Tom Caputo	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Deepak Garg	Yes	Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Yes
Anne Helgen	Remote	Meghan Moriarty, Ex-officio, School Committee	Yes
Conor McEachern	Yes		
Staff			
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Jill Geiser, Superintendent of Schools	Yes
Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Director	Yes	Tony DiCologero, Schools Director of Finance	Remote

1. Introduction of New Committee Members

Mr. Lubien introduced new members Fitzie Cowing, Sue Croy, Deepak Garg, and Melissa Morley. Each of the new members spoke about themselves and their backgrounds. Mr. Lubien explained that the terms have been realigned so there will be 5 members up for reappointment each year.

2. Election of Officer Positions

Mr. Lubien reviewed the Officer Positions, and how people would move through these positions. He said he and Mr. Rickter are willing to stay as Chair and Vice Chair this year, with Mr. Rickter showing interest in becoming Chair next year. He then outlined the role of the Secretary and how the three officers work together.

Mr. Taylor spoke about how to make the Committee's work more accessible to the public, how to counter the appearance of there being "back room" discussions, and problem of the anchoring effect which discouraging the proposal of alternate numbers. Mr. Lubien, Mr. Rickter, and Mr. Anderson spoke to these concerns and a discussion followed.

Ms. Garvin praised Ms. Hewitt for her contribution to the budget process last year, saying that the new process was a starting point and that as much information about the budget will be made available as soon as possible.

Mr. Epstein spoke about the role of the Chair of the Warrant Committee in starting the consideration of the various budget issues and getting them in a form where they are ready for public discussion.

Mr. Weis asked that the Department Heads provide honest details on what will be lost at various potential budget levels.

Mr. McLaughlin moved to nominate Geoff Lubien as Chair of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. McLaughlin moved to nominate Paul Rickter as Vice Chair of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Warner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Weis moved to nominate Connor McEachern as Secretary of the Warrant Committee. Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

35 **3. Introduction and Welcome New Superintendent, Dr. Jill Geiser**

36 Dr. Geiser thanked those who worked with her on her entry planning effort, and offered to speak to anyone
37 else who is interested. She then spoke about her experience and background as well as her goals.

38 **4. FY23 School Budget Update**

39 Dr. Geiser introduced the issues to be discussed.

40 Mr. DiCologero explained that they ended the year with a positive balance of about \$386,000. He explained
41 how \$136,000 from the Circuit Breaker was reclassified to the General Fund. The result is a General Fund
42 final balance of about \$250,000. The FY23 Circuit Breaker will be about \$180,000, and he expects a
43 \$250,000 turnback to the Town.

44 There was a discussion of the use and transfer of the remaining funds and the impact of the funds on the
45 FY24 budget, especially around Special Education spending.

46 Mr. Caputo asked if Mr. DiCologero could provide details on what is happening with Special Education
47 spending. Mr. DiCologero said he believes they will have additional information available soon. Dr. Geiser
48 also spoke about this issue. There was a discussion of Special Education spending and services.

49 **5. Discuss Assistant Finance Director Position**

50 Dr. Geiser explained how the District decided to create the position, and how it was done.

51 Mr. DiCologero outlined the plan for the position, and its impact on his ability to work on other tasks.

52 There was a discussion of the position and what has been done to attract candidates.

53 Ms. Cowing advised that the District consider the optics of hiring an administrator when there are services
54 and opportunities that students are not getting because of budget cuts.

55 There was further discussion about adding this and other positions.

56 **6. Review Belmont Middle & High School Funding Summary**

57 Ms. Hewitt provided an update on the funding for the BMHS project.

58 There were several questions and discussions about the project, funding, and debt.

59 Mr. Taylor suggested that rather than always referring to financial impacts in relation to “the median single-
60 family home” the Committee begin to include impacts that would relate to those living in non-single-family
61 homes, as do half of the residents in Belmont. There was a discussion of possible alternative references.

62 The Committee discussed the project finishing on time, lower borrowing expenses, and other positive
63 results of the project.

64 Mr. Caputo and Ms. Hewitt provided a brief update on the Rink and Library funding and projects, which
65 were discussed.

66 **7. Review Fall Schedule and Budget Calendar**

67 Mr. Lubien reviewed the Budget Calendar which also includes Warrant Committee meetings and other
68 commitments. There was a discussion of the components of the schedule.

69 **8. Discuss Subcommittee Assignments**

70 Mr. Lubien reviewed his Subcommittee Assignment recommendations.

71 Ms. Garvin explained that she invites Warrant Committee Subcommittee members to participate in
72 Department Head meetings as a way to learn the process. She will send invitations to the Subcommittees
73 once the schedule is confirmed.

74 Mr. Lubien asked Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Weis, and Ms. Warner how they would like to proceed regarding the
75 Property Tax Working Group. There was a brief discussion, and it was decided to discuss this offline.

76 Liaisons: A liaison is needed for the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee, and Mr. Garg volunteered.
77 Other liaisons are:

- 78 • Community Preservation Committee – Mr. Lubien
- 79 • Structural Change Implementation Committee – Mr. Rickter
- 80 • Rink Committee – Mr. Caputo
- 81 • Library Committee – Mr. McLaughlin

82 9. Liaison Reports:

83 A. Town Administrator: Ms. Garvin:

- 84 a. Provided an update on the Warrant for the November Town Meeting.
- 85 b. Announced a Public Input Session for the Rink on September 14th.
- 86 c. Reported that all Department Head vacancies have been filled.
- 87 d. Town Day is this coming Sunday.

88 B. Select Board: Mr. Epstein:

- 89 a. Reported on the work being done regarding the MBTA Communities proposal for Town Meeting
- 90 in the Spring.
- 91 b. Provided an update on the possibility of converting the Board of Assessors to an appointed
- 92 body.
- 93 c. Explained that leaving Civil Service is being considered again.

94 C. School Committee: Ms. Moriarty reported that the Finance Subcommittee is up and running and will

95 meet every other Tuesday morning at 8am. The members of this group are Jamal Saeh, Jung Yuen,

96 and Amy Zuccarello.

97 D. Rink Committee: Mr. Caputo reported that the project is moving fast and will likely be completed in 12-

98 14 months. He provided an update on the project and what will be happening in the next few months.

99 10. Approve minutes (if any), including all outstanding subcommittee or working group minutes.

100 May 10, 2023: Mr. Caputo said that Line 62 should say “Construction Manager”, not Structural Manager. Mr.
101 Weis said that the motion for approval of the April 26, 2023 minutes shows “with names abstaining” and asked
102 if those names could be included. He added that one Line 67 should say “nothing is firm yet”, not “nothing if
103 firm yet”.

104 *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the May 10, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting as*
105 *amended. Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed 16-0-1 by a show of hands vote with Ms.*
106 *Read abstaining.*

107 May 17, 2023: *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting.*
108 *Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed by a show of hands vote with Mr. Epstein abstaining.*

109 June 14, 2023: Mr. Weis pointed out that the dates in Lines 31 and 32 for the Shared Services minutes do not
110 agree. The correct date is April 27, 2023.

111 *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting as*
112 *amended. Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed by a show of hands vote.*

113 June 21, 2023: *Ms. Helgen moved to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting.*
114 *Mr. McLaughlin seconded, and the motion passed 16-0-1 by a show of hands vote with Mr. Taylor abstaining.*

115 **Public Comment** – there was no public comment.

116 **Adjournment**

117 *Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Helgen*
118 *seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.*

119 **Next Meeting**: Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at 7:30pm

120 Respectfully submitted by,

121 Susan Peghiny, Recording Secretary
122