

DATE: October 20, 2023
TIME: 9:11 AM

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 27, 2023
7:30pm**



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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:31pm. There were 17 voting members present.

Member	Present	Member	Present
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Robert McLaughlin	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Remote	Melissa Morley	Yes
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Yes	Lynn Peterson Read	Remote
William Anderson	Yes	Matthew Taylor	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Marie Warner	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Yes
Deepak Garg	Yes	Meghan Moriarty, Ex-officio, School Committee	Yes
Anne Helgen	Yes		
Staff		Others	
Patrice Garvin, Town Manager	Remote	Paul Joy, Economic Development Committee	Yes
Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator & Finance Director	Yes	Taylor Yates, Vision 21 Committee & Planning Board	Yes

1. Economic Development Committee and Vision 21 Implementation Committee Presents – Proposed amendments to the zoning bylaws for opening restaurants in Belmont.

Mr. Yates outlined the two Zoning Bylaw Amendments that they are proposing. These should:

- Make it easier to open a restaurant.
- Close the existing loophole for chain restaurants.
- Bring the Town's parking requirements in line with surrounding towns.

He then pointed out that the amendments will NOT:

- Remove restaurant regulations.
- Affect bylaws regarding new construction/renovation.

Mr. Yates then explained why they are bringing the amendments forward, pointing out that, due to zoning, much of the Town's financial situation is because such a small portion of taxes come from business.

Mr. Yates then provided a history of the amendment project and the various organizations that have worked together on it. He then reviewed the components of the Warrant Articles.

There were questions and a lengthy discussion about the issue of parking regulations for restaurants.

The next part of the presentation and discussion focused on the definitions for restaurants which would help identify Formula Based (i.e., chain) restaurants which would require additional hurdles and the concerns/benefits of those hurdles. Of particular concern was the number of outlets a restaurant should have to trigger the Formula Based designation and restrictions.

There was a discussion about ensuring that the zoning was strong enough to require chain restaurants to conform to the look of the Town.

Mr. Epstein asked about the portion of the proposal that requires a chain restaurant to meet seemingly subjective requirements such as "complementing" business already in the zone. This issue and the restaurant review process were discussed.

Mr. Joy pointed out that Chapter 70a funding calculations do not include income from business revenue so by increasing this revenue the town will get more out of this funding.

2. Review of Q4 financials

Ms. Hewitt pointed out that this report is preliminary, and the auditors will be reviewing it next month so things may change.

Revenues: Ms. Hewitt explained that more revenue than expected was collected, and spending was lower than expected so there is approximately \$4,500,000 more than budgeted. She then provided details of the various types of revenue.

Mr. Weis asked about Penalties & Interest, which is the only negative number on the list. Ms. Hewitt explained that this is due to a process in the Treasurer's office.

Ms. Helgen asked what contributed to the Licenses & Permits revenue increase. There was a discussion of larger projects like McLeans as well as the number of home renovations.

Mr. Anderson asked about the timing of spending investment income, and Ms. Hewitt said it had been spent at the right time. This income was discussed.

Expenses: Ms. Hewitt then reviewed the details of spending in the various areas (General Government, Public Safety, etc.), encumbrances, as well as notable spending sources.

She then reviewed the various turnbacks for the year.

There were some questions and discussion about expenses.

3. Review FY25 Preliminary Revenue Projections

Ms. Hewitt provided the review of preliminary revenue projections. She explained some of the things impacting the accuracy and finalization of the projections.

There were several questions about the projections, which were discussed.

4. Beginning Discussion on FY25 Override and Free Cash

Mr. Lubien explained why he felt it was helpful to have this discussion.

Mr. McEachern outlined the historical work he had done to help determine revenue and expense variances. His goal was to determine what was being turned back, on average, over time. He found that, generally, over the past 10 years there were positive variances in excess of the amount of one-time reserves/Free Cash that was budgeted which has allowed Free Cash to grow. He then spoke about how this information could be used for determining the use of Free Cash in budgeting.

There were questions and discussion about this information and how to use it as well as how to approach Free Cash in relation to an override.

Mr. McEachern then spoke about measuring tax burden including an override, 2.5% increase, plus the library and rink. He explained the research he did to determine burden per household (rather than single family home since there is a lot of multiple family home stock in Belmont). He then shared the expected burdens with these increases and showed how Belmont compares to other similar communities.

There was discussion about this information, as well as questions.

Other Business

A. Administrative matters: Mr. Lubien:

- a. Reviewed the Subcommittee assignments and gave some instructions about running the Subcommittees.
- b. Reminded the members about completing the Conflict-of-Interest training.

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

September 13, 2023: Ms. Croy said that she did not make the comment on Line 53. Ms. Cowing indicated that it was her statement. Mr. Rickter said that in Item 2 the name should be Ms. Garvin, not Mr. Garin. Also, Ms. Hewitt's title is Finance Director, not Manager.

Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2023 Warrant Committee meeting as amended. Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.

Liaison Reports:

- A. Town Administrator: Ms. Garvin reported on the activities of her office.
- B. Select Board: Mr. Epstein reported on the activities of the Board. Mr. Lubien spoke about the Public Forum scheduled for the next night.
- C. High School Building Committee: Mr. McLaughlin reported that the dedication is October 21st.
- D. Structural Change Implementation Committee: Mr. Rickter reported the activities of the Committee.
- E. Rink Building Committee: Mr. Caputo reported the activities of the Committee and status of the project. Ms. Hewitt spoke about the financing plan for this project as well as the Library.
- F. School Committee: Ms. Moriarty reported the activities of the Committee.

Public Comment – there was no public comment.

Adjournment

Motion: *Mr. McLaughlin moved to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:42pm.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary