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DATE: February 14, 2022
TIME: 9:36 AM

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, October 6, 2021
7:30pm**



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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

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	Yes	Paul Rickter	No
Jennifer Fallon	Yes	Ellen Schreiber	Yes
Elizabeth Goss	Yes	Laurie Slap	No
Daniel Halston	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Anne Helgen	Yes	Adam Dash, Ex-officio - Select Board	Yes
Staff		Jamal Saeh, Ex-officio, School Committee Chair Appointee	Yes
John Marshall, Asst. Town Administrator			

I. Presentation from Kathy Keohane, Vice-Chair Belmont Public Library Board of Trustees, regarding proposed Building Project.

Representatives: Elaine Alligood and Ms. Keohane, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Belmont Library Board of Trustees; Peter Struzziero, Library Director.

Presentation: Ms. Alligood provided some statistics about library usage, programs & materials. The building turns 57 years old this month and is failing.

Ms. Keohane explained that the Trustees reached out to Daedalus (which is now called CHA) to look at the capital budget submissions and update those costs, renovation options, and update the cost of new building.

Ms. Keohane explained that the largest failures are behind the scenes and showed a video which illustrated the inadequate heating/cooling, antiquated fire alarm system, inoperable emergency generator, the elevator that does not meet ADA requirements, lack of energy efficiency, operational efficiency, leaking roof, electrical, plumbing, mechanical systems that do not meet code, etc. and the impacts of these problems.

Ms. Keohane said there is asbestos and lead in the building, and that the rate of failures is increasing. She provided details on the problems with the failing systems, especially the electrical system. She also outlined the issues and potential costs and impacts around repairing. Repair is estimated to be at least \$23.7M.

Three different studies done at 3 different times all recommended new construction rather than repair, and the Trustees are supporting this solution.

Ms. Keohane shared images of the design of the new building and some of its features, including an additional 11,000 square feet of space.

Funding sources were outlined, including naming rights, CPC, Kendall Funds, etc.

The Library Board of Trustees unanimously recommended to the Select Board that they go forward with a debt exclusion in November of 2022 for the new building. The Select Board was in agreement that this was the right solution. Mr. Dash confirmed that the Select Board is in support.

Discussion:

Ms. Doyle asked if the Trustees had compared the operating cost difference between the current and proposed building. Ms. Keohane said they had but will revisit this because it was done pre-Covid. Mr. Struzziero said although the building will be larger, they believe the costs may come down because of the efficiencies of the building.

Ms. Doyle asked if it was allowed for the library to be long-term, net-negative loaner in the Minuteman network. Mr. Struzziero said it does not matter, as most libraries are happy to have the network be as large and robust as possible.

Mr. Saeh asked what the process is to prioritize the debt exclusion for the library with other items that will be presented (schools, Chenery solar, ice rink etc.). Mr. Lubien said the challenge will be what needs a debt exclusion vs what can be done through the general capital and operating budgets and other sources. He feels this project would need the debt exclusion, and that this should have a high priority.

Ms. Fallon pointed out that if one infrastructure system fails it may be that the building has to close before there is a new building, which introduces unexpected costs. Mr. Lubien said this came up at the Select Board and needs to be considered.

Ms. Alligood said there is a lot they still don't know about the building, and they feel lucky that nothing horrible has already happened.

Ms. Keohane said there is money in the budget for temporary space for use during construction, and they will consider using it if the current building fails before there is a new building.

Ms. Dionne asked Mr. Dash if there was thought given to an override – will it happen at the same time or will it be staggered, etc. Mr. Dash responded that they are always thinking of an override, with the question being the timing of it. It might get pushed if they receive ARPA or infrastructure money.

Mr. McLaughlin said he doesn't think the rink and the library can go at the same time, and the library has many more users than the rink. He feels the library should be at the front of the queue.

Mr. Caputo said he's concerned that they're talking about the project in isolation, especially since there is a lingering structural deficit. This might be resolved, but it's more likely there will be an override. He wants them to think holistically about how these pieces come together. Mr. Lubien said the long-term financial planning committee as well as the task force should be included in the discussions because of this.

Ms. Helgen asked if there is state money available to help with construction, and what is the process to access it. Ms. Alligood said there is no money available from the state, but they are looking elsewhere for funding (foundations, federal sources, etc.). There was a discussion of grant requirements, rounds, etc.

Ms. Doyle suggested that when this goes to the general public they prepare a short, tidy explanation for why there is no state money available. There was agreement to this suggestion.

Ms. Fallon pointed out that it was the town, not the library, that had previously turned back the grants because of other funding priorities.

Mr. Lubien said the design has been a long, expensive, thoroughly vetted process, and that these discussions are not about the design. He suggested this detail be included in future presentations.

Public Comment: Larry Link, Belmont Library Foundation Member, said he is puzzled by the backlog of capital projects and asked how this happened. He asked that there be more enthusiasm around this project by Town leaders, especially because of the safety issues at the existing building. He also pointed out that time and energy of people who have been working on this issue is not included in the cost summaries.

Ms. Goss responded that she is impressed with the dedication of the Town volunteers who work on these issues. She said there are hard choices to be made because of the lack of tax revenue.

Ms. Doyle pointed out that the role of the Warrant Committee is to review and consider the financial restraints that are before the Town.

Ms. Keohane said this is a must-have need and asked that the Town leaders rally around it with advocacy and contributions.

Ms. Alligood asked what the liability is to the Town because it *knows* about the problems in the building.

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

Mr. Dash provided a summary of the items the Select Board has been working on including increased trash removal, Police & Fire staffing (including a discussion about the Town reviewing its participation in Civil Service), a Proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and the first celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day events.

Mr. Marshall advised that the budget season would officially kick off October 13th, and the Q1 Report will go to the Select Board on October 18th. He also reported that Ms. Garvin is starting public office hours which begin by Zoom on Monday, October 25th at 5:00pm.

Mr. Saeh reported on visioning and reconfiguration of education at BPS because of the middle school and elementary schools moving. He also said they approved the student vaccination policy. Belmont is one of only a few districts who have a vaccination mandate. They have also discussed how to report information more routinely as suggested by the Warrant Committee.

Mr. McLaughlin reported that the last part of the old high school has been removed, except the foundation. He also said they had gotten feedback on the workmanship and a roof leak at the new school. There was initially a condensation imbalance that made it appear that there was a leak. He discussed some of the challenges making sure that the building was useable, so there is a long punch list for completion.

Ms. Schreiber said there will be public tours of the high school on Saturday, October 23rd, and library tours on Sunday, October 17th to see the issues firsthand.

Ms. Doyle asked if anyone was doing research on the ability of non-civil service towns to fill their vacancies, and the composition of those applicants. Mr. Dash said that information could be found. There was a discussion of this issue.

Ms. Dionne reported that the CPC received 8 applications for about \$1.7M, and the projects are good and forward-looking. The bulk of the projects are for recreation, so they are pushing the Recreation Commission to ensure that they prioritize projects.

III. Approval of Minutes

Motion: *Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the **June 23, 2021** meeting of the Warrant Committee as amended. Ms. Helgen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by rollcall vote, with Mr. Caputo and Mr. Saeh abstaining.*

After the above vote and discussion, the Committee decided to vote the minutes as a slate with the following corrections:

September 8, 2021:

- Mr. Weiss said the word “that” at the end of Ms. Garvin’s comment “The office of community development had no planner so there was a service lag” should be removed.
- The sentence about the Communications Committee should say “they will also look at creating explainers for communicating with Town Meeting Members and the general public on certain topics...”, rather than *to use* at Town Meeting.
- Ms. Read said she is shown as not present, but she did join the meeting at 7:40pm.

September 22, 2021:

- Date is missing from the heading.
- Mr. Halston added a line in the 2nd paragraph in section III about the Pilot discussion “Mr. Halston also emphasized that this is not a silver bullet and there are not likely large sums of money at issue.”
- Ms. Schreiber said in the section about Communications Committee in the bullets about using Facebook and podcasts. She would like to remove the two bullets and just say “they are exploring the possible use of Facebook and Podcasts”.

Motion: *Mr. McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the **June 23, 2021, July 7, 2021, September 8, 2021, and September 22, 2021** meetings of the Warrant Committee subject to the comments having been made will be forwarded to Ms. Dionne who will be authorized to incorporate them, and then post them with the Town Clerk. Ms. Helgen seconded and the motion passed by roll call vote with the following abstentions:*

June 23, 2021: Mr. Caputo, Mr. Saeh, Ms. Gross

July 7, 2021: Mr. Dash, Mr. Caputo, Ms. Gross

September 22, 2021: Ms. Fallon, Mr. Caputo, Ms. Helgen, Mr. Levin

September 8, 2022: Ms. Helgen

IV. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

VI. Adjournment

Motion: *Mr. McLaughlin moved the adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee. Ms. Dionne seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51pm.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary