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**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
FINAL  
OCTOBER 4, 2017, 7:30 P.M.  
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen (arrived at 7:59), Libenson, Lisanke, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Slap, and Weis

Interim Town Administrator Marshall

Members Absent: BOS Chair Williams and School Committee Chair Fiore

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Epstein.

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the evening's agenda.

***Introductions, including New Members***

Chair Epstein introduced himself, as did the members of the WC. He then provided some background information on how WC meetings are run. He reviewed past practices concerning the preparation of the minutes and the voting of the minutes (Lisa added some Minutes information here), the posting of agendas, starting time, and ending time. He noted that members of the public will have a chance to speak at 9:15 p.m. during the Public Contribution section of the agenda.

The WC has three new members: Ms. Chris Doyle, Mr. Jack Weis, and Ms. Elizabeth Dionne.

***Report of Nominating Committee (NC) and Election of Officers***

Chair Epstein explained that, as is done annually, a Nominating Committee (NC) was appointed in July to make recommendations on officers for the WC, including Chair, Vice Chair, and a Secretary. Any WC member can nominate him/herself for one of those offices, as well.

Member Lubien asked for clarification on how the Nominating Committee worked, including:

- what is the nominating process?
- does the process ever change?
- is the nominating committee subject to Open Meeting Law (OML)?

NC Chair McLaughlin said his view is that the Nominating Committee is not subject to

OML because it only recommends names for consideration. It does not make any binding decisions. He proposed that in the future the Nominating Committee be called a working group to clarify its role.

Nominating Committee (Working Group) Chair McLaughlin stated that the other members of the Nominating Working Group were Members Libenson and Alcock. Member McLaughlin provided a brief rationale for each nomination before moving the motion.

Member McLaughlin moved the following slate: To nominate Chair Epstein as Chair of the WC, Member Schreiber as Vice Chair of the WC, and Member Crowley as Secretary of the WC.  
The motion passed unanimously.

### *Approval of Minutes*

The minutes of 6/14/17 were approved with six abstentions.

### *Discussion of Pay As You Throw (PAYT)*

Chair Epstein noted that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) have already voted on the RFP for the next trash contract, which renders the PAYT issue a bit moot. The Selectmen will issue an RFP for automated trash collection with a 64-gallon barrel. (Households objecting to a 64-gallon barrel may choose a smaller, 35-gallon barrel.) If the 64-gallon barrel is not sufficient, overflow bags can be purchased. The town is hoping for robust bidding on the RFP. Currently, residents can put out as much trash as they like, and the collection is not automated. Chair Epstein raised several issues that were not specifically discussed by the Board of Selectmen at its meeting, viz., how to handle parked cars blocking the barrels, what happens if snow banks reduce the area to place a barrel, the fiscal impact of automation versus the status quo, etc. The decision for the RFP does not rule out the possibility that the BOS may reconsider PAYT within a couple of years, as it is an option compatible with automated trash collection.

Chair Epstein indicated that trash collection and disposal are significant expense items in the town budget, and reviewed the historical budgets for collection and disposal within the town budget. He wondered how much more effective automated will be (regarding costs) over the status quo. Member Lubien stated that he spoke with Mr. Marcotte, DPW Director, and that in the short term it might cost the town more money, but in the longer term there will be savings (perhaps \$150K per year) on labor costs because of the automated truck.

Ms. Marshall explained that the recycling program will not change, but that bulky items will be limited to one per week (free of charge).

Member Crowley expressed concern about the likely cost of the option voted by the BOS for the RFP, noting that RFPs often are used to collect price information on multiple

options, so that the best cost decision can be made on a final contract. With just one option, he said, we can't be assured of a best cost eventual contract.

Member Gammill noted that the Board has voted on this issue and did not seek out the WC's input. Member Schreiber agreed with Member Crowley's concern and also noted that there had been a commitment to significant public discussion on the next waste contract, which had been insufficient for this very complex issue. A major decision has been made, she said, and the WC and town have not had a chance to review the supporting financial analysis. Chair Epstein said that Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Mr. Marcotte is highly experienced in this area and presumably also had information from other towns to help guide the decision-making process.

Member Weis asked if there was an "action path" for the WC to follow? Chair Epstein replied that the decision has been made and the WC should be prepared to address the subject of the trash collection contract in its report to Town Meeting. He added that he too was surprised how brief the public discussion process was. There was only one meeting in June and then another last week (when the vote was taken). Member Dionne stated that the WC seems to be lacking pertinent information on this issue. This is important given that another operating override may be down the road and the WC will want to be able to say that it has scrubbed the town's budget for every penny.

Chair Epstein suggested that the Public Service Subcommittee gather relevant data on solid waste costs to be able to expand the discussion in the WC report to Town Meeting.

Ms. Marshall noted that the least costly method was not necessarily the one pursued. The effort was to explore all of the options before a new bid was put out. Residents wanted the Board to explore various options. It came down to the three options: status quo, PAYT, and the automated service. Automated offered the best solution for the most people, given all of the fiscal challenges facing the town. Trash, she said, is a very personal issue. Both cost savings and efficiency are expected under the automated system. The old barrels can be used for recycling material and new barrels will need to be purchased. The effort was to reduce trash and increase recycling. The town will receive education on this change, which will not take place until this summer at the earliest.

Chair Epstein cited DPW Director Marcotte's expectation that automated collection tends to reduce overall trash picked up. However, he noted that Belmont is already quite efficient right now and wondered about the potential for further reduction in trash volume.

The PAYT option was then briefly explored. Chair Epstein requested that the Public Service subcommittee continue to monitor this issue and that the WC be apprised and informed, as necessary. Member Lubien said that the Public Service subcommittee will likely meet soon.

***Formation of Project Study Groups (Budget, IT, Public Safety, etc.)***

### *Long-Term Budget Forecasting*

Chair Epstein stated that the WC requires a better understanding of the budget shortfalls expected in the next few years. Several potential debt exclusions will come before the voters (including the high school, library, etc.) as well as the effect of pension/OPEB funding obligations and other budgetary pressures. He suggested that a Budget Forecast Study Group be formed to get better informed about longer-term budget issues and forecasts. Member Gammill added that school and town employee contract negotiations are the major driver for the future budgets. This topic (collective bargaining and the potential for any future WC role in contract negotiations) was briefly explored. Member Fallon noted that the WC Chair in the past has made a presentation to the School Committee in advance of contract negotiations.

The issue of the work, findings, and impetus of the Financial Task Force (FTF) was raised. Member Lisanke said that the Financial Task Force effectively no longer exists; it last met in January of 2015. Ms. Marshall added that an "implementation committee" was envisioned as a way to implement the FTF's recommendations. She noted that the Recreation Strategic Study Group is an example of the FTF's work moving forward. There was consensus that the town should have a multi-year forecasted budget with expectations around OPEB, Pension, salary impacts, etc. The WC should be a part of discussions about budget forecasting (along with the School Committee, the Town Administrator's Office, etc.).

Chair Epstein asked to receive emails from those WC members who are interested in being a part of a Budget Forecast Study Group.

### *Information Technology (IT)*

Chair Epstein then broached the topic of forming a Public Safety IT Study Group to look at software (to generate departmental reports), among other issues. He suggested that the WC take the initiative on this. Member Helgen provided some background information on the issue of how the town can more efficiently use the technology that it has purchased, especially as it relates to the Public Service departments. Chair Epstein said that it will be helpful to identify the IT challenges that the Police and Fire departments are currently facing. Ms. Marshall noted that, while this is a challenge for Public Service, those departments are committed to learning more about the software, without requesting to hire additional staffing.

Member Fallon said that it would be helpful to enlarge the focus of this study group to encompass all of the town's IT needs, and noted that these needs (of various departments) are very difficult to balance from a Capital Budget Committee point of view. It is costly to update the IT infrastructure. The WC needs to be better equipped to approach the town's IT needs as a financial analysis issue.

The WC discussed issues relating to IT in town. Member Doyle asked whether there was

any coordination among town departments on IT issues. Member Schreiber indicated that the town departments do work together, but that the WC could do a better job working across departments on IT issues. Ms. Marshall provided some additional background information on the topic.

Chair Epstein again requested emails from WC members interested in serving on an IT study group, which may focus on the public safety agencies, but could have a larger town-wide focus.

### ***Updates: Board of Selectmen and School Committee***

There were no reports.

### ***Public Contributions***

Mr. Kim Slack, a member of Sustainable Belmont, spoke to the PAYT trash collection option. He stated that the BOS did not include PAYT in the RFP. The consequence will be that of four options under review – (1) status quo (no changes), (2) automated trash collection with 64-gallon containers, (3) automated trash collection with 35-gallon containers, and (4) PAYT – only one option, automated with 64-gallon containers, will get bids. Mr. Slack said that the WC will want to understand more fully the fiscal impact of not including an option for PAYT in the RFP, and suggested that the WC should offer advice to the BOS regarding the RFP process. Mr. Slack noted that there is a “political” dimension to the issue, too, with a looming town budget deficit and new trash barrels that will need to be purchased at a cost of \$500,000 or more. Does this option really represent a cost savings, he asked. Trash reduction is unlikely to occur with a 64-gallon barrel, as most Belmont households already dispose of much less trash. He requested that the WC advise the Board to reconsider its recent decision.

Chair Epstein replied based on his understanding of the DPW’s perspective on this issue. PAYT will be looked at again in about 2 years. The WC was not invited to be part of the process to develop the RFP. He did not think it was appropriate for the WC to impede the RFP process at this stage. Member McLaughlin agreed and stated that the role of the WC is not to advise the Board: the WC advises Town Meeting. Chair Epstein added that the WC will keep an eye on the RFP process and the waste issue generally, as well as how the new system compares to the old system, going forward.

### ***Adjournment***

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 9:29 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
WC Recording Secretary