

**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

2017 NOV -6 PM 2:10

**OCTOBER 25, 2017, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Epstein; Members Alcock, Crowley, Dionne, Doyle, Fallon, Gammill, Helgen, Lisanke, Lubien, McLaughlin, Schreiber, Slap, Weis and School Committee Chair Fiore

Members Absent: Libenson, Interim Town Administrator Marshall, BOS Chair Williams

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

Chair Epstein began by reviewing the evening's agenda. He then turned to the October 3 Board of Selectmen meeting. He indicated that one of the selectmen at that meeting stated that he (Chair Epstein) "puts people on a stopwatch" at WC meetings. Chair Epstein noted that this statement is not accurate. Discussions among WC members are not stopped, except at 9:15 p.m. to let any members of the public have an opportunity to speak. When there is a tight schedule with many speakers, he explained, he sometimes will limit time for formal presentations in order to allow for questions – but speakers have never had less than ten minutes.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 10/18/17 were approved with two abstentions.

Modular Acquisition Discussion with Superintendent Phelan

Superintendent Phelan reviewed the enrollment increases, which are averaging about 106 students per year. Each grade, going forward, is likely to average about 360 students in it. The district has taken measures to increase space and capacity. Teaching staff has needed to be added at the elementary levels as a result of the increasing enrollment. There are currently 4,531 students in the district – not including Pre-K or out-of-district students. Enrollment is increasing faster than the added FTEs (20 teaching positions). He explained the repurposing (of space) efforts across the district.

Superintendent Phelan noted that, in an attempt to deal with the burgeoning enrollment, twelve modular units have already been placed: six at BHS and six at CMS. Burbank will be the next site for the placement of four modular units.

He then reviewed the plans for the Burbank area, which would include expanding the parking lot and repaving the blacktop play area. This infrastructure work is long overdue, he said, regardless of the placement of modular units. This work is being done in conjunction with planning for a new BHS building, which, under one scenario, might possibly involve housing grades 7-12. The modular units may be temporary, but could

also need to see longer use.

Superintendent Phelan reviewed the cost for this work, which totals \$2,597,255. He explained the breakdown of the costs.

The WC asked questions and discussed issues relating to the Superintendent's presentation. It was noted that more Modular units may need to be placed at the Chenery. Superintendent Phelan continued to discuss the increasing enrollment. About 30-40 students needed to be re-districted this year, i.e., sent to elementary schools not located in their neighborhoods.

Chair Epstein raised the issue of what would happen if Town Meeting (TM) does not approve this article. Superintendent Phelan noted that class sizes would need to increase and that after-care spaces might need to be re-considered as well (as they are getting very crowded).

Member Gammill referenced an earlier School Department document that described two options for the modules, at Burbank and at Butler. Superintendent Phelan explained some of the thinking that led to the units being placed at the Burbank. Concerning timing (and assuming TM approves this), he said that the Burbank work would begin next Spring, with the bulk of it being done over the summer.

Member Gammill also asked about the funding of the project as well as the bidding process. Members responded that the Director of Facilities, Gerry Boyle, would oversee the project. Member Gammill noted that the budget line item "Utilities – Base" included improvements to the Burbank site in addition to connecting the utilities to the modular, and asked that these different types of expenses be listed separately. Member Gammill asked about the provisioning of the new classrooms, which is not included in the \$2,597,255 budget presented tonight – how much would that be, and which school fund(s) would be used to pay for these items? Superintendent Phelan said that the budget for these items has not yet been prepared, and expected some materials to be provided from existing supplies instead of purchased new. He also said that the Schools's Facilities Rental revolving fund might be used for this work.

Member Fallon asked if the impact of a 9-12-*only* configuration (for the new BHS building project) on the elementary schools has been fully explored. Member Doyle asked about the FTE impact on the budget with the burgeoning enrollment. She asked if new administrators would need to be hired. The Superintendent noted that more FTE support is needed, in general.

Chair Epstein raised the topic of the financing of the Modular Units. The Superintendent indicated that this has been discussed but was not settled as of now. Chair Epstein stated his expectation that the means of paying for the modulars would be addressed at the Special Town Meeting. Member Gammill stated that the financing will likely involve the borrowing of money. Chair Epstein noted that the Modular financing strategy is not currently carved in stone.

Member Gammill stated that meeting minutes were not available for the Space Task Force meetings. He noted that the Space Task Force neither kept minutes nor posted agendas. Superintendent Phelan disagreed that the School Department is not being transparent. The Finance Subcommittee, he continued, has welcomed Member Gammill into its meetings and has done its best to provide answers to his questions. Minutes are taken at all of the School Committee meetings and the SC meetings are both posted and open to the public. He added that the meetings with the Burbank and Butler communities were also open meetings and posted. Member Gammill stated that he was not able to gather information about the Space Task Force's work.

Chair Epstein asked Member Gammill if he had a question that had not been answered. Member Gammill asked who is the chair of the School Committee Finance Subcommittee. School Committee Chair Fiore responded that there is no chair, as is the custom for all School Committee subcommittees.

Member Doyle raised a question about the DPW, Police Station, and BHS timing for debt exclusions and funding strategies. Future debt service (as a result of potential debt exclusions), the town's debt capacity, the certified free cash amount, and debt service coming off the books were topics briefly explored.

Update: Major Capital Projects Working Group (MCPWG) Work

Chair Epstein noted that the group is working on its report to TM. The report will be ready for distribution soon. Member Weis asked if there was an update on the Police Station (short-term plan), specifically the elevator issue. Member Fallon noted that the refinement of the plan for the elevator is something the Building Committee will tackle, as it will be responsible for completion of the design work.

Update: Proposed IT and Budget Forecast Study Groups

Chair Epstein said he may structure these groups a bit differently, in light of the new Open Meeting Law (OML) guidelines. Also, the Interim Town Administrator is very busy right now and he did not want to add to her workload at this time. Therefore, while these are both worthwhile activities, they may need to wait until the new year.

Updates: Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Minuteman

Member McLaughlin asked if the Chair of the BOS was planning to attend the WC meetings in the future. Member Epstein said the BOS Chair has communicated that he reviews the WC agendas and will attend when he deems it appropriate to attend. Member McLaughlin indicated that the town bylaws designate the BOS Chair to be a member of the WC, and that his attendance is needed for the WC's work. He suggested that a motion be put forth, by the WC, that expresses its displeasure at not having the BOS Chair present for WC meetings. Several iterations of the motion were offered.

Member McLaughlin moved: That since the WC values the active involvement of the BOS Chair, it would like to express its displeasure – to the BOS Chair – in his not attending WC meetings. The WC urges him to attend, but if he does not wish to attend meetings, the WC requests that he appoint a Board of Selectmen designee.

There was consensus that not having a Board member attend WC meetings inhibits the functioning of the WC. Member Dionne added that the BOS Chair attends WC meetings for the benefit of the WC and the town. It is the means by which the WC is informed of the Board's thinking. Member Schreiber added that, while it has been a longstanding practice that the BOS Chair attend WC meetings, it does not have to be the Chair in attendance, but an alternate Board representative could be designated.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Contributions

None.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to end the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary