

**RECEIVED
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BELMONT, MA**

DATE: February 2, 2022
TIME: 9:07 AM

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 26, 2022
7:30pm**



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

Call to Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting of the Warrant Committee to order at 7:31pm.

Call to Order: Mr. Epstein called the meeting of the Select Board to order at 7:31pm.

Call to Order: Ms. Mahoney called the meeting of the Capital Budget Committee to order at 7:32pm.

Call to Order: Ms. Checkoway called the meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:32pm.

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	Yes
Jennifer Fallon	Yes	Ellen Schreiber	Yes
Elizabeth Goss	Yes	Laurie Slap	Yes
Daniel Halston	Yes	Jack Weis	Yes
Anne Helgen	Yes	Select Board	
Capital Budget Committee		Adam Dash, Chair	Yes
Anne Marie Mahoney, Chair	Yes	Roy Epstein, Vice Chair	Yes
Rebecca Vose, Secretary	Yes	Mark Paolillo,	Yes
Patricia Brusch	?	School Committee	
Karl Haglund, Planning Board Representative	?	Amy Checkoway, Chair	Yes
Staff		Meghan Moriarty, Secretary (Representative to CBC)	Yes
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Catherine Bowen	Yes
		Michael Crowley	Yes
		Jamal Saeh (Representative to Warrant Comm.)	Yes
		Ralph Jones	Yes

Joint Meeting with the Select Board, School Committee, and Capital Budget Committee to review and discuss the Financial Indicators presentation by the Communications Working Group.

Ms. Schreiber (Chair of the Communications Working Group) explained that their goal is to communicate financial matters to residents and Town Meeting Members. One of the ways the Subcommittee has approached this goal is to create a 10-year financial history of Town finances to provide a new perspective. The audience for this endeavor is the Committees, Town Meeting, and the community at large. The plan is to update this history each year and have it available in early fall, before the budget process begins. This should be particularly helpful for Town Meeting Members.

Ms. Helgen said this type of report was a recommendation of the Financial Task Force, which helped jump start this effort. She explained how they had looked at other towns to get ideas on the history.

Ms. Slap pointed out that the document is still in draft form, and they are looking for suggestions and input.

She provided an overview of the document, which includes:

- Population growth information.
- Revenue picture in total.

- Revenue details including:
 - Property Tax
 - State Aid
 - State & Federal Covid Funding
 - Economic Growth
- Expenditures including:
 - Personnel Costs
 - Collective Bargaining (including contract details)
 - Employee Benefits
 - Full Time Equivalent Employees (FTEs)
 - School Enrollments
 - Pension Liability
 - Retirement Participants
 - OPEB Liability (Retiree Health Insurance)
 - Long Term Debt Detail (Excluded & Non-Exempt)
 - Long Term Debt (Percent of Total Assessed Value)
 - Debt Service
 - Appropriated Discretionary Capital
 - Other Capital Funds (non-general fund)
- Certified Free Cash
- Total Operating Reserves
- Use of Non-Recurring Funds in Budget
- Appendix
 - Info on comparison towns and how they were chosen

Ms. Slap said the Committee hopes to add a feature allowing items to be flagged for deeper consideration.

Ms. Schreiber said the goal of this report was to present just the facts, but the Committee hopes that when it is finalized there can be a process to interpret this information for use in budgeting choices. They see this as a way to see the trends and then in the future discuss what they mean.

Mr. Paolillo said the data is great, but interpretation of it in the future is critical. He talked about a Financial Summit to do priority-based budgeting, which this information could support.

Ms. Checkoway asked which committees were involved in the Financial Summits of other towns and said that she would like to hear more about that. Ms. Helgen explained Lexington's Financial Summit process.

Mr. Levin said he would like to see the Scorecard implemented which would be very helpful to Town Meeting members, which may lead to more productive Town Meetings. Ms. Helgen said they will develop a process to do that and explained how other Town's did it.

Ms. Schreiber reviewed some of the components of a Financial Summit that would need to be worked out. She said pulling together the data is the "easy" part (although it was a very big job) but interpreting it is the big job.

Mr. Crowley said he thinks this information is great as context but isn't clear about how it relates to the budget and assigning resources. Mr. Lubien explained that this provides the groundwork for other conversations, but how to incorporate this and create a better process going forward is being discussed.

Ms. Schreiber said use will also change as people become familiar with using history and more comfortable with the information.

Ms. Fallon said that as a communication tool it might be useful to include fees and outside grants.

Mr. Epstein asked if the indicators used are more or less than used in other towns and asked what the basis for selection was. He also asked if there are examples of analytical conclusions reached by the other towns. Ms. Helgen said the Belmont report is very similar to other towns and explained some of the minor differences. She said trend summaries are used as a basis for their budget discussions. Ms. Slap provided some examples of how this could be done in Belmont and was done in other towns.

Mr. McLaughlin asked how this can be made attractive so other people will read it. Ms. Helgen explained some ideas the Committee has to achieve this.

Ms. Schreiber added that the interpretation of the report is what's important rather than the physical report, especially the conversations that are started. This is where people will be pulled in.

Ms. Read asked if they saw any measurement of efficiency in other town's reports. Ms. Helgen said there is some data from the DOR, but it's unclear that comparisons (for example between school systems) are accurate.

Mr. Halston said the appendices are something that anyone can easily understand. He thinks including some of these in the newspaper would be helpful to the larger community.

Ms. Bowen pointed out that the designation "Single Family Tax Bill" might not be clear and asked if there is another way to identify this type of domicile since about half of the residents in Belmont live in multi-family dwellings. Ms. Helgen said she doesn't think there is data that breaks that down.

Ms. Goss said there could be an "Ask the Expert" article and said there are a variety of ways to share this data.

Public Comment

Bill Anderson asked Mr. Halston to clarify his comment about assessed property values. Mr. Helston said he was looking at the appendices showing tax bills and values going up. Mr. Anderson said the rate of income increases and their disconnect between values needs to be considered. Mr. Lubien said the point of the graph in the appendix is to reflect the assessed market value forces, which are out of the control of the Town.

Ms. Dionne clarified how the tax levy works on individual homes and the impact on tax bills.

Mr. Saeh said it might be worthwhile to add information about taxes as percent of income, with other towns as a comparison.

Mr. Epstein pointed out that Mr. Anderson's question has launched the type of discussion that the Committee hoped would start because of the document.

Ms. Bowen asked if broader historical context should be included.

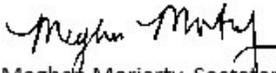
Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Paolillo moved to adjourn the meeting of the Select Board. Mr. Epstein seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by rollcall vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31pm.

Motion: Ms. Mahoney moved to adjourn the meeting of the Capital Budget Committee. Ms. Moriarty seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by rollcall vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32pm.

Motion: Ms. Bowen moved to adjourn the meeting of the School Committee. Ms. Checkoway seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by rollcall vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

Accepted and Approved by SC:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary