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Minutes of the
BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING
Belmont Gallery of Art, Homer Building, 19 Moore Street, Belmont,
January 7, 2026

Warrant Committee Members	Present	Staff Members	Present
Paul Rickter, Chair	Present	Hilton Madevu-Matson, Member	Present
Conor McEachern, Vice-Chair	Present	Melissa Morley, Member	Present
Bill Anderson, Secretary	Present	Corinne McCue Olmsted, Member	Absent
Tom Caputo, Member	Present	Lynn Peterson-Read, Member	Present
Sue Croy, Member	Present	Marie Warner, Member	Present
Andrew Flamang, Member	Present	Jack Weis, Member	Present
Deepak Garg, Member	Present	Matt Taylor, Ex-Officio, Select Board Chair	Present
Anne Helgen, Member	Present	Meg Moirarty, Ex-Officio, School Committee Chair	Present
Mark Kagan, Member	Present		
Staff Members	Present	Others Present	Present
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Present		

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rickter called the meeting of the Warrant Committee to order at 7:30 PM.

Working session on Warrant Committee report on Belmont Center Overlay project

Mr. Rickter reviewed the overall fiscal framework being used in the draft report, explaining that the analysis focuses on a limited number of core variables: projected new property tax revenue at full build-out, current baseline property tax revenue from parcels within the overlay, ancillary revenues (including motor vehicle excise tax), municipal service costs, school-age children costs, and the resulting net municipal fiscal impact.

He emphasized that while some values (such as current property tax revenue) are known with certainty, others are inherently estimates and may be best presented as ranges rather than single point values

Committee members discussed the importance of presenting the fiscal information in a way that is accessible to Town Meeting members, including the possible use of visual summaries and an executive summary to clearly convey assumptions and outcomes.

The Committee reviewed draft assumptions regarding projected residential and commercial property values, noting that the current model relies on assumptions previously developed by Town staff and consultants. Members discussed whether assumptions related to per-square-foot valuation, unit mix, and motor vehicle ownership may understate potential revenue, while also recognizing constraints unique to Belmont Center, including limited parking availability and restrictions on curb cuts

Several members emphasized that the Committee's role is not to substitute its own development proposal but to stress-test the existing model and identify where assumptions may bias results upward or downward. There was general agreement that the report should clearly distinguish between consultant assumptions and the Committee's observations or alternative scenarios.

The Committee discussed municipal cost assumptions, including police, fire, public works, library, and other general services. Members noted that the current model assumes relatively limited variable municipal costs and discussed whether this approach may understate impacts associated with population growth. Enterprise funds, including water, sewer, and recreation, were discussed, with clarification that increased usage in those areas is largely offset through user fees rather than the operating budget

Several members suggested that, rather than attempting to precisely model each incremental cost, the report could include sensitivity scenarios assuming higher overall municipal costs (e.g., a 5% or 10% increase) to demonstrate how results would change under more conservative assumptions.

Considerable discussion focused on assumptions regarding school-age children generated by new residential units. Members reviewed alternative methodologies for estimating per-student costs and debated whether assumptions embedded in consultant models may overstate marginal costs due to the "lumpy" nature of school staffing and enrollment changes. The Committee discussed using a conservative per-student cost while also presenting a range of possible outcomes and sensitivity analyses reflecting different unit mixes and child-per-unit ratios

Members also discussed the limited fiscal offset from state Chapter 70 aid for additional students, noting that Belmont is a minimum-aid district and that incremental state revenue per student would be minimal.

Throughout the discussion, members emphasized that the fiscal impact of the overlay zoning appears modest relative to the Town's overall budget and that reasonable variations in assumptions yield outcomes ranging from slightly positive to slightly negative. Several members stressed that the report should clearly communicate that the zoning decision should not hinge solely on fiscal impacts, but rather on broader planning, land-use, and community considerations, with fiscal analysis serving as contextual information rather than a determinative factor

The Committee agreed that draft sections would be revised to incorporate feedback from the working session, including clearer explanations of assumptions, expanded sensitivity analyses, and a more prominent summary of key conclusions. Members indicated that a revised draft would be circulated in advance of the next meeting for further review.

Administrative matters, including review and approval of minutes (if any)

Other topics unanticipated by the Chair

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Doug Koplow suggested that the Committee clearly distinguish in its report between data drawn directly from RKG or Town analyses and the Committee's own evaluation of that data. Mr. Koplow also encouraged the Committee to post draft analyses in advance of meetings, if feasible, to assist public review. Finally, Mr. Koplow questioned whether Town data on school-age children by address could be used to improve accuracy, noting that such data may provide a more reliable basis than regression analysis.

Rena Fonseca thanked the Warrant Committee for its thorough analysis and raised three concerns: that substantial mixed-use development is already possible under existing zoning and special permit authority, questioning the need to remove additional regulatory barriers; that the Committee's analysis shows the fiscal impact of the overlay would be modest at best and potentially negative and that this should be clearly communicated to Town Meeting; and that assumptions regarding school-age children should account for the possibility of children living in one-bedroom units due to housing affordability pressures.

ADJOURN

Mr. Rickter adjourned the meeting at 9:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

James Goudie-Murray

Recording Secretary