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To: Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator, Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administration

CC: Mark Paolillo, Roy Epstein, Adam Dash, Select Board; Geoff Lubien, Chair, Warrant Committee, Chris Doyle, Chair, Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee, Paul Rickter, Chair Structural Change Implementation Group, Meg Moriarty, Chair School Committee

Proposal for Sustainability Grant Manager in FY 2024 Town Budget

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: *The Belmont Energy Committee recommends the Town hire a .75 FTE position title “Sustainability Grant Manager” (SGM) in the FY 2024 Town budget. Based on the experience of other MA towns (Table 1), the position will generate grant and incentive revenue at least equal to the fully loaded cost of the position the first year and between 2 and 6 times the cost of the position by year three. Our survey of several communities demonstrated that hiring a SGM to be very beneficial not only to reducing those towns’ carbon footprint, but also to their financial bottom line by reducing energy demand and costs. For example, the Town may take advantage of generous Green Community Act and other federal/state grant opportunities.*

Making the Case: The Belmont Energy Committee proposes the creation of a .75 FTE Sustainability Grant Manager (“SGM”) position beginning in FY2024.

The town’s experience as a Green Community highlights the need for an SGM. Belmont is eligible to receive at least \$250,000 per year in Green Community grants. We applied for and received two grants in 2016 and 2017 for over \$500,000. It is our understanding that Belmont has not applied for a Green Communities grant in the last 6 years. This means the Town has likely passed up on receiving as much as \$1.5 million between FY2018 and FY2023. These grants fund weatherization, energy efficiency, heat pumps, and help with the purchase of electric vehicles and chargers. All of these are important to our climate action objectives. It is likely Town staff currently lack the bandwidth to effectively focus on seeking and managing grants and other opportunities for decarbonization efforts. The Town Administrator warned that the Town lacks sufficient staff time to manage additional grant-funded projects (Structural Change Report, Idea 23, p29). The Energy Committee proposes that the SGM’s job description include project management and coordination of grant implementation.

The Energy Committee has made Town staff aware of funding opportunities as it learns of them. Three recent examples of recent grant opportunities include:

- (i) the availability of Alternative Energy Credits for the ground source heat pumps installed at the high school/middle school; estimated value of \$30,000/year.
- (ii) state incentives for the town to electrify their vehicle fleets estimated value of \$7,500/vehicle up to 50 vehicles.
- (iii) upcoming federal rebates equal to over 25% of the cost of Belmont’s solar arrays on the high school/middle school and the new library. Estimated value; \$600,000 for

the high school/middle school Phase I 1MW array, \$153,000 for Phase II 300kW array; library TDB

What we learned from other communities: The Energy Committee researched at least 28 communities in MA and interviewed staff at eight of those communities (Table 2). Arlington was especially notable – its sustainability manager has helped generate \$1.4 million in grant revenue to the town in the last 4 years that resulted in energy savings of over \$100,000/year.

Many towns and cities in Massachusetts have hired dedicated sustainability grant positions to advance their efforts to decarbonize their municipal footprints, while also lowering their energy spending (Table 2 shows those municipalities in eastern Massachusetts). We surveyed the starred municipalities shown in Table 2 and reached the following key conclusions:

- Sustainability grant managers provide significant financial returns (Appendix A), which were reported to us as averaging between 2 and 6 times the combined salary and benefits of a sustainability staff position. (Note we have not independently confirmed these numbers but see Duffy, 2017; *Added Capacity: A Cost vs. Benefit Analysis of Municipal Energy Managers in Massachusetts* for similar information).
- SGMs typically report to the Town Manager or Mayor’s Office to maximize visibility and collaboration across all departments.
- All communities surveyed felt positive about their decision to hire a sustainability grants manager.
- In speaking with SGMs in Eastern Massachusetts, we found them to be very willing to share ideas, opportunities, and grant proposals with other SGMs, which would allow a new Belmont SGM to get up to speed quickly.

Draft Job Description:

The Sustainability Grant Manager, under the supervision of Belmont’s Town Administrator, develops and administers programs, policies and initiatives to advance Belmont’s energy sustainability profile in all residential, commercial, and municipal sectors. The SGM advances Belmont’s commitment to reduce carbon emissions 80% by 2050; implement Belmont’s 2009 Climate Action Plan, the 2018 Roadmap and any updated plans. Coordinates closely with Town Committees and Boards, including the Energy Committee. Establishes benchmarks and metrics for measuring Belmont’s sustainability performance and documents progress in meeting the metrics established in the Climate Action Plan, the Climate Roadmap and any updated plans.

Conclusion and Recommendation: The Energy Committee strongly encourages the Town to hire an SGM beginning in FY 2024 to generate grant revenue for the Town far in excess of the cost and to advance the Town’s climate and fiscal goals.

EXHIBITS

Table 1: Examples of some climate funding opportunities relevant to Belmont

- Alternative Energy Credits (AEC) for ground source heat pumps at the high School/middle School
- Green Communities grants for EVs, EV infrastructure, and energy efficiency improvements to municipal buildings.
- The coming “Green Communities 2.0” grant, called “Climate Leaders.” In return for more funding, Green Communities will need to go further than required to be a Green Community, including Town Meeting adopting the specialized stretch energy code and a “EV-First” municipal fleet policy
- EOEAA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grants.
- DOER Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grants.
- MAPC Accelerating Climate Resilience (ACR) grants.
- MassDEP Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (EVIP) grants for both vehicles and charging infrastructure.
- US EPA Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants (for municipal fleet vehicles including but not limited to school buses).
- 2023 Inflation Reduction Act grants for municipal renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

Table 2: Municipalities in eastern Massachusetts having sustainability managers or are in the process of hiring that position.

Acton *	Medford
Arlington*	Natick
Amesbury	Newton
Andover (Coordinator)	Quincy
Bedford (Hiring)	Salem
Beverly*	Sherborn (Coordinator)
Boston	Somerville
Brookline (Administrator)	Waltham
Cambridge	Wellesley
Carlisle (Hiring)*	Westford *
Chelmsford	Weston
Concord (Hiring)*	Winchester*
Framingham	Worcester (Manager)
Holliston	
Lexington *	

* Denotes communities that the Energy Committee interviewed by phone and/or email

Appendix A: Grants obtained by some sustainability managers in other towns since 2018. Most impressive are the results of our neighboring town of Arlington:

Arlington: Recorded **\$1,436,000** of grants between 2018 and 2022 (so far) plus average annual utility savings during that time of over \$106,000

- 2018 DOER Green Communities grant \$210,290.
- 2019 DOER Green Communities grant \$98,052.
- 2019 Net Zero Planning grant. \$150K grant, \$50,000 allocated to Arlington. From EOEEA, administered by MAPC.
- 2020 DOER Green Communities grant \$100,000.
- 2020 MassDEP Volkswagen Settlement Open Solicitation grant \$275,656
- 2020 MassCEC ACTNow EV bus grant \$176,000
- 2021 DOER Green Communities grant \$99,632.
- 2021 EPA Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant for two electric school buses \$326,000
- 2022 Green Communities grant \$100,000

Beverly: Awarded nearly **\$11 million** in sustainability and other grants. Beverly has gone all in on obtaining grants with good success. They have a full-time grants director and sustainability director and are looking to hire a project manager for sustainability related projects.

- For FY22, they were awarded \$6.3M in grants
- For FY23-Q1, they are on track to receive \$5.8M in overall grant funding. Note that Beverly's grant numbers (above) include amounts for initiatives beyond sustainability.

Concord: **\$1,062,000 in grants** 2018-2021 including MA Green Communities, MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program, Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grant, VW Open Solicitation grant.

Natick: Between 2019-2022 received **\$1,581,000** in climate action related grants.

Wellesley: Awarded **\$200,000** in 2021 Green Communities grants for heat pumps, LED lighting, police vehicles.

Winchester: Recorded **\$255,000** in grants awarded in 2022

- MassDEP EV Incentive Program DC Fast Charging station grant: \$103,000
- Green Communities grant for energy efficiency projects: \$100,000
- MAPC Accelerating Climate Resilience (ACR) grant: \$52,000

Appendix B: The link between SGM and the Town's Climate Action Goals

While the Town has adopted meaningful climate goals, including Town Meeting approval of the Belmont Climate Action Plan in 2009 and the Belmont Climate Roadmap in 2019, our actions, to date, have not been sufficient to put us on track to achieve our stated goal of an 80% reduction in carbon emissions compared to 2005 levels. An energy inventory conducted by the Energy Committee (Town of Belmont, CO2 Emission Inventory Update, March 2016) showed that, while Belmont's carbon emissions were decreasing between 2005 and 2014, the rate of decline was insufficient to meet our goal of 80% emission reductions by 2050. The town has continued to take actions to decarbonize our infrastructure, including, most significantly, the construction of an all-electric high school/middle school, which promises to be a zero net energy building. However, much more needs to be done and hiring a dedicated SGM is an essential step to advancing both our Town's climate and fiscal goals.

The Commonwealth and the federal government have recognized the urgency to accelerate decarbonization and are now providing significant funding and other opportunities, such as earned energy credit programs, solar investment tax credits, the EPA's Electric School bus awards, and other incentives under the recently passed Federal Inflation Reduction Act. Table 1 lists these and other funding programs available to Belmont. The SGM would work with municipal, commercial, and residential sectors of the town to identifying projects, programs, and funding sources for decarbonization and electrification across the Town's built environment and transportation sectors that are consistent with the Town's designation in 2014 as a Green Community. The SGM would manage funded projects to completion. For the Town to take full advantage of the myriad existing and new grant programs necessitates a focused staff expert, rather than leaving these initiatives to other Town staff who are already overburdened and understaffed managing their existing responsibilities. Many of the energy grants have short application periods and require significant preparation, which this position would provide, on top of focused grant writing and project management.