

Minutes of Joint Meeting Belvidere Selectboard and Planning Commission

March 10, 2022

Meeting convened at 6:36 PM and adjourned at 7:49 PM. This was an in-person and ZOOM hybrid meeting, hosted by Planning Commission Chair, Fran Leavitt.

Members present via ZOOM (Selectboard) Kevin Leavitt and Earl Domina Jr. (Planning Commission) Fran Leavitt, Mary Hysick, Kathy Marchant, and Ken Adams Jr. Also present were LCPC board member Carol Caldwell-Edmonds, and Town Clerk Cathy Mander-Adams. In person attendees at the Town Clerk's Office were Ken Adams Jr., Earl Domina Jr., Carol Caldwell-Edmonds, and Cathy Mander-Adams.

Motion by Ken to accept the minutes of the January 12th joint meeting of the Belvidere Selectboard and Planning Commission as written; 2nd by Fran; motion carried with Mary abstaining.

Motion by Fran to accept the minutes of the January 13th meeting of the Belvidere Planning Commission as written; 2nd by Ken; 3 yes votes from BPC members with Mary abstaining, which raised question of the need for a quorum (4) of yes votes to pass this motion. This action was tabled briefly during meeting while Carol found information on the internet which supported the position that a quorum is needed to conduct a meeting, but an abstention is neither counted as a yes nor no vote and voting by those members present can move action forward. Motion was revisited and carried.

Based on his conversation with the Town's attorney, Brian Monaghan, Earl presented a report on the governance of joint meetings and Brian's advice on the formation of an ARPA steering committee:

- Joint meetings held among municipal boards require a quorum of each board present to conduct business
- Brian advised on limiting the number of members of a steering committee for practicality and efficiency of management
- Brian suggested that the BPC could function as the steering committee, or a committee could be formed consisting of several BPC members and several volunteers from Belvidere's residents.
- Once the steering committee is defined, a schedule of status reporting to the Selectboard should be created.

Carol Caldwell-Edmonds volunteered to serve on the ARPA steering committee, indicating that, as a member of the LCPC and representative to Lamoille Fibernet, she could offer comments received from Belvidere businesses, from LCPC, and from Lamoille Fibernet, regarding ARPA funds. For example, Carol had received a comment from Belvidere business owner, Joe Russo, that he has towers on his property that could possibly be used for cell phone service. Mary added that a previous Town Meeting survey conducted by the BPC showed strong local interest in improving cell phone service in Belvidere.

Kevin's opinion is that creating and managing an ARPA steering committee should not be complicated, and that if the BPC is comfortable serving as the steering committee, they should be allowed to "do their job." Earl indicated the Selectboard should remove itself from the steering committee, and if BPC wishes to take the lead role in forming an ARPA committee that would be OK. Earl suggested the BPC should hold a discussion on this in their own meeting.

Cathy Mander-Adams also volunteered to serve on the ARPA steering committee. Neither she nor Carol have been appointed as of this meeting.

Mary stressed the importance of including Belvidere residents in the ARPA discussion.

Based on his conversation with LCPC director, Tasha Wallis, Earl presented a report on the status of finalizing Belvidere's Hazard Mitigation Plan:

- Apparent uncertainty exists among LCPC, Belvidere Planning Commission, and Belvidere Selectboard as to which Town board should be responsible for finalizing the Hazard Mitigation Plan and conducting a public hearing for the plan's adoption.
- Earl explained that historically the Selectboard and Road Commissioner had been working with Lea at LCPC to complete a revised plan. Confusion arose when Lea's replacement, novice LCPC member Sal Morales, asked the Planning Commission instead of the Selectboard to organize a public hearing to finalize the plan.
- Tasha informed Earl that, as far as the LCPC is concerned, either the BPC or SB can be responsible for conducting the hearing.
- Earl recommended that the Belvidere Selectboard finish the adoption process of this Hazard Mitigation Plan revision, and the Belvidere Planning Commission consider managing the next plan revision in 5 more years.
- Consensus of the Planning Commission is for the Selectboard to proceed with the public hearing and final adoption process.

Motion by Kevin to adjourn the Selectboard portion of the joint meeting at 7:05 PM; 2nd by Earl; motion carried.

In the Planning Commission portion of the meeting, discussion ensued among the BPC members, Cathy Mander-Adams, and Carol Caldwell-Edmonds as to what the next steps in forming a committee without Selectboard participation might be. Uncertainty remained as to whether the BPC should act solely as the ARPA steering committee, or to include residents to serve as well.

Kathy Marchant suggested an outreach campaign to residents to 1) ask residents if they are interested in serving on the ARPA committee, and 2) if they have any suggestions for ARPA projects; Ken suggested this idea might work better if handled with two separate outreach campaigns.

Consensus determined that more guidance is needed from the Selectboard on its perception of what the committee's purpose should be, and that the Selectboard suggest a mission statement for the committee. Carol stated that LCPC staff members are ready to advise municipalities on committee functions, and that LCPC is available for help in dealing with the ARPA funds. Kathy Marchant suggested that Carol seek guidance from LCPC and that Ken seek guidance from the Selectboard. Fran offered a draft statement for Ken to present to the Selectboard:

The Belvidere Planning Commission has been charged by the Belvidere Selectboard with steering the ARPA funds projects to ensure ARPA money is spent according to ARPA guidelines, and to recommend possible projects to the Selectboard based on the steering committee's outreach to the Belvidere community.

Motion by Fran to adjourn at 7:49 PM; 2nd by Kathy; motion carried.