

Belmont Public Schools

Responses to Questions Raised at the February 23, 2022 Warrant Committee Meeting regarding the FY23 Budget

Update for 3/8/22 Finance Subcommittee Meeting:

Responses which have not yet been discussed are shaded in yellow

Responses that are under review or need clarification are in red font

1. Why has the proposed budget gone up \$10 M over 3 years?
 - a. *This is currently under review.*

2. Nonrecurring costs
 - a. What was in the FY22 budget that will not carry over in the FY23 budget?
 - i. *13.10 FTEs that were added as intra-year positions only in FY22 are not being carried over in the FY23 General Fund Budget*
 - ii. *These 13.10 FTEs were not in the FY22 Budget last spring*
 1. *They are new positions added during and for FY22 only in response to student needs identified during the summer and fall of 2021*
 2. *They are being treated as non-recurring positions, as they are funded from a non-recurring source, namely the projected FY22 General Fund Budget intra-year staff exchange savings*
 - b. What are all of the nonrecurring costs in the proposed budget (i.e. tents, 1-year positions, etc.)?
 - i. *Neither tents nor one-year positions are included in Draft 1 of the FY23 General Fund Budget*
 - ii. *Non-recurring costs currently being charged to the FY22 General Fund Budget include*
 1. *Large outdoor function tents*
 2. *Intra-year positions, which expired on or before 6/30/22*

3. 13 FTEs
 - a. What is the total dollar amount of these positions?
 - i. *The anticipated cost of the 13.10 positions, if all were filled upon the date of approval is \$461K (\$340K salaries, \$121K health insurance)*
 - ii. *A number of positions, although posted, were not hired, based largely on lack of applicants*
 - iii. *The estimated cost of the portion of the 13.10 positions hired, based on their respective hire dates is \$212K (\$204K salaries, \$8K health insurance)*
 - b. What is the total dollar amount and benefits of the approved positions by the SC that were hired?

- i. *These funds (i.e. FY22 projected General Fund savings) are being used to do just that for FY22*
 - ii. *Any unspent funds at the end of FY22 are turned-back to the Town at the end of FY23; FY22 General funds cannot be used to hire positions for FY23*
- e. Prior to COVID, this was about 20% of the budget. What % is it now?
- i. *What was 20% of the budget? – Please clarify*

5. Minuteman

- a. Do we have an admin overseeing the recruiting/application process, etc.
- i. *During FY21, we paid a retired school principal to oversee the academic elements of the transition from membership to non-membership to Minuteman. This person’s work was completed last spring (2021). Since that time, no administrator has been hired to do this work as a discrete function.*

b. How many students applied? Were accepted? Attend?

- i. *Five Belmont students applied to Minuteman for the 2021-2022 School Year*
 - 1. *All five were grade 9 for the 2021-2022 School Year*
 - 2. *One of the five were accepted; the others are on a wait list*
- ii. *Belmont enrollment at Minuteman for the 2021-2022 School Year is as follows:*

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total
1	9	13	10	33

c. Overall cost broken out by tuition and monthly transportation.

- i. *FY22 Minuteman costs include*
 - 1. *Annual tuition per student of \$18,679 (33 students)*
 - 2. *Capital fee per student of \$7,467 (33 students)*
 - 3. *Sped increment per student of \$6,100 (13 students)*
 - 4. *Lease payment cost of \$41,381*
 - a. *Total paid directly to Minuteman for FY22 is \$983,609*
 - 5. *Transportation is procured and administered by the Belmont School Department*
 - a. *FY22 daily rate for one bus is \$499*
 - b. *Total estimated FY22 cost for transportation to & from Minuteman is \$89,820*
 - 6. *Total estimated FY22 cost associated with Minuteman is \$1,073,429*

d. What is the tuition for Medford (or other voc programs that our students attend) versus Minuteman?

- i. *FY22 Total annual tuition per student for the Medford Public Schools CVTE is \$12,314 (3 students)*

ii. *Transportation is procured and administered by the Belmont School Department; FY22 transportation to and from Medford is \$150 per day, per vehicle*

6. SPED accounts

a. Should the projected 3M in SPED reserve affect what is spent in the General Fund?

- i. *The School Department is available to discuss with the Finance Subcommittee, the School Committee and other stakeholders regarding this question*
- ii. *The School Department will implement the guidance provided by the Finance Subcommittee and School Committee on this issue*
- iii. *The School Department's interest is continuing to work collaboratively with the Town to utilize all funds appropriately and optimally to address the fiscal challenges facing us all Town-wide over the next three years and beyond*

b. If the OOD reserve is \$1M above the recommended level, then schools should not ask for \$1M matching in ARPA funds, we should make use of the \$1M we have.

- i. *As noted above, the School Department is available to discuss with the Finance Subcommittee, the School Committee and other stakeholders regarding this question*
- ii. *The School Department will implement the guidance provided by the Finance Subcommittee and School Committee on this issue*

7. SPED contracted positions

a. What is the cost of the contract positions versus the FTEs, broken out by health insurance, benefits, separation costs?

- i. *The two additional FTEs for behavioral practitioners in the FY23 Budget is \$180K (\$72K each for salary and \$18K each for health insurance)*
- ii. *We are paying for approximately 70 hours per week for behavioral services for contract providers*

b. Can the money used to currently contract out these positions be reallocated to hire the FTEs?

- i. *Behavioral services are only one type of many that are provided within the contract services line*
- ii. *The need per type of service can vary from year to year*
- iii. *Therefore, there is not necessarily a dollar-for-dollar modularity between hiring behavioral specialists and expecting that all other service needs will remain constant from FY22 to FY23*
- iv. *At this time the School Department is using an amount of \$50K as a placeholder for consideration as a possible reduction to this line item for FY23*

8. Communication of the Budget

a. How can we ensure that the budget book is made available to all WC members and on the website before the meeting?

- i. Any expectation to have the budget books available prior to the 2/16/22 joint meeting was unknown to the School Department
- ii. In previous years, the School Department budget book was distributed out at the joint meeting
- iii. The School Department sent approximately 24 FY23 Budget Books to the Town Administrator's Office on the afternoon of the joint meeting, so that they would be available on the next day for pickup by officials
- iv. Ordinarily, the order of operations is to present the budget (or any other any document) at a public meeting and then to make the documents available afterward
- v. The budget book documents were posted to the School Department website on the day after the joint meeting
- vi. The district is available to discuss the timing of document availability for budget meetings going forward

b. Can we provide a more condensed presentation of the budget to the WC (like that by the Town), going through items line by line and allowing for more discussion?

- i. The School Budget Book does include (and has historically included) a summary by program, with subtotals for program categories, as well as line-item detail for every program (including MUNIS account numbers for each line)
- ii. The School Department is available to discuss requests for specific formatting suggestions

iii. This presentation was believed to be too lengthy

1. The FY23 School Budget presentation at the joint meeting had previously been presented approximately five times, based on evolving iterations, at School Committee and Finance Subcommittee meetings
2. The FY23 School Budget presentation itself was 29 pages, which is six more pages than the Town's presentation of 23 pages
3. The district is available to discuss optimizing the presentation to maximize audience/reader engagement and understanding

c. Can we present the Q2 Actuals (no projected amounts) line by line, year by year so these Q2s are easily comparable over the last few years?

- i. The School Department can provide a line-item report of Q2 actuals

d. Can we provide consistency in formatting?

- i. The Intro section to the budget does not match the summary section that was included last year making a roll forward analysis/comparison to the FTF2 model impossible. (for Roy)
- ii. **The FY22 Draft 1 Budget Executive Summary included the following table:**

FY22 Total General Fund Budget: Roll-forward amounts plus restorations, plus strategic-plan cost drivers and other cost drivers

Budget Category	FY21 General Fund Budget	FY22 Roll-Forward Budget	Long-Term Structural Changes	Strategic Plan Cost Drivers	External Cost Drivers	Total FY22 General Fund Budget	Change FY21 to FY22	% Change	Notes
Staff	42,939,834	45,008,027	1,129,586	689,000		46,826,613	3,886,779	9.05%	Charging all FDK salaries to GF upon elimination of fee in FY21 - to trigger on-going increase in Ch. 70 state aid; 689K in new positions
Texts, Supplies, Materials, Equipment, Other	2,214,182	2,269,537		118,367		2,387,904	173,722	7.85%	Includes Technology costs to support 1:1 district; legal expenses
Busing	496,473	496,473		54,527		551,000	54,527	10.98%	Contractual increase
Fringe	9,111,308	9,111,308		181,500	295,384	9,588,192	476,884	5.23%	Health insurance for new employees; 3% index for existing staff
Special Education Tuition, Transportation, Contract Services	6,723,844	6,723,844			2,198,005	8,921,849	2,198,005	32.69%	Replenishment of \$1.7M in SPED reduced in FY21 Budget
Total FY20 General Fund Budget	61,485,641	63,609,189	1,129,586	1,043,394	2,493,389	68,275,558	6,789,917	11.04%	
% Change over FY19 Budget		3.45%	1.84%	1.70%	4.06%	11.04%			

iii. **The basic structure of this table had been included during the years when the School Department was adding positions regularly in response to then increasing enrollment, to show that**

1. **Roll-forward costs**
 - a. **Were generally increasing in-line with common expectations and**
 - b. **Were generally in-keeping with the growth rate of the Town budget**
2. **Enrollment and other cost-drivers were putting added pressure on the School budget, necessitating increases above an incremental amount**
3. **While an aggregate rollover increase could be calculated from the data in the table, the table was not intended as a reconciling document to the FTF2 model on a category-by-category basis**

iv. **The nature of School operations has been changing over the last two to three years due to COVID**

1. **Overall student enrollment is down**
2. **Student needs for academic recovery and mental health have increased dramatically**
3. **As such, the previously-used table, as presented, would not be particularly helpful to readers; and we wanted to be clear that the Schools were not treating FY23 in a "business as usual" fashion, both in terms of changing operations and the fiscal challenges facing the Town as a whole**

v. **In lieu the table format used previously, a table showing the FY23 Budget mapped to the FTF2 model categories was not used because:**

1. **The School Committee is still in negotiations and the FTF2 model categories includes a salary line for "COLA & Steps/Degrees Incr.", as component of total "Salary & Wages"**

- a. *Inclusion of this amount as discrete number may detrimentally affect the School Committee's bargaining position if it were made public at this time*
 - b. *Using only parts of the FTF2 categories could be misinterpreted as not being fully transparent*
- 2. *The assumptions in the FTF2 model itself are currently being questioned by some stakeholders*

- vi. *The School Department is available to discuss the inclusion of category summary for the FY23 Budget, as informed by the contextual items delineated here*

- vii. *The salary number requested has since been provided to the requestor*

- viii. *The School Department would like to suggest a collective discussion among stakeholder groups regarding the interdependent relationship between the FTF2 model and the annual operating budget, which ideally would result in agreed-upon expectations and parameters for which tool drives the other, when and under what circumstances*