

**Belmont School Committee Minutes
Joint Meeting of the
Finance Subcommittee of the School Committee
And the
Education Subcommittee of the Warrant Committee
July 11, 2013
Conference Room of the School Administration Building**

Present: Mr. Kevin Cunningham
Ms. Anne Lougée
Ms. Laurie Slap
Ms. Laurie Graham
Dr. Tom Kingston, Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance

Present from the EdSubCom of the Warrant Committee:

Ms. Pat Brusch
Mr. Mike Libenson
Mr. Raffi Manjikian
Mr. Bob Sarno

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:08 a.m.

2. Review of FY'13 Warrant Committee Report of the Belmont Public Schools

The two subcommittees discussed various aspects of the report, all with an eye toward FY'14 and future years. Might we find ways to achieve better outcomes with the same level of resources? Are there opportunities to replace costs with more cost-effective measures? Are we challenging the degree of inertia within the organization?

The discussion primarily focused on cost saving opportunities to achieve sustainability – always using a cost-effective lens when making decisions. Dr. Kingston and Ms. Slap noted that educational innovations are not driven by cost but by what is programmatically beneficial to the students. Understood by all is the fact that salaries are the primary cost driver of the BPS budget and Dr. Kingston explained that he is working with a consultant to develop alternatives to the current compensation structure, to be proposed in the upcoming round of collective bargaining.

The two subcommittees discussed the degree to which Out of District Placement costs are a major cost driver of the budget. Mr. Sarno questioned whether the

School Department has the appropriate controls in place to manage these costs. Dr. Kingston noted that although Belmont's Student Services staff is leaner than some other districts, that the state itself is the biggest cost control auditor of these placements.

Last summer the School Department devoted considerable resources to provide additional detail regarding Special Education costs for members of the EdSubCom. Today Mr. Sarno asked if his committee might get "one more level of insight" of these expenses, specifically if Mr. Manjikian (who has relevant professional experience in this area) could have access to some of the "basic" information. Dr. Kingston replied that he would check with legal counsel. Ms. Graham however cautioned that student confidentiality will continue to be the issue regarding Mr. Manjikian's access to the data.

3. Special Education Stabilization Fund

Mr. Sarno distributed a revision by the EdSubCom to the Special Education Stabilization Fund protocols, noting that this is his subcommittee's recommendation to the entire Warrant Committee. Dr. Kingston stated his objections to the revisions as he believes they are in conflict with the nature and application of the stabilization fund – noting specifically that this fund does not function as one of the Town's reserve funds. Approval of this agreement rests with the Board of Selectmen and Ms. Graham indicated that the School Department's goal will be to resolve this in September.

(Mr. Manjikian left the meeting at 10:45.)

4. Long-Term Planning Modeling Groups

Members reviewed Dr. Kingston's memo titled "Modeling Groups" dated July 8, 2013. The various groups will develop a model for identifying and collecting the data for each topical group in order to inform a long-range set of projections to meet district needs in the next three to five years.

The memo outlines eight content areas and recommends appropriate membership from Town committees and/or departments. The eight areas are: 1) Salary and Compensation; 2) Special Education; 3) Enrollments; 4) Operations and Maintenance; 5) Instructional Modeling and Innovation; 6) Revenue Sources; 7) Student Services; and 8) Instructional Technology. Ms. Slap noted that the focus should primarily be financial vs. programmatic in nature, and Ms. Bruschi emphasized the need to be proactive with information that will be garnered by the work of these modeling groups. It was agreed that there should be an Action Plan by September 1st.

5. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 18th meeting were approved unanimously, with the possibility of a future amendment to Section 3.

The minutes of the July 2nd meeting were approved unanimously.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by


Anne Lougée