

**Belmont School Committee Minutes**  
**Finance Subcommittee**  
**October 28, 2014**  
**Conference Room of the School Administration Building**

**Present:** Mr. Kevin Cunningham  
Ms. Anne Lougée  
Ms. Laurie Slap, Chair  
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent  
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance

Guest: Mr. Bob Sarno, Chair, Education Subcommittee of the Warrant Committee

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

**2. 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Update**

Mr. DiCologero reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter expenditures and his forecast for subsequent expenditures through the remainder of the year. The projected deficit of \$499,321, he emphasized, is based on very conservative numbers that lean towards a worse-case scenario. His presentation focused on line items and categories that forecast a high degree of variance from the FY15 budget.

Personnel expenses: Although the elementary and high school teacher salaries project a combined positive YE balance of \$185,500, the negative balances projected for middle school and support staff salaries, as well as substitution costs are 117,650, 102,770, and 90,000, respectively. In total, salary and substitution costs represent a \$125,000 (rounded) overrun for the year. However, when anticipated savings of \$85,000 for fringe benefit expenditures considered, the overrun for personnel costs comes to approximately \$40,000. More specific details were provided.

Mr. DiCologero explained that there is variability among the personnel line items each year because of many leaves of absence (LOA's) are unknown at the time the budget is developed. In addition, whether long-term substitution costs are charged to the Substitute line or the respective salary line depends upon whether the person on leave has accrued sick leave available.

Due to increased enrollment, several positions have been added in the district since the budget was adopted. In order to reduce class size in grade 5, one teacher was added and the physical education position was increased by 20% to accommodate the new class. To satisfy a mandate for instructing English language learners (ELL) and to accommodate the increased number of existing and new ELL students, it was necessary to add a 1.0 ELL instructor. Because these students are

present at all grade levels, one-third of the cost was spread amongst the elementary, middle and high school salary lines.

In addition to the above, the equivalent of approximately 3.5 FTE's have been added to student support staff salaries to accommodate the needs of new students as well as returning students. Three part-time aides were hired and the hours of some existing aides were increased to meet these needs. In the other direction, an interim Science curriculum coordinator was hired at 0.6 FTE.

Non-Personnel expenses: The 1<sup>st</sup> quarter report does not reflect a freeze on classroom supplies and materials, although it is highly likely that a freeze will be authorized in the near future. The cost of regular transportation projects a \$30,000 overrun, primarily due to reduced use by full-paying families and an increase in usage from families requesting waivers. Mr. DiCologero noted that a family cap has not been in place for many years.

Mr. DiCologero explained that the \$50,000 projected overrun for utilities and maintenance is a conservative figure due to some unanticipated repairs to date (a generator and a boiler at different schools) as well as planning for a worse-case winter weather season.

Special Education expenses: These expenses – SPED tuitions, salaries, non-salary expenses, and transportation – account for \$380,000 of the approximately \$500,000 projected deficit.

Mr. DiCologero explained that, over the years, the average number of out-of-district (ODD) placements for special education students has been in the low 80's. At present we have 93 ODD placements, 6 who arrived in the district after June and two more since September. These recent additions account for the approximate \$125,000 increase in SPED tuitions. Mr. DiCologero forecasts an additional \$100,000 in SPED support salaries to accommodate the needs and the intensity of the needs of students both new to and returning to the district, as well as \$95,000 and \$60,000 in non-salary and transportation expenses, respectively.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter report forecast utilizes all SPED IDEA grant monies, all but \$58,000 of the Circuit Breaker funds, and all of the available LABBB credits.

The group discussed the need to possibly request access the SPED Stabilization Fund to address some of the projected deficit, as well as other measures to curb spending throughout the remainder of the year.

## **2. Approval of Minutes**

On a motion by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Ms. Lougée, the committee voted 2-0-1, with one abstention, to approve the meeting minutes of October 7, 2014.

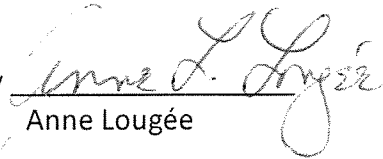
**3. Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of the Finance Subcommittee is scheduled for Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. in the conference room of the School Administration building.

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by

  
Anne Lougée