

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEEMINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
DECEMBER 1, 2020

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Catherine Bowen, Secretary
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Ms. Evelyn Gomez
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations
Mr. Michael McAllister, Director of Human Capital

1. Opening Business

1.1 Call to order

The Committee agreed to discuss the FY21 Quarter 2 update as the first item on the agenda.

2. Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee – FY21 Q1 Update

The Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee – Anne Helgen, Geoff Lubien, Liz Goss, Jack Weis, Pual Rickter – joined the School Committee Finance meeting. The group discussed the FY21 quarter 1 budget. Tony DiCologero shared a spreadsheet explaining the current balance of each line item and noted costs with formats Remote, Hybrid, and Regular. At this time, he expects the School Department to break-even but will continue to monitor costs. The district has had the benefit of three COVID-related grant funding sources to support the demand on school opening this year. COVID-19 may continue to have an impact if positions need to be added related to that. The federal grant money will close out on December 30.

Fall athletic fees were lowered due to a shortened season. If winter athletics does take place, fees may be lowered for those sports as well. This is the first year there were no fees for full day Kindergarten. As a result, Chapter 70 funding will be increased beginning next year.

Tony presented the revolving account; overall infrastructure of the kindergarten is intact and needed going forward with some small variation in costs of material and supplies. Invoices sit in the encumbrances until grant applications are processed and reimbursed; expenses continue to resolve. Employee leaves were discussed, higher numbers this year in the range of 23 currently, some unpaid. Work-from-home accommodations were feasible for some employees. Unit D positions are needed for many of the classroom supports for those on leave or working from home.

For FY22, we will need the anticipated 1.2M increase in state aid attributed to supporting full-day kindergarten, which would not be an increase as we are no longer charging tuition to participants. One-time positions hired for the unique COVID operations will not be automatically added to FY22. Positions going forward would be added to the FY21 base budget. Positions are still in flux currently for staffing the hybrid model and may change due to required quarantines throughout the year.

3. Equity Audit Funding

Michael McAllister profiled some organizations to do the equity audit. The cost can run from \$10,000 to \$50,000. The larger amount is concerning due to lack of funding in the budget. There was discussion about asking potential partners such as the Foundation for Belmont Education to help with funding. Michael McAllister is working on the RFP process.

4. FY22 Budget Update

5. Testing Funding

Tony DiCologero has been discussing with the State the possibility of creating a revolving account to collect fees to pay for testing. He is also looking into outside organizations to collect fees. Superintendent Phelan is reaching out to other districts and working with the Broad Institute to find out how they are handling testing. The School Committee discussed the need for a project manager to coordinate the testing initiative.

After School Program Update

After School, programs have been taking place outside during October and November. Now that colder weather is here, they have moved back into the buildings. Due to COVID, social distancing restrictions the students have had to spread out more. This has caused some loss in revenue for the programs. One program has reached out to Superintendent Phelan with concerns they may not be able to sustain their program without a guarantee of a contract in the near future. If contracts can be renewed the programs could set a long-term plan for recovery. The district has not charged any rent to the after school programs for this year.

Committee members discussed the need to support families with after options, noting the benefit of the considerable range in tuition fees for families. School Committee policy outlines prioritization of groups for use of school spaces. Support for these organizations should be equitable. Tony DiCologero and Superintendent Phelan will explore what might be a reasonable reduction in rent and discuss the contracts.

Athletics

Middlesex Interscholastic Athletics Association agreed to move forward with a delayed start of the winter season, which will begin on December 14. They provided guidelines late and made modifications to the sports. The season will be shorter so the fees should be decreased as well. The School Committee will need to vote on December 8 on whether or not to go ahead with the winter program due to being in remote operations for the high school currently.

School Committee members discussed the possibility of supporting students with physical activity outside of sports if the season does not take place. Belmont Youth Basketball Association has been

interested in space in the schools for their programs. The district is working to coordinate with after school programs and cleaning. There are currently clubs and activities running at the middle school and high school and town based activities to take part in.

Due to time constraints, the remaining agenda item was not discussed.

6. Adjourn

*The School Committee **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 a.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by  _____
Catherine Bowen, Secretary