

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
NOVEMBER 24, 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 at 8:02 AM

2. Equity Audit Funding

The School Committee Finance Subcommittee discussed possible funding sources for the equity audit. The Equity Subcommittee has proposals from three different groups but they need to determine exactly what they are looking for in an audit. The hope is to have a vendor chosen by their next meeting on December 21.

There is a wide range in potential costs – between free and \$45,000, with the expectation that a minimum of 20,000 would yield the service needs identified by the district. There was discussion about reaching out to community partners to participate in funding. Tony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations explained funding for an audit would need to comply with state procurement laws. Any cost over \$50,000 would require sealed bids. If between \$10,000 and \$50,000, the district would solicit quotes or create an RFP to select proposals. The goal is to determine funding and have the audit ready for the start of the year.

3. FY22 Budget Update

The FY22 contingent budget was presented at the joint meeting last night. It is important to explain what override means moving forward and to include the directors starting in January in order to emphasize to the community the importance of the override.

The district needs to explain what \$5,000,000 worth of reductions will look like. Superintendent Phelan has concerns that the Select Board does not yet know when they will decide on free cash – it may not be until January.

School Committee members voiced concerns that the community might reject the override if they do not get the appropriate amount. Parents are voicing concern that the \$400,000 amount may not be enough. School Committee members expressed hope that the district could ask for a higher amount. The Town may have more grant money to take advantage of. School Committee members agreed a higher override amount should be suggested given this has been an unprecedented year. This might be a chance to bring the district up to the standards of surrounding districts. The following amounts were suggested: \$689,000 for year 1, \$650,000 for year 2 and \$830,000 for year 3. School Committee members suggested the creation of a summer “boost academy” to support students prior to entering the next school year.

4. Testing Funding

School Committee Chair Andrea Prestwich has been looking into the possibility of testing for students and/or staff. Tony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations reached out to the state to determine if it is possible to create a revolving account for the testing funds.

Chair Prestwich has come up with potential proposals where community members would pay for testing. She has also reached out to the Foundation for Belmont Education (FBE) to ask if they would be willing to help with funding for this effort. A nurse coordinator would also need to be hired if testing were to take place. This position would be for approximately 10 weeks only at a potential cost of \$5,000

Separately, there could be a discussion on testing for teachers/staff. The full cost of this program would be \$10,000 for ten weeks if the district covers the cost. There was discussion about the possibility of hiring someone now to get the program off the ground and charging the cost to the CARES Act.

It was acknowledged that this kind of program should be run directly by and funded directly by the State. It is expected that the district would need to partner with the Health Department in order to successfully do a large testing program.

5. After School Program Update

The Committee did not discuss the After School Program.

6. Executive Session

*The School Committee **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to enter into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with union personnel. The School Committee will not return to Open Session.*

Respectfully Submitted by


Catherine Bowen, Secretary

