

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 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 meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

2. Fall Season Fee Reduction

The School Committee discussed the district's recommendation to reduce athletic fees. The reasoning behind the reduction is due to a shortened season with certain restrictions and modifications.

Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance shared the document: "FY21 ATHLETICS - FALL SEASON PROJECTED OPERATING COSTS AND REVENUE 2020-09-04" detailing related direct sports costs, including coaches stipend, transportation, officials, and event staff. He explained how student fees cover these costs at the current and proposed rates, noting that indirect program-wide costs such as league dues, trainer, insurance, are not included. He explained how the budget would be able to support the reduction in fees. The Committee discussed what might be an appropriate reduction from \$450, which is the normal athletic fee, for the modified season. The reduced fees would be only for this coming fall season and would include the following sports approved by the School Committee on September 8th: Field Hockey, Golf, Cross Country and Boys/Girls Soccer. Future sports seasons would require approval at each stage and corresponding discussion of fees would be discussed at these stages. School Committee members discussed the appropriate amount for the reduction, noting that any reduction would be one-time and not indicative of future fee reductions. The district administrators suggested reducing the \$450 fee to \$300, which yielded a ~\$12,000 deficit to direct cost. After discussion, School Committee members agreed on \$325, and agreed to vote on the reduction of the athletic fee at the School Committee meeting that evening.

3. Fall Season Fee Reimbursement

Superintendent Phelan stated the district's position is to not reimburse athletic fees if the season needs to be ended early due to a COVID incident. Families who have paid the current rate for their sport this season would be provided a refund for the amount in excess if the athletic fee rate were reduced. Families may also receive fee reimbursement if their student withdraws from a sport prior to the start of that season. The Committee discussed equitable approaches to athletic fees, need to ensure equitable access to participation, and fees for all extracurricular activities.

The Committee discussed whether or not to refund athletic fees in part, whole, or not at all, once the season had begun, should any change to the season offering occur due to COVID or other unforeseen circumstances. Committee members discussed whether or not the value of the fee impacted the refund policy, and if one amount were more preferable relative to the proposed refund policy. Committee members supported not reimbursing the athletic fee given the fixed costs that would be incurred and the extent to which fees sustain the programming. After discussion, it was agreed to vote at the full School Committee meeting on fee reimbursement.

4. FY20 Close Out

Tony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operation shared a spreadsheet, "SCHOOL DEPARTMENT FY20 FINAL REPORTS 2020-09-11" explaining the changes in the budget due to COVID-19 and the shutdown of schools. The district has maximized grants as much as possible for the purchase of PPE and devices for remote learning.

Mr. DiCologero explained each line item and whether there was a positive ending balance. There was discussion about the possible need for additional buses when the schools open in hybrid.

The School Committee discussed concerns over funds returned to the Town. The funds could have been used for more pressing school department needs.

\$672,000 was placed in the Special Education Reserve Fund, which requires a vote of School Committee and Select Board to appropriate. Mr. DiCologero explained "maintenance of effort" requirements for the municipality to uphold.

Chair Andrea Prestwich stated she is working with someone who has identified a lab that can do testing for the district and anticipate bringing the question of funding COVID tests under the "225" grant to the School Committee. Her thought is to test everyone going back into a building, creating a baseline assessment, which would cost \$78,000. The cost to do surveillance tests for only staff for 14 weeks, twice per week would cost \$273,000.

The School Committee discussed staffing needs for next year. The district is looking at potential changes or additions to existing job descriptions to allow them to function in a different way during remote and hybrid learning.

5. Update – Financial Task Force 2

The School Committee determined there was not enough time for a discussion on the Financial Task Force 2.

4. Adjourn

On a motion offered Michael Crowley and seconded by Catherine Bowen, 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