

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING

January 5, 2021

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
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

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 8:06 a.m.

2. Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee - FY22 Budget Update

The Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee – Anne Helgen, Geoff Lubien, Liz Goss, Jack Weis, Paul Rickter- joined the School Committee Finance Subcommittee meeting. The combined group discussed the budget presentation in preparation for tonight’s School Committee meeting. Superintendent Phelan gave context for the presentation which incorporated the work with the School Committee, Warrant Committee and other Town departments. The Select Board is considering the use of free cash for FY22. Superintendent Phelan believes an override would better serve the Town as a whole. The budget presentation narrative will indicate that with no override, substantial cuts will occur and will affect services. The Belmont Public Schools are at a fork in the road to continue growth in learning and to achieve smaller class sizes for the benefit of the grade reconfiguration and opening of the new middle and high school.

School committee members commented that the public should be reminded that the FTEs needed are not just to increase the overall number of positions but to stay on pace with enrollment, as the district was on pause this year due to the pandemic. There is some concern if there is no override, the district’s Level 1 status will be affected, and the district does not want to go back to being a deficit minded organization.

The warrant committee members gave overall positive feedback regarding the presentation. They reminded all to be careful referring to an override because it has not been formally put on the ballot, yet.

The group then viewed the Appendix slides which included comparison data to other districts. Michelle Rinehart (Harvard intern) utilized the DESE RADAR tool to collect the data, which showed Belmont below other districts in state funding (per pupil), less teachers even though we have been increasing recently (FTE and \$), and higher class sizes. It was agreed the information on these slides was dramatic. Although the district is getting good results with less spending, we have less opportunities for our students than other districts and are falling behind in our view of success. (Robotics program not robust, no coding, no math/science coaches.) A final suggestion was made to highlight the end goal as the needs of the children and not just the need to obtain increased funding.

3. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59am

Respectfully Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Checkoway". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Checkoway, Acting Secretary