

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING

JUNE 3, 2021

Present: Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Andrea Prestwich
Mr. Jamal Saeh
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Absent: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair
Ms. Catherine Bowen

1. Opening Business

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 a.m. as subcommittee.

2. FY22 Budget Out of District tuition

Every year the district determines how much of the Special Education Reserve Fund to carryover to next year, utilizing a 3-year look ahead, to be able to balance special education needs and returning general fund free cash to the Town if possible. Director of Finance DiCologero anticipates \$8.6M in Out Of District (OOD) tuition expenses this year and the district is on track to carry over \$1.1M in to FY22. DESE allows districts to carry forward one year of Circuit Breaker funds, which would be approximately \$1.7 or \$1.8M for Belmont.

School Committee members discussed the appropriate value to use as carryover, looking at state guidance the Warrant Committee's suggested amount, and the risk with using a lower carry over figure. Superintendent Phelan confirmed the risk of not carrying over enough funding is not being able to pay tuition bills in the future, which will impact the overall budget. In the past, when additional funds were requested for OOD expenses, the Town has asked the School Department to freeze the entire budget. Based on current information, the district is on track to spend down special education reserves to \$0 for FY24. The difference this year is possible funding from the American Rescue Plan to the Town of Belmont. The unknown factor is how much funding the district will receive over the next three years.

Superintendent Phelan offered clarification of the overall process, indicating Circuit Breaker lags behind special education tuition needs in its operationalization (curvy line). The district has attempted to flatten that line the last few years. School Committee Members felt Warrant Subcommittee's expectation from the last Finance Subcommittee meeting was that the School Department would give back \$600K in free cash, drawing down the entire Special Education Reserve fund. Member Crowley also inquired why the district was seeking School Committee guidance today. Superintendent Phelan responded that it was questioned at a previous meeting whether the administration asked for SC guidance or if SC was aware of the Administration's actions. School Committee members expressed their desire to discuss the carry over balance with the Warrant Subcommittee for Education at the next Finance Subcommittee meeting.

3. Federal Funds

Superintendent Phelan reported on a review with principals of needs that will be supported by Federal Funds. This initial list was centered on academic recovery and social emotional learning recovery. The administration will take another look at the list to prioritize the items. Updated guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education last week used stronger language for an all in-person return to school for fall 2021, possibly negating the need for extra tents and supplies for lunch. Items that will be needed include a summer academic recovery program, afterschool academic recovery, special education teachers, social workers, building substitutes, nurse, math specialist (elementary), RTI Math/English professional aides, METCO professional aides, and professional development on trauma informed instruction.

Superintendent Phelan encouraged the group to think about the timeline to use ESSER I and II funds - over one or two years. The district could act on some positions now and others in the future and could possibly use ARP funds to cover expenses incurred from remote-only families' needs.

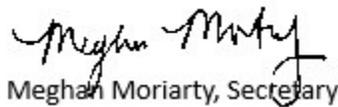
Discussion then turned to the probable need for an additional special education teacher for the 2021-2022 school year, due to mandated services. Traditionally these fluid needs are calculated in the fall and brought to the Finance Subcommittee and Warrant Committee at that time. The administration wanted to present the possibility earlier than that timeframe. Committee member Saeh felt this should have been brought forth at the budget meeting to help inform those decisions.

Going forward member Moriarty recommended a chart for the budget book indicating the fluctuation in special education positions to help with clarity based on a Warrant Subcommittee request.

4. Adjourn

The Finance Subcommittee adjourned at 9:53 am

On a motion offered by Jamal Saeh, and seconded by Meghan Moriarty, the School Committee voted unanimously (4-0-2) to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 am.



Meghan Moriarty, Secretary

Respectfully Submitted by: