

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
March 23, 2021

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Catherine Bowen, Secretary
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Ms. Evelyn Gomez
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Absent: Ms. Amy Checkoway

1. Opening Business

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m.

The Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee – Anne Helgen, Geoff Lubien, Liz Goss, Jack Weis, and Paul Rickter- joined the School Committee Finance Subcommittee meeting.

2. FY21 ESSR I, II and FY22 Budget Update

Superintendent Phelan reviewed the federal grants from the earlier Finance Subcommittee meeting and outlined updates to the expenditures under these grants. The funds must meet COVID related/supplemental expenditures, and cannot supplant regular budgeted expenditures. In preparation for increased student attendance at reduced physical distancing minimums, the district has spent ~\$300k on desks, additional personal protective equipment, replacement filters, and additional HEPA filtration units.

ESSER II and III will be combined (\$1.4M) to cover summer school/academic recovery camp (salaries, materials and supplies). To start the 2021-2022 school year, the funds will be used for surveillance testing and the anticipated “remote-only” school, mandated by DESE and for anticipated enrollment spike, when K-12 students return in September. There is also an anticipated need for “recovery programming” (general education intervention programming).

Ninety percent of families opted for in person learning; therefore, operating a remote only school would be costly and the district is looking at a regional option while awaiting more guidance from the Department of Education. The potential for reduction in some materials that were related to mitigating surface transmission may yield some savings, and will be reviewed in cost and transmission mitigation value.

COVID surveillance testing is underway at the high school, using the DESE program which uses with Ginko test. This approach is more labor intensive and has necessitated school nurses to work on Sundays. Evaluating this program in labor hours and testing costs will follow the pilot, and plans will be prepared for external donations

to be accepted by June, should surveillance testing continue to be a mitigation strategy the School Committee supports. Peer districts are seeing a reduction in the cost of the less labor-intensive testing method by Miramus. Committee members anticipated that elementary students may be the most vulnerable in the fall and most beneficial to operations to perform COVID surveillance testing.

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee members shared concerns on the state's funding formula for Belmont, with particular concern for how the Kindergarten students have been accounted for in the shift to full day Kindergarten. The methodology for that and the potential for additional state aid from the Governor's budget were discussed, and is expected to continue in dialogue with our elected state representatives and DESE. School Committee members voiced support for the value of full day kindergarten for families and student outcomes, and Superintendent Phelan indicated that it is not likely the district can revert to charging a fee for full day Kindergarten education.

Education subcommittee adjourned their meeting at 9:28 am.

3. Surplus Technology Items – March 2021 (Approval)

The committee members reviewed the documentation provided by Director of Technology, Steve Mazzola which encompassed outdated Chromebooks and iPads, as well as surplus smart boards that would not be used in the transition to the new middle and high school. Any funds collected from potential resale or other approved crediting process would go to the school budget if within the year, or to the town treasurer if from a preceding fiscal year, with expectation that the funds would contribute to the technology budget overall.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Evelyn Gomez, it was voted (3-0-3) to approve the surplus items listed in the provided documents be disposed of.

The next meeting will be March 30 for the discussion of budget priorities and indications of areas by school level and program; April 8 will continue budget discussions relative to the override ballot outcome; April 13 meeting will include discussion with the Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee

4. Adjourn

The Finance Subcommittee adjourned at 9:42 am.



Catherine Bowen, Secretary

Respectfully Submitted by: