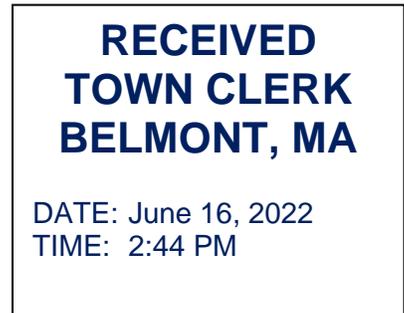


SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
MAY 3, 2022



Present: Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Chair
Ms Amy Checkoway, Secretary
Ms. Catherine Bowen
Mr. Mike Crowley
Mr. Jeff Liberty
Mr. Jamal Saeh

1. Call to Order

Chair Moriarty called the School Committee to order at 5:01 pm. Member Liberty joined a couple minutes late.

2. FY23 Budget (vote)

Chair Moriarty let the School Committee know that this morning there was a finance subcommittee meeting and voted unanimously to approve the FY23 budget. A PowerPoint deck was shared to support the discussion at this meeting and the morning’s meeting: [Belmont Public Schools FY23 Budget Changes from Draft 1 to Draft 2](#). Slide 21 includes the language from the vote taken by the finance subcommittee. This vote included funding for 3.2 new positions (referred to as “Option 2” in the slides and multiple discussions). The slide includes a note from the district administration that the FY23 budget may need to be accessed to fund other needs such as mandated services (Special Education and English Learner Education) and to support and facilitate the transition of the district grade reconfiguration.

This is an opportunity for the School Committee to review the budget again, and hear comments and questions from the School Committee before taking a vote. There have been many public meetings so there will not be an opportunity for public comments tonight.

The Superintendent reviewed a subset of slides (starting on slide 15) and noted that there have been about 30 public meetings about the budget and now the conversation is narrowed down to a small number of potential new FTEs as well as a final review of the “all in” budget. We have been looking at a budget that adds 6.2 versus 3.2 positions (referred to as Options 1 versus 2). We are also reducing the budget in some areas, and are growing in other areas of the budget. If we look at the general fund line with the full 6.2, it means adding 13.3 positions (incremental adds from FY22 budget plus 6.2), would mean adding 1.31% to the general fund budget from FY22 to FY23. The finance subcommittee recommends adding 3.2 positions (less than 1%) to

general fund budget. The Superintendent also showed reductions from the initial proposed budget to explain how we got here. Slide 20 also shows the increases and decreases across different areas of the budget.

Member Saeh reiterated one of the questions that was raised this morning by Member Crowley which asked about if this budget includes the federal ARPA funds, and the Superintendent pointed the School Committee to the motion that the finance subcommittee voted on which includes language about federal fund availability. He also pointed to the language about how the FY23 budget may shift depending on special education and other mandated services and any reconfiguration planning that would not add any positions but may need to be fit within the budget. Member Crowley wanted to clarify that while the \$1 million that we are assuming from ARPA is included in the all in total of the budget, the additional \$132,000 which we hope to receive from Chapter 70 money after the House and Senate versions of the budget is not included.

Member Checkoway asked a question about the FTEs from one year to the next, and asked if the Superintendent could talk through the changes from FY22 to FY23 in terms of the general fund and the grant sources. Superintendent Phelan explained the 10.2 FTE change (positions added last year, during the year, and into next year) and in recurring grants and COVID one-time funds (mostly ESSER) the change is -1 since one of the special education positions was only for one year so that position goes away. The revolving account is mostly food services, and did see small increase in need there. Member Checkoway asked if FY22 numbers were from beginning of school year, and Superintendent said they are all the positions that are moving forward into next year, so reallocation positions are not on the list and unfilled positions are also not on the list.

Member Liberty asked about if the 6.2 additional positions are still mission critical, and the Superintendent said yes, and Member Liberty asked if there is some risk if vote for less than 6.2 positions that they will not be funded, and the Superintendent said there is some risk. Member Liberty asked what basis of confidence is that will be able to cover all the positions, and the Superintendent said that there is support for additional Chapter 70 money will come to the school district (\$132,000), so that's within \$90K of all 6.2 positions, and hopefully ARPA money will also come to district for second year so within that roughly \$60K delta that might be able to use, and also staff exchange/turnover is usually source of revenue as ebbs and flows that can help meet the needs of the district including all 6.2 FTEs, potential special education needs, and also one-time opportunity to get straight moving into the new grade 7-12 school so if see any attrition savings after FY22, hopefully can fund creatively point person to support the transition.

Member Bowen asked if it would be possible to move any positions in or out of general fund from revolving funds. The Superintendent said there are fractions of some positions in the revolving account in the general fund (e.g., METCO), but had not planned to move any of these, as this has been tightened up in recent years, and noted that the food service budget is wholly

independent. Member Bowen clarified that she wanted to understand flexibility as she knows there are more positions than we can fund. She asked about the student activity director and if this position is still in general fund. Director of Finance Tony DiCologero explained that 0.25 student activity director is part of what would be full time athletic director and that this is in the general fund. Member Bowen said that this position is only addressing certain grade levels, and she understands that wellness and student activities should look at all grades, so she'd love to see that position divided so can address student needs more comprehensively than through athletic program. Superintendent Phelan clarified that athletic director supports all MIAA sports/grades and collected money for certain student activities through administrative assistant, and that this position never supported K-4 grade level or oversaw student activities/clubs. Superintendent said that principals usually oversee some of these activities, the director of Fine and Performing Arts helps with some of the afterschool activities in these areas, and some of the other activities are overseen by staff and principals.

Member Moriarty asked that questions be limited to critical ones that will impact ability to vote given time constraints of certain School Committee members tonight.

Member Liberty said that this is the first time in a public meeting that talking about reconfiguration plan in respect to the budget and that the reason we are talking about it now is that it may have FTE or budget implications. Superintendent Phelan said we may want to hire a one-time position to help with this work. Member Liberty acknowledged that some of the school-based needs had come off the table so wondered about the value of this kind of position versus the needs of the principals. Superintendent said that have been working on building-based approach for the past 8 years and have almost never hired central office position, and that there is a very large project that need to move forward. This wasn't brought up earlier because needs that wanted to put ahead of that and if there were flexible funds to support this. However, two years of planning have been lost due to COVID and we are trying to take care of building-based needs first, but cannot ignore district configuration plan that needs to be crammed into one year so that potentially adding one more person to help could be money well spent. Member Liberty asked again if the central office position would be more important. The Superintendent said he would like it to be right behind the 6.2 FTE. He clarified that there are a lot of positions that are needed at all levels. If we really want to talk about the list of positions that we have put aside with COVID and when did not get the override, the 6.2 is getting at the bullseye from building perspective, but when pull lens back and look at landing very big project with all of its demands, he thinks the district and town would benefit from coordinating work from one person who has professional capacity to do this work.

Member Checkoway amplified some of the points that have been made in prior discussions about the budget that are driving her support for the vote before us. We know the district is reliant on and restricted by a limited general fund budget that is heavily supported by one-time federal funds. Given the needs of the district and reconfiguration needs, and additional Chapter 70 funds that we think will be available, she supports the budget with the 3.2 FTEs. She thinks

the additional ARPA and Chapter 70 funds are critical to supporting student needs and supports continuing to discuss ongoing needs and the district's capacity to be able to plan and oversee key tasks that we all support and expect.

Member Saeh noted that this is an important point and that the budget work doesn't end with Town Meeting and the prioritization does not end with this vote. His hope and question is that when it comes down to reprioritizing so we can balance needs and support the 7-12 school, that this part of the conversation also comes to the School Committee for input and decisions just the same way that the federal funds have. These are hard decisions. Can we get alignment on this and that the expectation is that any prioritizing will come back to the School Committee?

The Superintendent said it will and that in prior years had also sought approval from finance subcommittee when new positions arise, especially Unit A and above.

Member Crowley wanted to say that strongly agree with everything Members Checkoway and Saeh said and made following motion:

"Moved, that the School Committee votes approval of an FY23 school budget of \$66,849,456 from General Fund sources and a total of \$76,964,825 from all sources, including grants and revolving funds; provided that the recommendation assumes the Town will make available to the School Department for needed student services any eventual increase in FY23 Chapter 70 funds that are over and above the level set in the Governor's FY23 budget; provided further that the recommendation assumes the Select Board will make available \$1,000,000 in ARPA funding."

The motion to approve the proposed FY23 budget was seconded by Member Saeh and approved unanimously by roll call vote (6-0).

3. Adjourn

Chair Moriarty adjourned the meeting at 5:46 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

