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**Town of Belmont**  
Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee  
Minutes for Friday January 27, 2107 7:30 am  
Town Hall, Conference Room 1

Members Attending: Jim Gammill (JG), Anne Helgen (AH), Michael Libenson (ML), Laurie Slap (LS)

Member Absent: Roy Epstein

1. JG called the meeting to order at 7:33 am.
2. The minutes of January 19th were approved as amended 4-0.
3. JG updated the members on the school committee finance subcommittee meeting held on January 24. He described that much of the discussion there was about the use of the circuit breaker account to carry forward unspent revenue from the state circuit breaker grants that are partial reimbursements from out of district tuitions for students receiving special education services. Using data provided by the school administration, he discussed a table and a graph he had prepared showing 4 years of history of circuit breaker revenue, spending, and carry forward history.

LS noted that special education services, along with enrollment, have been the major budget pressures on the school committee for a number of years and that the need for some reserve or cushion for unexpected out of district tuitions has been and continues to be needed.

ML asked whether earlier data is available. JG said he only had General Fund data for FY12 and FY13 but he would ask the school administration for the Circuit Breaker budgets for those years.

The subcommittee members agreed on the following two points.

First, public discussion about how and where to reserve funds for unexpected out of district tuitions and special education services is a good thing.

Second, there are at least three specific strategies for doing so:

- (a) carry forward unspent balances in the the circuit breaker account by charging out of district tuitions to the circuit breaker account as a last resort;
- (b) charge current year out of district tuitions to the circuit breaker account in amounts that match or approach the sum of the carry forward balance plus current year actual circuit breaker grants, and thus reduce the need for General Fund dollars (which would reduce the draw on free cash or the General Stabilization Fund);
- (c) similar to (b), but also transfer funds from either free cash or the General Stabilization Fund to a SPED Stabilization Fund.

The subcommittee members agreed that options (a), (b), and (c) could be pursued together; that is, some funds could be carry forward in the circuit breaker account while also reducing the draw from General Fund reserves, or funding the SPED stabilization fund, or both.

The subcommittee discussed strategies for engaging key school and town officials about this topic.

4. JG described a discussion at the January 24 school finance subcommittee meeting about a change in state law that would give municipalities the option of allowing school committees to access funds in a SPED stabilization fund. The subcommittee will be interested in hearing more specific

details and is open to the idea in concept.

5. In response to a question, JG updated the subcommittee about the recent Capital Budget Committee meeting and its overall approach to the pending major capital budget projects. The subcommittee also discussed technology related topics.

6. The subcommittee discussed the plan for its work in the weeks ahead. JG asked members to think about which topics could be the focus for special analysis. JG also discussed that the format for requesting additional information from the school district may be altered this year.

7. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 am.