

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee
February 23, 2021 8:00 AM
Remote Meeting via Zoom

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: April 1, 2021
TIME: 9:15 AM

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee: Liz Goss, Anne Helgen, Geoff Lubien, Paul Rickter, Jack Weis, Laurie Slap

School Committee: Kate Bowen, Amy Checkoway, Mike Crowley, Tara Donner, Evelyn Gomez, Andrea Prestwich

School Department Administration: Superintendent John Phelan, Finance Director Tony DiCologero

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 AM.

Federal Grant Impact

John started the meeting by sharing a four-slide presentation summarizing the COVID relief funds received to date from various federal and state sources, and the amount spent to date and remaining under those various grants. Some of the key points included:

- The first round of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I) grant was for about \$127,000. That grant only has a remaining balance of about \$22,000, but that remaining balance must be spent before the end of this fiscal year.
- The federal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CVRF, or 225 grant) was for about \$1.04 million and has a remaining unexpended balance of about \$305,000. Technically, that grant can be spent up until December 31st, but DESE wants towns to use it to reopen schools this year and is requiring the grant to be expended before the end of this fiscal year. The department is planning to use the funds accordingly, including on a 0.4 FTE nurse for the remainder of the year, surveillance COVID testing, additional PPE, additional air purifiers and filters, additional technology equipment, and additional hybrid and remote learning materials for K-4.
- The state Coronavirus Prevention Fund (SCPF) is for an amount of about \$147,000 and is currently still fully available. It, too, must be spent before the end of the current fiscal year. The administration is planning to use it for the same types of expenses that they will be covering using the aforementioned CVRF funds.
- The second round of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER II) grant is for about \$456,000. This grant is the only one that can be used in FY 22. So, the administration is planning to use those funds to cover costs associated with a “recovery camp” for students this summer, as well as to plan for the 2021-2022 school year. Anticipated FY 22 needs include “recovery programming”, an anticipated spike in enrollment as K-12 students return to school, and an expectation that DESE might require school departments to offer a “remote only” option to families. (John anticipates that such a remote-only option could require the town to hire up to an additional 16 teachers at a cost of about \$1.2 million).

Although not related to COVID per se, Anne again asked John about the Chapter 70 funds associated with Belmont's decision to eliminate fees for full-day kindergarten. John stated that DESE has agreed to do an analysis showing how much additional aid we are receiving in FY 22, per the Governor's budget, by eliminating those fees.

Adjournment

Before the other topics on the agenda could be discussed, the meeting was prematurely adjourned at 8:58 AM after being Zoom-bombed.