

**Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee  
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee  
February 9, 2021 8:00 AM  
Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 1, 2021  
TIME: 9:14 AM

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Members in Attendance**

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

**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 8:02 AM.

### **FY 22 Budget Reduction Scenario**

John began by summarizing recent discussions with the Financial Task Force. At a meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup>, the task force decided that, in the event the override fails, the town would use \$6.6 million of free cash towards the FY 22 budget. That would leave \$4.2 million in free cash, plus the town's \$1.9 million reserve fund, allowing the town to meet its 10% reserve target. That would also leave a projected deficit of \$3.8 million versus the FY 22 budgets prepared assuming an override passes. The Financial Task Force proposed a roughly 60/40 split in how that \$3.8 million gap would be covered, with the School Department covering \$2.3 million and the town departments \$1.5 million. At a subsequent meeting of the Financial Task Force on February 8<sup>th</sup>, by putting the OPEB reductions before the split between the required cuts in the School Department and town departments budgets, the task force reduced the size of the deficit that needed to be covered by the School Department to \$2.07 million.

John then walked through a brief, four-slide presentation showing the School Department's preliminary analysis as to how that \$2.07 million deficit might be covered. Some of the key points included:

- In addition to not filling the 10.6 FTEs that are budgeted to be added in FY 22 if the override passes, another 15 FTE positions would be eliminated – 9 teaching positions (three each from each of the elementary, middle, and high schools, respectively) and another six administrative and support positions. The foregoing said, John was clear that the proposed slide represents more of a framework for the types of cuts that will be required rather than an exact blueprint for how the actual cuts would be made. For example, John noted that the enrollment bulge in the middle school might require fewer cuts there and more at the elementary or high school level. Similarly, the School Department might conclude that one or more of the 10.60 proposed new FTEs are critical, so might add some of the budgeted positions at the expense of even more cuts to existing staff.
- In addition to the personnel reductions, the School Department is projecting that they will need to cut about \$418,000 from the General Fund budget for sports and extracurricular activities and another \$170,000 or so from the budget for supplies and materials.

John then opened the meeting up for questions/comments. Among the questions and comments:

- Geoff inquired whether the School Department was considering possibly using more SPED reserves from the various reserve balances so that fewer General Fund dollars would need to be expended next year to replenish the General Fund budget reductions towards SPED costs made in FY 21.
- Paul Roberts made a compelling case that cutting supplies might actually be more painful than cutting an additional FTE position because cutting supplies can hamstring the teachers' ability to do their job.

### **Adjournment**

The Education Subcommittee portion of the joint meeting was adjourned at 9:29 AM.