

**Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee**  
**March 3, 2022 7:30 PM**  
**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

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**TOWN CLERK**  
**BELMONT, MA**

DATE: June 21, 2022  
TIME: 9:06 AM

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Members in Attendance**

Anne Helgen, Paul Rickter, Laurie Slap, Jack Weis

### **Call to Order**

After a long technical delay getting access to the Zoom video meeting link, the meeting was called to order at 7:55 PM.

### **Discussion of FY 23 School Department Budget**

The group had a robust and wide-ranging discussion regarding the FY 23 School Department budget. The discussion ended up focusing on three major themes, as follows:

- Using the FY 22 budget as the starting point for the FY 23 budget understates the year-over-year growth in the budget because, as noted in recent meetings with the Finance Subcommittee, the Q2 financial results are projecting a year-end surplus of approximately \$710,000. Moreover, that year-end surplus is after the School Committee authorized an additional 19.95 unbudgeted FTEs to be hired in FY 22 (although, admittedly, not all of those positions were filled) and is also after the inclusion of approximately \$425,000 in unbudgeted expenditures for COVID-related tents. If one looks at the year-over-year growth in the FY 23 budget using the Q2 projected actual General Fund expenses, the FY 23 budget is up by closer to \$5.0 million, or 7.7%.
- The FY 23 budget seemingly does not fully utilize the available outside state Circuit Breaker funding for out-of-district tuitions. The department's FY 22 Q2 financial projections assume that the full FY 22 General Fund budget will be used for OOD expenses. However, in part due to a \$450,000 increase in state Circuit Breaker funds and \$166,000 in unbudgeted LABBB credits, the department is currently projecting to end FY 22 with a carryforward balance of about \$2.2 million in reserves, an increase of about \$900,000 over the FY 21 year-end balance. The projected cumulative year-end FY 23 carryforward balance is up an additional \$700,000 to \$2.9 million, more than double the targeted year-end FY 21 carryforward reserve balance of \$1.3 million.
- The overall growth rate in the School Department budget, both in FY 23 and over the past several years, is unsustainable. Setting aside the prior comment about the FY 22 budget comparison understating the true growth rate, the FY 23 General Fund budget is up 4.9% from the FY 22 budget and is up 5.5% if one includes the traditional non-COVID grants and revolving funds. Year-over-year General Fund staffing is up 13.03 FTEs (consisting of 6.20 new positions and 6.85 unbudgeted FY 22 hires that are being carried over into FY 23). Moreover, this growth rate has been sustained over a number of years. As the department's budget book shows, the School Department budget has grown almost \$10 million, or 17%, over the FY 20 actual expenditures. The growth in the total budget (excluding expenditures covered out of COVID-relief funds) is up \$10.5 million, or 16%. The growth in FTEs has been equally steady. Total FTEs from all sources (again excluding those funded through COVID-relief sources) since the FY 20 budget and through the FY 23 budget are up 24.6, or 4.4%. Due to the transition to full-time kindergarten, the growth in FTEs funded through the General Fund is more substantial, 43.3, or 8.6%, in just three years.

Jack will reach out to Geoff Lubien to give him a heads-up on our subcommittee's initial big-picture analysis of the current FY 23 School Department budget and to ask him if he wants to join the meeting with the Finance Subcommittee on Tuesday, March 8th.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 PM.