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DATE: March 20, 2024
TIME: 3:06 PM

**Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee
November 21, 2023 8:00 AM
Town Hall, Select Board Conference Room and Remote via Zoom**

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee: Bill Anderson, Sue Croy, Anne Helgen, Paul Rickter, Matt Taylor, Jack Weis

School Committee Finance Subcommittee: Jamal Saeh, Jung Yueh, Amy Zuccarello

School Department Administration: Superintendent Jill Geiser, Finance Director Tony DiCologero, Interim Assistant Superintendent Lucia Sullivan

Others: Warrant Committee Chair Geoff Lubien

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM.

FY 23 Q4 Financial Results Summary

In the interest of time, we did not ask Tony to walk through his customary spreadsheets on the actual expenses. Instead, we moved right to questions from the Ed Subcommittee.

Key points raised during the associated discussion regarding the General Fund included:

- FY 23 ended with a positive variance of about \$350,000, including the \$250,000 transfer from the Warrant Committee at year end.
- Regular education transportation costs were higher than budgeted, primarily due to allocating fewer costs to the revolving account out of concerns that the department will need to rely more heavily on the revolving fund in FY 24.
- Substitute expenses were higher than budgeted due to a combination of more unanticipated unplanned absences as well as unfilled vacancies at the high school which necessitated hiring substitutes.
- District support expenses were higher than budgeted due to the on-going costs of software licenses for technology initially acquired during the COVID pandemic as well as on-going Chromebook repairs (attributable to regular wear and tear) and the hiring of a search consultant.
- Special education (SPED) expenses were up considerably for the year. However, much of the impact from the increase in out-of-district (OOD) tuitions was felt in the other non-General Fund revenue sources. The General Fund expenses were up by about \$100,000. However, other non-OOD General Fund SPED expenses were up about \$450,000.

The group also briefly discussed the revolving funds, focusing on the annual balance from operations (fees collected versus expenses) in comparison to the ending fund balances.

FY 25 School Budget Discussion

The group then discussed the preliminary FY 25 School Department budget. Key points discussed included:

- The starting point for the budget was the “roll-forward” budget. In developing this estimate, the School Department excluded any FTEs hired in FY 24 that were not originally included in the FY 24 budget. Those positions are incorporated into the department’s “reallocation” numbers.
- All materials and supplies were indexed off of the FY 24 budget at a 2.5% growth rate.
- The salary numbers include the slight “fractional” salary increases for staff who are being paid out of grants but where the grant funds are not increasing.
- SPED costs are currently simply indexed at 7% over the FY 24 projected costs. That said, the group agreed that a more detailed estimate based on projected enrollments and sources of funds was warranted. The two subcommittees will plan to get together at some point in December after Tony has had the opportunity to update his three-year sources and uses model.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.