

**Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee**  
**Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee**  
**December 1, 2020 8:00 AM**  
**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

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

DATE: January 11, 2021  
TIME: 2:19 PM

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Members in Attendance**

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

**School Committee:** Amy Checkoway, Mike Crowley, Tara Donner, Evelyn Gomez, Andrea Prestwich, Kate Bowen, Superintendent John Phelan, Finance Director Tony DiCologero

### **Call to Order**

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

### **Q1 FY21 Update**

Tony walked through the typical Excel spreadsheet he prepares.

Regarding the General Fund:

- There is a \$477,000 negative variance in the elementary teacher salary account. About \$320,000 of this variance is due to the decision to fund full-day kindergarten entirely out of the General Fund. The rest is primarily due to teachers taking leaves and being replaced by teachers earning higher salaries (a dynamic that is opposite of what normally occurs). John noted that out of 51 requests for leave, there are currently 6 teachers out on leave and another 23 teachers who are on “work from home” leave, with their in-person teaching duties being handled by substitutes. There are another 9 aides on leave.
- The variances in the special education salary and non-salary accounts essentially offset each other. Those variances are primarily a function of the form of provider organization, and whether the staff at those particular providers are classified as employees or contractors (something the School Department doesn’t control).
- The special education tuitions account is showing a negative available balance. This is really a timing difference due to the fact that the state hasn’t yet set its FY 21 budget, so, technically, we don’t know what our FY 21 circuit breaker allocation will be. (The state has provided a Q1 allocation.) Tony anticipates that once the state budget is set, we should receive essentially what the School Department had been projecting. For now, the variance report makes a conservative assumption that the General Fund will need to fund the entire amount beyond the Q1 circuit breaker allocation. However, there are adequate funds in our circuit breaker carry-forward reserve balance to cover the shortfall if the town were not to receive any more than the Q1 allocation.

For the revolving accounts:

- The negative variances in the YTD Expended column are primarily timing differences.
- For Full-Day Kindergarten, the positive 7/1/20 balance will be reduced to zero by 6/30/21. The department is paying some salaries out of that account until the existing funds in the account are depleted. The department did receive some fees from residents at the start of FY 21, but those fees will be refunded.

- The department is expecting to have to pick up a higher share of the busing fees out of the General Fund. The number of buses and the number of runs are the same as originally expected, but because of COVID restrictions and hybrid learning, the buses are only running at one-third capacity, meaning that there will be fewer user fees than originally expected to cover the transportation costs.

For grants, the negative balances in the Balance On-Hand column are primarily timing differences. For the CVRF account (the COVID 225 grant), unlike most grants, the department was required to first incur the costs and then submit for reimbursement. The department submitted the request for reimbursement for expenses that were incurred to date on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **FY 22 Budget Update**

There was a brief review of the presentation on the FY 22 budget made at the November 23<sup>rd</sup> joint meeting of the Select Board, School Committee, and Warrant Committee. John mentioned the 33 additional FTEs that the department has projected they will need for FY 22 to FY 25. For the FY 22 budget, the additional budgeted FTEs are based on the department's long-term needs assuming a return to a normal in-person learning environment. Any new hires made in FY 21, even if funded out of the General Fund, have been eliminated from the budget, except as explicitly projected as new positions in FY 22. The department, though, has identified additional, temporary positions that might be needed in FY 22 if the schools continue to operate next year in a COVID environment. Those positions are not included in the current budget but are instead in the department's so-called "parking lot".

There was also a brief discussion about tracking FY 21 headcount. John agreed to prepare a table showing the change in department headcount from the number upon which the final FY 21 budget was predicated versus what was in place as of the end of Q2 of FY 21.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 AM.