

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee
February 23, 2022 8:00 AM
Remote Meeting via Zoom

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BELMONT, MA

DATE: June 21, 2022
TIME: 9:04 AM

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee: Anne Helgen, Paul Rickter, Laurie Slap, Jack Weis

School Committee: Mike Crowley, Meg Moriarty

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

Others: Geoff Lubien, Roy Epstein

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 AM.

FY 22 Q2 Budget Update

Tony walked through his customary Excel spreadsheet. The department is currently projecting about a \$700,000 positive General Fund variance at year end. On a net basis, virtually all of this is positive variance is due to savings in the salary lines, primarily due to the customary turnover savings. Additionally, there are projected positive variances of about \$150,000 in the substitutes line (fewer needed), \$110,000 in the benefits line, and \$85,000 in the expenses line, which are offset by a projected negative variance of about \$425,000 in districtwide expenses associated with the rental of tents to achieve social distancing at the various schools.

Mike asked a question about how much those savings would be reduced if the department filled the current open positions. Per John, there are about 10 open positions, but John also indicated that at this point the department was no longer actually looking to fill all of them.

John made a general comment about how this is a unique time with various sources of federal and state funds coming in and out, which makes it more difficult to anticipate the trending and run rate of expenditures.

Anne made the comment that there are a lot of non-recurring expenses in the Q2 numbers – e.g., one-year positions funded through turnover savings, the tents, etc.

Laurie made a request that we get Q2 actual numbers using the budget categories, which will help us in our FY 23 budget analysis.

The discussion turned to the revolving accounts which were addressed via questions. The variances in food service and busing both reflect timing differences, in that the analysis includes a full year of estimated expenses, but only a partial year of revenues. The variance in building revenues is attributed to the fact that building rentals are down, as well as to the fact that the department purchased some equipment like air purifiers.

John turned to and walked through a spreadsheet on SPED contract services. Anne inquired whether if adding psychologists to the FY 23 budget would produce an equivalent savings in the contract services expenditures. John responded that it isn't a one-for-one swap and that there are other contacted SPED services besides psychological services (e.g. speech therapists, etc.).

FY 23 Out-of-District Tuitions

Tony had previously distributed the most recent three-year OOD projections.

John noted that the state Circuit Breaker rules have changed (with the state now increasing its reimbursement rate to 75%), which has had a positive impact on the budget. John also stated that he is working with the town as to the best use of FY 22 funds, the impact that has on the FY 23 budget, and with an eye on FY 24 and FY 25.

Mike stated that he thinks the department should be targeting a carryover reserve balance similar to last year, i.e., around \$1.3-\$1.5 million. John replied that he and Tony agree, although they would be inclined to set the number in the \$1.5-\$1.6 million range. Bottom line, the School Committee needs to establish a target number for a year-end carryover balance for the department to manage towards.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.