

Belmont School Committee Minutes
Finance Subcommittee
October 28, 2011
Conference Room of the School Administration Building

Present: Ms. Laurie Slap, Co-Chair, Co-Secretary
Mr. Kevin Cunningham, Co-Chair, Co-Secretary
Dr. Thomas Kingston, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Anne Lougee of the School Committee also attended

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Slap called the meeting to order at 12:14 p.m. in the conference room of the School Administration Building.

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

2.1 Report of Warrant Committee Contacts

Dr. Kingston had reported about his meeting with Liz Allison, Chair of the Warrant Committee, in which he broached some of the recommendations of the finance subcommittee. He reported that she would not be in favor of changing the date of the delivery of the initial available revenue budget, but would be happy to meet with the whole School Committee at any time.

Among the reasons the WC Chair offered for keeping the simultaneous delivery of the budgets was the notion that the pressure to produce the budgets was a positive force, that could help focus efforts toward innovation. (Dr. Kingston reported that he will be meeting with Clayton Christensen regarding innovation in the schools on November 22.) Ms. Lougee suggested that we do already innovate, but perhaps we don't communicate these innovations effectively (she gave the example of using iPads in support of some autistic students). Along these lines, Dr. Kingston also noted that he had met with Representative Will Brownsberger about virtual learning and "innovation school" models.

The group discussed "innovation" as a term, distinguishing cleverness with existing systems versus completely revising models of teaching. They also discussed what the primary goal of innovation would be: to improve student outcomes, or to save costs?

They contemplated two tracks of activity about innovations: 1) demonstrating/communicating about innovations already underway in the

schools, 2) consider adjustments to the budget to support innovations (possibly introducing override discussions).

2.2. Progress on Long-Term Subcommittee Report

Mr. Cunningham presented a summary of the Report in its current form. The group discussed some of the key points.

Ms. Slap emphasized that she did not want the report to suggest that there is no need for available revenue and allocation figures early in the process. Mr. Cunningham agreed that the recommendations should not be construed as eliminating these important estimates, but they should be owned by the governing boards, with the Warrant Committee putting forward figures for reference. The group agreed that public input at various stages of the budget process was important.

Regarding the "split", Ms. Slap hoped that the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, etc. would work early behind the scenes to find available revenue, such that the available revenue figure known at the end of January (incorporating the Governor's proposal) would be as realistic as possible. She noted the excellent cooperation of the BOS and the SC near the end of last year's budget process, and hoped that that cooperation could be in place through the whole budget season this year.

There was some discussion of using the level service budget as a reference budget.

3. ADJOURNMENT

At 12:57 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Ms. Slap, it was

VOTED unanimously (2-0) to adjourn the meeting

Respectfully submitted by 
Kevin Cunningham, Co-secretary