

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Catherine Bowen, Secretary
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Ms. Evelyn Gomez
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations
Mr. Michael McAllister, Director of Human Capital

1. Opening Business

1.1 Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

Member Bowen requested an adjustment to the agenda order to discuss FY22 Budget Timeline first. Chair Prestwich accepted the request.

2. FY22 Budget Timeline

Supt. Phelan reviewed timeline (FY22 SCHOOL BUDGET TIMELINE - DRAFT; 2020-8-11 DRAFT FY22 Budget Calendar Schedule). The goal of the budget timeline is to prepare for a contingent budget (one that includes an override vote) and a non-contingent budget (one without an override vote). The non-contingent budget will have to include plans on how to share funds, utilizing a one-budget approach and assuming there are reductions. The Financial Task Force II is hoping to have more information in November. The dates for the budget timeline are tight for the school department, which are trying to be in line with the Town calendar while navigating the many changes to operational conditions. Budget conversations will begin with the Leadership Council (Directors, Principals, and Asst. Supt) and School Committee next week. School Committee members suggested at the earliest sign the proposed budget does not work equitably for the schools, a meeting with the Select Board would be organized. The School Committee agreed to hold Finance Subcommittee meetings more frequently going forward.

3. FY21 Coronavirus Relief "225" Grant Update

Tony DiCologero provided an update on the Coronavirus 225 School Relief Grant. The name "225" is based on the dollars per student. It works out to be an increase of one million dollars. Mr. DiCologero explained the different DESE grant categories. All the expenses have to be incurred by December 30.

The staff has the ability to request a 12-week leave. There have been leave requests and requests to work remote-only. Michael McAllister, Director of Human Capital explained the different types of leave available to Belmont educators. Additional staff will be needed for hybrid learning models. The district has been working on how to implement that, including consideration of streaming live-instruction. The accelerated timeline for entering into hybrid has not really affected the number of requests for leave.

Tony DiCologero explained stipend Director of Nursing Beth Rumley received a stipend for additional hours worked over the summer. School Committee Chair Prestwich suggested penciling in \$200k funding for Covid testing.

4. Town COVID Grant – School Expenses Update

When CARES Act funds were made available through the Town, there were initial expenses incurred during spring 2020. There was guidance from the state on what was eligible with the DESE grant. (SCHOOL EXPENSES CHARGED TO TOWN COVID GRANT 2020-09-29; FY21 CvRF GRANT SUMMARY) The funds were used for custodial time for cleaning schools, food service to prepare meals for free and reduced lunch students. Devices (chromebooks and iPads) were purchased for students and staff. Personal protection equipment (PPE) was purchased by the Facilities Department to be distributed to all schools. School Committee member Crowley asked if it is possible to charge a couple of crossing guards to the Town grant. School Committee Member Bowen noted the concern from community members on the reduction in School Crossing Guards, interest in collaborating with the Belmont Police Department, and the need for a transportation subcommittee on the School Committee to ensure an equitable approach to transit. The School Committee discussed charging some of the expenses to the CARES Act funds, rather than the 225 grant. Jon Marshall, Assistant Town Administrator has been working collaboratively with the departments to ensure all aid funds are used to the greatest extent possible. Supt. Phelan indicated they would be purchasing more PPE and possibly more air purifier units. Member Bowen recommended they look to LEED and WELL [International WELL Building Institute] guides for approaches to cleaning and chemicals that would support air quality for students and staff.

5. FY21 High School Athletics Fees

At a previous meeting, the School Committee approved the plan put forward by the Athletic Director and Supt. Phelan for a modified Fall 1 sports season. Programs follow guidelines approved by Belmont Health Department, Belmont School Committee and MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, Inc.). The planning for sports has been a significant amount of work for the school nursing department.

Tony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations provided an overview of how much the abbreviated fall season will cost (FY21 ATHLETICS BUDGET ANTICIPATED COSTS 2020-09-25). From a finance perspective, Dir. DiCologero presented a financial plan incorporating fees at \$300 per sport for the remaining seasons and adjusted sports operational measures, to evaluate what the impact is on the FY21 budget.

The goal is to provide the fee amount to families as soon as possible. The School Committee approved a one-time fee reduction to \$325 for the first season. The School Committee was provided a list of all approved clubs and activities at their last meeting. Committee members expressed support for students to have access to some form of extracurricular connection in remote learning. Some clubs tied to external organizations are not running in their usual manner, so students may not have their typical options. Belmont Health Director Wes Chin has approved in-person drama, theater, marching band and soapbox derby club for high school students. Parent-teacher organizations can move forward with

proposals for their after school events; principals would review these in conjunction with the Health Department. School Committee members suggested not limiting athletic programming to those offered only by the MIAA to support student physical activity. Member Donner inquired about availability for Cross Country for middle school students.

Supt. Phelan indicated that bus fees and FTEs would be included in next meeting agenda items.

6. Adjourn

On a motion offered Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, the School Committee VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by 
Catherine Bowen, Secretary