

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA.

MAR 5 8 55 AM '14

Town of Belmont
Warrant Committee
Education Subcommittee

2013-14

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes for December 17, 2013
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee
School Administration Building Conference Room

Members Present: Bob Sarno, Jim Gammill, Raffi Manjikian
Members Absent: Pat Brusch and Elizabeth Grob
School Committee Members Present: Laurie Slap, Anne Lougée, Kevin Cunningham
School Administrative Officials Present: Thomas Kingston, Anthony DiCologero

Lacking a quorum, the Education Subcommittee members present participated as the School Committee Finance Subcommittee convened at 8:10 am.

Interim Superintendent Kingston began with a brief overview of the ongoing work of several groups composed of School Committee members and school officials. Among the topics under study are (1) the enrollment base and projections for future enrollment; (2) class sizes; and (3) preparation for contract negotiations.

The School Finance Subcommittee invited Education Subcommittee Chair Sarno to ask questions about the first quarter financial reports. Business and Finance Director DiCologero explained the nature of the spending in those accounts with higher than expected activities in the first quarter. No issues arose that were deemed to need further follow-up. Dr. Kingston gave an overview of the district's current approach to deploying legal services, and noted, for information, that some districts have brought legal services in house. Regarding out of district tuitions and spending for special education services, at this point there is no perceived need to request access to the stabilization fund.

Dr. Kingston then discussed ongoing research into enrollment increases. He said the increases were similar to those seen in neighboring districts, and the attractiveness of the district is a draw for families to move to Belmont, either as renters or homeowners.

At this point, the Education Subcommittee achieved a quorum, and Chair Sarno called the meeting to order at 8:50 am.

The enrollment trends discussion continued, with a focus on the Chenery middle school. Various strategies were envisioned if the current trends continue. Dr. Kingston cited earlier work that projected 30 additional students upon completion of the Cushing Square project, and 100 additional students if the current plan for the Uplands is developed. It

was also noted, as an observation, that existing housing traditionally used by older residents is often transitioning to families with school age children.

Chair Sarno then asked for a discussion on the current FTE measures, as provided prior to the meeting. The school officials noted that ELL teachers account for several of the increases, in response to the number of ELL students increasing from 117 to 184. It was confirmed that the FTE numbers presented represent a good overview of the system, and are not affected by current vacancies.

Regarding the preparation and distribution of financial reports, Mr. DiCologero estimated that the second quarter reports would be available before the 2015 budget presentation in February. He is looking forward to the migration of the MUNIS system to the cloud, and he is looking forward to streamlining report generation after that migration.

Regarding the calendar for 2015 budget preparations, Mr. DiCologero said he is preparing a "roll ahead" projection of the cost of providing 2014 services in 2015, as well as an available revenues budget. He is currently receiving 2015 budget requests from the members of the leadership council.

Next was a discussion of sick bank and leave utilization policies and practices, with Dr. Kingston explaining the current agreement to regard utilization of leave as a contractual matter and to exclude it from the evaluation system. The current focus of the evaluation system is to support continuous improvement across all employees.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of special education services and what information is available to the Education Subcommittee. Reference was made to the Walker Report and inquiries about the data that was available to produce that analysis. Dr. Kingston described his request to legal counsel to clarify whether or not particular information can be provided to the Education Subcommittee, and that he is adhering to that legal guidance. Those present then discussed in broader terms about how this topic might be addressed in the future, to provide additional insight to the Education Subcommittee about the current and future shape of the cost structure for these services. A suggestion was made that Ken Kramer, the Director of Student Services, be invited to a subsequent meeting to talk about this topic in the context of broad population trends and other similar factors.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.