

Warrant Committee
October 14, 2020 7:30pm
Remote Meeting via Zoom

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: June 21, 2021
TIME: 9:01 AM

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee: Laurie Slap, Paul Rickter, Mike Crowley, Ellen Schreiber, Elizabeth Dionne, John Alcock, Christine Doyle, Jennifer Fallon, Andrew Levin, Daniel Halston, Anne Helgen, Geoffrey Lubien, Robert McLaughlin, Lynn Read, Jack Weis, Roy Epstein, Michael Crowley

Other: Jon Marshall

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

I. Approve minutes. (none)

II. Review of Final FY20 financial reports – Town & School.

Ms. Garvin provided a review of the Final FY20 financial report for the town.

- COVID has had an impact on both revenues and expenses.
- The following is an overview of town revenue:
 - Regarding real and personal property taxes, there is a shortfall. However, this could be due to timing issues because of the transition to a new fiscal year. This is a normal occurrence.
 - The town saw a trail off in the collection of excise taxes, which other towns are also experiencing. The town is hoping that this is a blip.
 - Meals tax, parking revenues, Library and Recreation revenues, police fines, rental fees, Board of Health permits are all down as an effect of COVID. There has been an estimated impact of lost revenue of \$579,000 in local receipts.
 - There has been a major decrease in ambulance receipts.
 - Town Clerk fees have increased because of an increase in death certificates.
 - Building Department revenues (building permits) are up by \$60,000. The town will be keeping an eye on this in relation to the estimated revenue.
- Committee member questions and comments:
 - Earnings on investment brought in revenue due to the High School. This is a positive variance that the town will not see in FY2022.
 - To clarify, the \$579,000 is a net reduction from the FY20 estimate to the actuals. It may not be all COVID related reductions.
- The following is an overview of town expenses:

- There was a spending freeze during the last two months of the fiscal year (May and June) which the town anticipated. The town saw savings across all Departments.
- The Police and Fire Departments did not allow vacations which provided staff savings related to overtime. There were 3 vacancies within the Fire Department which did generate overtime costs. There may be 3 additional future vacancies in the Fire Department in the upcoming 2021 spring.
- The town tried to only spend money where necessary.
- There is a vacancy within the Facilities Department. Their Department has been all hands-on deck during the entirety of COVID.
- Free cash will hopefully be certified soon.
- Committee member questions and comments:
 - What kinds of savings did the town see?
 - On the salary side, unless there is a vacancy within a Department, there are no savings. There were savings for travel, which ceased during COVID.
 - Will the freeze on vacations impact the Public Safety budget in FY21?
 - The vacation freeze was lifted, and the Departments were warned ahead of time to watch overtime. There have not been any concerns raised from the Chiefs since the freeze was lifted.
 - Does the town expect restitution for COVID related costs?
 - The town has been tracking COVID related expenses. All requests have been going through the Town Administrator's office, so they are carefully tracked. The town did receive federal funding to cover these expenses. The federal aid went into a special revenue account which the COVID expenses have been charged to. The costs have been moved out of the General Fund.
 - There was a savings in some pensions and retirements. Can you speak to that?
 - That includes Workers Comp, Unemployment, Medicare, Life Insurance, etc. You find savings related to Medicare when people leave the town's health insurance system.
 - The town is in the process of obtaining their free cash number from the Department of Revenue.
 - Is there an update regarding the state funds for FY21?
 - Gov. Baker has provided numbers which now need to be sent to the State Legislature. It is expected that the budget will be level funded.
 - Are excess COVID funds directed to free cash? Will it help manage FY22?
 - Yes, but the town will need to receive their free cash number and needs to discuss this further.

Mr. Jack Weis provided a review of the Final FY20 financial report for the schools.

- Teacher salaries total just under \$30 million. The expenditures related to the budget was about 98%.

- Substitutes and non-salaried school expenditures had significant savings because of COVID and the early termination of in-person school. This totaled about 60% of their budget.
- The \$745,000 negative variance was a result of the effort to make sure that every student had an electronic device for remote learning. \$645,000 of that has been reimbursed from the CARES fund. The School Department is reflecting that expense in these numbers.
 - The CARES Act guidance has been a moving target since first established. The federal funding goes into a special revenue account which COVID related expenses are charged to.
- The School Committee decided to increase the contribution to the General Fund that goes towards transportation to offset increased costs. Portions of the bussing fees were returned to families.
- Will the decrease in school enrollment reflect a savings?
 - A large percentage of the school enrollment decrease was children entering Kindergarten which may be an effect of COVID (anecdotally). It does not appear that this will drive savings. Enrollment is expected to return to normal figures.
 - There is no reduction in FTE's.
 - There is a push for DESE to consider FY19-20 enrollment figures for school funding.
- Can we gather data rather than speculate regarding the decrease in school enrollment?

III. Review of COVID-related reimbursements.

Mr. Marshall reported that Belmont is in the process of seeking FEMA reimbursements. Some reimbursements are both FEMA and CARES Act eligible. These reimbursements can be funded 75% through FEMA with the remaining 25% to be covered by CARES funding. The town needs to send both the known and anticipated expenses by the end of November. CARES Act funding will end December 30, 2020.

The School Department has access to a 225 grant.

IV. Update on rink RFP.

The town is still working internally and hopes to bring a complete update to the Select Board in November.

V. Plans for FY22 budget development.

This will be a standard item for every meeting until Town Meeting. Budgets are due from the Departments by October 19th. Departments will prepare budgets in the event of an override/no override. The financial model will be run and updated as information becomes available.

VI. WC appointments to the Structural Reform Committee.

Chairwoman Slap appointed Ms. Anne Helgen and Mr. Paul Rickter to the Structural Reform Committee.

VII. Reports from Select Board, Town Administrator, School Committee, and liaisons.

The Long-Term Capital Budget Committee has begun meeting.

The Structural Reform Committee is still looking for four residents to join the group.

The School Building Committee reported that the project is on time and on budget.

The next Warrant Committee will take place 10/28/20.

VIII. Adjournment.

Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 8:48pm. (Motion passed unanimously).

Submitted by,

Katie Luczai

Documents Used:

1. Town Final FY20 Financial Report

2. School Final FY20 Financial Report.