

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
Joint Meeting with the School Committee Finance Subcommittee
April 30, 2020 3:00 PM
Remote Meeting via Zoom

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DATE: May 12, 2020
TIME: 9:11 AM

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee: Chris Doyle, Anne Helgen, Geoff Lubien, Paul Rickter, Jack Weis

School Committee: Kate Bowen, Amy Checkoway, Mike Crowley, Tara Donner, Andrea Prestwich, Superintendent John Phelan, Finance Director Tony DiCologero, Chenery Principal Mike McAllister

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 PM.

Impact of COVID-19 on FY 20 and FY 21

The administration hopes to have an update on Q3 actual results for next week's meeting. That update will also include an update on the impact of the expense savings policy initiatives the department recently undertook. And, in response to a question, Tony confirmed that the Q3 numbers would include an update to the projected \$188,000 budget surplus that was included in the Q2 actual results, as well as a firm grip on the final projected FY 20 OOD tuitions.

Tony presented a spreadsheet showing the administration's proposed budget savings for FY 21. The proposed budget savings total \$658,000, of which \$598,000 represent savings in salaries and \$60,000 are non-salary savings. Some of the key components of these savings are as follows:

- The administration is proposing to eliminate 1.8 of the originally-proposed 5.8 new FTEs, for a total savings of about \$124,000. These cuts would come from the proposed additions to the high school staff. The department is proposing to retain the 4.0 additions at the middle school. Per John, while the high school class sizes are growing, for now they are manageable. However, the middle school class sizes have become too large.
- An additional unspecified \$220,000 in other salary adjustments/savings. John was not very specific about how this number was calculated. He seemed to suggest at one point that this number included so-called attrition savings resulting from having some existing teachers retire or otherwise leave the district next year and be backfilled by new hires at somewhat lower salaries. However, it was not completely clear whether the proposed budget savings included such attrition savings.
- Approximately \$169,000 in savings by lowering the projected increase in health insurance premiums from 4% to 3%. However, John readily acknowledged that this amount is almost certainly double-counting the savings that Patrice Garvin already projected when she identified \$3.9 million in potential savings.
- Approximately \$60,000 in non-salary savings through reductions in purchases of texts, curriculum materials, and other supplies.

John noted that this was a first pass at identifying potential savings and acknowledged that others might expect the School Department to contribute more. He indicated that the administration would take another pass to identify where additional cuts would have to be made if the School Department was asked to achieve \$1.1 million in budget savings. However, he also expressed a hope that such an analysis would also be undertaken on the Town departments as well, so that a holistic comparison could be made as to which cuts people felt would be least painful to the town overall.

The Education Subcommittee agreed that we would meet separately and independently to come up with various “what about?” questions and “what if?” suggestions as to other potential ways the School Department might achieve additional budget cuts. We agreed to meet sometime next Tuesday, May 5, 2020, and will send our questions and comments to John and Tony as soon as possible after we meet.

Next Meeting

The Education Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at a time to be determined. The next joint meeting of the Education Subcommittee and the School Committee Finance Subcommittee will be on Thursday, May 7, 2020, at 3:00 PM.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 PM.