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DATE: June 12, 2023
TIME: 9:46 AM

**Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee
February 8, 2023 7:30 PM
Town Hall, Conference Room 4**

Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance

Bill Anderson, Anne Helgen, Paul Rickter, Laurie Slap, Matt Taylor, Jack Weis

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM.

Discussion of FY 24 School Department Budget

The subcommittee reviewed the so-called Budget Reduction Options that the School Department presented to the School Committee at the January 24th School Committee meeting. We also discussed the Draft 2 FY 24 School Department budget that the department will be presenting at the Budget Summit the following night (February 9th), focusing on the 35-page executive summary, not the detailed 124-page budget book.

Key conclusions drawn from the discussion included:

- Overall, the subcommittee felt that the School Department should be able to manage with the additional \$4 million in free cash that is being proposed to utilize for the School Department budget.
- The foregoing said, the subcommittee is struggling with the fact that the town is proposing to utilize \$4 million in free cash, \$1 million of which is going to capitalize a replenishment of the School Department's carry-forward out-of-district tuition reserve at the end of FY 24. Some subcommittee members questioned whether those funds might be better left in the town's reserves.
- Subtracting out the impact of fringe benefits and custodial costs being removed from the School Department budget to the new "shared services" portion of the town budget, the School Department General Fund budget is increasing by about \$6.8 million, or about 12.3%. That is an unsustainable rate of increase.
- The subcommittee feels that there are efficiencies and budget savings that are achievable in the departmental budget that could minimize the impact of budget cuts that are being proposed by the department in the Draft 2 budget.

Jack will be prepared to share these conclusions at the forthcoming February 9th budget summit.

In addition to the foregoing, Jack noticed a technical issue in how the School Department calculated the total out-of-district tuition expenses which overstates the total FY 24 tuition expense by the \$1.1 million projected carry-forward reserve amount. This does not have any impact on the General Fund portion of the budget, but it does overstate the department's total budget. Jack will share this with Tony in advance of tomorrow's budget summit.

We have a meeting scheduled with the School Department administration, the School Committee chair, and the Warrant Committee representative from the School Committee on the morning of February 15th, in advance of the full Warrant Committee meeting later that night, to discuss these ideas further. That said, the Ed Subcommittee recognizes that it is the

School Department, under the oversight of the School Committee, that ultimately decides how the budgeted dollars will actually be spent.

In advance of our meeting on February 15th, in order to pull our thoughts together about the potential efficiencies and savings that the subcommittee sees as possible changes in the budget that might offset other proposed budget cuts, the subcommittee will meet again on the morning of February 13th.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the previous Ed Subcommittee meetings of October 11, 2022, November 14, 2022, December 12, 2022, December 13, 2022, January 5, 2023, and January 6, 2023 were reviewed and discussed. Subject to one minor edit to the December 13th minutes, all were approved.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 PM.