

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM  
JANUARY 7, 2014**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair  
Ms. Anne Lougée, Secretary  
Mr. Kevin Cunningham  
Ms. Lisa Fiore  
Ms. Elyse Shuster  
Ms. Laurie Slap  
Dr. Thomas Kingston, Interim Superintendent  
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction  
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Business, Finance and Operations

Also present: Max Davidowitz, Student Representative

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Graham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham updated the Committee on recent and upcoming events throughout the town.

1.6 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston reminded parents that if there is bad weather and schools are open, parents may choose to keep their child at home if they believe conditions for getting to and from school are unsafe. He stated that two days will be added to the school calendar at the end of the school year due to last week's cancellations due to the snowstorm.

Dr. Kingston announced that the installation of solar panels on the Wellington School was approved by the Belmont Planning Board. The time frame for the installation is not yet known. Some work may take place during the school breaks and it is hoped that the solar panels will be in full operation by next fall.

Dr. Kingston stated that the conversion to from oil to gas powered heat at Belmont High School (BHS) is now complete. Mr. DiCologero suggested that we are only partially completed. He also mentioned there are still problems with the Higginbottom Pool at BHS. The pool is currently closed due to elevated chlorine levels which were the result of a malfunctioning pump and ongoing ventilation issues. Dr. Kingston reported that work is progressing as quickly as possible to correct the problem so the pool can re-open.

Dr. Kingston reported that there are 4,305 students currently enrolled in the Belmont Public Schools (BPS). He stated that the modeling group assigned to study enrollment issues is putting together data on future enrollment trends. The group plans to prepare a white paper on how to more accurately predict and manage enrollment growth.

Ms. Darias announced that the Foundation for Belmont Education (FBE) Board has awarded 15 grants to the BPS in the first of its two annual award cycles. She noted that there was a wonderful range of projects that were funded. The details about each of the grants can be found on the FBE website. These grants are in addition to the \$116,000 Innovative Teaching grant – the first year of a four-year grant – the FBE awarded the district. Ms. Darius reported that the two FBE fall fundraisers – the Annual Spelling Bee and the Dan Scharfman Memorial 5k Road Race – each raised in excess of \$20,000. The FBE's annual dinner and auction gala is scheduled to take place on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Darius thanked the FBE for its incredible support to the schools.

#### 1.7 Director of Finance, Business and Operations' Report

Mr. DiCologero reported that the Leadership Council has been working to submit requests for salary and non-salary items in light of enrollment and other needs for FY15 and beyond. He and Dr. Kingston met with David Kale, Town Administrator, to discuss the initial draft of the budget.

## 2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

## 3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

### 3.1 Global Leadership Course – Dr. Jeff Shea – Exhibit A

Dr. Jeff Shea presented an overview of his Global Leadership Course which came about through professional development ideas and was funded by Primary Source. The course focuses on major global problems facing communities around the world. Students learn what it means to be a global citizen and how the world's problems relate to the lives of people living in the United States. Students had the opportunity to take a field trip to visit Partners in Health (PIH) in Cambridge where they were able to explore careers in the non-profit sector. Students in the Global Leadership course also study the pros and cons of microfinance. Dr. Shea explained that the purpose of the course is to allow students to

learn more about the developing world and the challenges people face as well as to develop skills necessary to analyze issues from multiple perspectives.

### 3.2 Belmont High School Program of Studies 2014-2015: 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Exhibit B

Belmont High School Principal Dan Richards outlined the process of updating the BHS Program of Studies, noting that the work begins in October when curriculum directors and faculty members are asked to identify courses they would like to see offered. Once the Program of Studies has been approved by the high school staff it is presented to Ms. Darias for her review and input and then comes to the School Committee for its approval.

Assistant Principal John Muldoon explained that current 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are also included in the discussion of course offerings. Once the Program of Studies has been approved by the School Committee guidance counselors meet with students to review the selection and make choices that meet their interests and academic requirements. Once students submit their course selections, the master schedule is created during the April vacation.

Mr. Arto Asadoorian, Director of Fine and Performing Arts, reviewed three new theatre arts courses to be added to the Program of Studies. He noted that these courses are actually being reintroduced to the curriculum after funding for the teaching position was eliminated several years ago. Mr. Asadoorian spoke to the importance of teaching theatre arts, explaining that participation in these courses helps to develop a student's creativity, critical thinking and collaboration skills. He noted the need to add a 0.4 FTE position for a Theater Arts teacher if the courses are approved.

Ms. Colleen Foley, Director of Foreign Language, explained the history of the Chinese language program and the rationale for adding a Chinese level 4 college prep course to the curriculum, thus enabling students the opportunity to take the fourth year course at the college prep level as well as the honors level. The addition of this course would require an additional 0.2 FTE position.

Ms. Deb Darlington, Director of Science, presented a brief overview of her proposal for a Coding Honors course. The full-year course, available to juniors and seniors, would focus on logical thinking and creativity in computer literacy. Student will learn skills in language syntax, data manipulation and programming structures. The addition of this course would not necessitate an increase in staffing.

### 3.3 BMS/Comcast Renewal Update

Mr. Scott Stratford, School Committee Liaison to the Belmont Media Center, explained that the Town of Belmont is holding several focus groups to discuss the future of cable TV service, community media and technology. These focus groups are part of the Town of Belmont's and Belmont Media Center's franchise renewal process with Comcast. Community members will have a chance to offer input about services they would like to see offered through the Comcast cable TV system.

4. **SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)**

4.1 Student Representative

Max Davidowitz updated the School Committee on events at Belmont High School. More than 50 students will be participating in the Senior District Festival this weekend. Rehearsal, pit and tech activities are underway for *Legally Blonde*, the spring musical. Max reported that although changes have been made in the cafeteria it still takes considerable time to purchase a meal, leaving little if any time for it to be eaten. He mentioned that mid-terms are scheduled in the next couple of weeks and that SAT testing will take place on January 25<sup>th</sup>. He informed the committee that this evening was the first time that the Pep Band performed at a girl's home basketball game. Finally, he noted with appreciation that many teachers are working to create opportunities outside the classroom for students to apply and/or observe in a real world setting the content of what they are learning in the classroom.

4.2 Finance Subcommittee

Ms. Slap stated that the Finance Subcommittee met this morning and discussed where the development of the FY'15 budget stands at this time.

4.3 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

Ms. Graham stated that the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee will meet next week to discuss food service accounts.

4.4 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

Ms. Graham stated that the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee will meet in the next couple of weeks to discuss a book that is being added to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum.

4.5 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee has not met.

4.6 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet tomorrow night.

4.7 Wellington Building Committee

The Wellington Building Committee will meet in two weeks.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda – none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items – none

5.4 Approval of Minutes

December 16, 2013

December 17, 2013

On a motion offered by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

**VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes of December 16, 2013, December 17, 2013 as amended.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

January 14, 2014

School Committee Meeting

CMS Large Community Room – 7:30 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**

December 20, 2013 letter from Dustan & Katy Bonnin

December 13, 2013 letter from Lueders Environmental, Inc.

January 1, 2014 enrollment


January 1, 2014 enrollment indicating changes

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:40 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Slap and seconded by Mr. Cunningham, it was

**VOTED** unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by

  
Anne Lougée, Secretary