

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
MARCH 24, 2015**

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

Absent: Mr. Thomas Caputo

Student Representative: Mr. Daniel Vernick

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Slap called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Slap 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 Chair's Report

Ms. Slap reported that many people attended Superintendent Phelan's budget presentations to the Butler and the Chenery (joint with Belmont High) PTO/PTA groups. In addition, community members have attended two Precinct Meetings to hear reports from the Board of Selectmen (BOS) about the recommendations of the Financial Task Force (FTF) and from Superintendent Phelan about the available revenue and FTF budgets for FY16. A final Precinct meeting is scheduled to take place at the Beech Street Center on Monday, March 30, at 7 p.m.

Ms. Slap reported on recent and upcoming events in the Town and Schools. She reported that the Foundation for Belmont Education's dinner/live auction event on March 23rd was a great success and noted that bidding on its silent auction items will remain open on-line until March 29th.

1.6 Student Representative Report

Student Representative Daniel Vernick reported that the spring musical at Belmont High School, *Anything Goes*, opens on Thursday of this week, with additional shows on Friday evening, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday evening. He also reported that the Advance Placement (AP) art students are hosting a free event on March 28, from 7:30-9:30 p.m., at the Beth El Temple to showcase their work to Belmont residents. Mr. Vernick noted that overall many high school students are concerned about the FY16 budget and about the potential reductions to educational programming that they currently enjoy should the available revenue budget be implemented. Students are staying informed about the process through social media channels.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan thanked the FBE for its successful dinner/auction evening. The event raised funds for teacher grants, technology, and innovation, all of which have a direct and positive impact to student learning districtwide. He emphasized that the ongoing partnership between the FBE and the schools is greatly valued and much appreciated.

Superintendent Phelan noted that the final Precinct meeting to inform residents about the FY16 budget options will be held Monday, March 30, starting at 7 p.m. at the Beech Street Center. Both budget documents and the Financial Task Force report can be found on the BPS website.

Superintendent Phelan reported that the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing will begin this week for grades 3 through 8. The 10th grade students will continue taking the MCAS tests, which will also take place this week.

Superintendent Phelan and Ms. Slap noted that this was Ms. Lougée's final meeting as a member of the Committee and thanked her for her years of service.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Professional Learning Team Report – Exhibit A

Chenery Middle School social studies teachers Mr. Andrew Semuels, Mr. Peter Tausek, and Mr. Adam Weldai reported on the work of their Professional Learning Team (PLT) to support student learning. Their work, which they titled "Don't be Queasy: DBQs are nice and easy!," is focused on building into the grades 5, 6, and 7 curriculum lessons to increase student opportunities to learn to use multiple documents to help them develop and support a claim in response to an open-ended question.

Their goal is to see students improve their ability to form claims that are supported by reasonable evidence when looking at primary and secondary sources about a topic (referred to as Document Based Questions – DBQs). Student development of these critical thinking skills and the ability to communicate their analyses is relevant to all curriculum areas, and is one component of what the new PARCC assessments are measuring.

The PLT presentation provided sample DBQ assignments and evaluation rubrics for each grade level. This year the PLT is learning what has worked well as well as where they need to make changes to their instruction. It will continue to create models for DBQs to help scaffold student responses, to develop lessons to teach students to determine main idea, paraphrasing, and using specific quotes from specific or multiple documents, and continue to revise and develop DBQs based on student result.

3.2 2015-2016 School Calendar Discussion and Vote – Exhibit B

At its March 10 meeting, the School Committee discussed the pros and cons of either adding additional non-school days for religious holidays or not having any at all. In the ensuing two weeks Superintendent Phelan discussed the issue with the leadership of the Belmont Education Association and with members of the Leadership Council in an effort to find an outcome that reflects the needs of the district. In a memorandum to Ms. Slap, he summarized their feedback, that of community members who contacted his office and the Committee, as well as the results of a survey on the issue conducted by the MA Association of School Superintendents. Superintendent Phelan's memo outlined four options for a pilot program for the upcoming school year.

The Committee discussed the options and then heard from several community members in the audience who spoke in favor or adding one or two days to observe the high holy days of the Jewish faith.

On a motion offered by Ms. Lougée and seconded by Ms. Graham, it was

VOTED 5-0-1, with one absence, to pilot in the 2015-2016 calendar year to observe one Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur, on September 23, 2015 and to keep the scheduled half day for Good Friday on March 25, 2016, as amended.

3.3 Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest – Exhibit C

Superintendent Phelan reported that the focus of the Statement of Interest (SOI) to be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is on high and growing enrollment at the high school and districtwide. The SOI details issues of overcrowding at the high school and some dated design issues of the current structure that hinder the ability to effectively deliver a 21st Century education. He thanked Mr. DiCologero, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds Fred Domenici, Belmont High Principal Dan Richards, Central Office secretary Kristine Murphy, and Belmont Director of Facilities Gerry Boyle for their assistance with the SOI.

Superintendent Phelan explained the MSBA requires the School Committee to vote its support of the SOI to the MSBA prior to its submission by April 10, 2015. The vote requires use of prescribed text provided by the MSBA. He noted that following the Committee vote, the SOI will be delivered to the Board of Selectmen for vote at their March 30 meeting.

Ms. Lougée read the following prescribed text:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on March 24, 2015, prior to the closing date, the School Committee of the Town of Belmont, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated on or before April 10, 2015 for the Belmont High School located at 221 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority categories for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future

Priority 2 – Elimination of existing severe overcrowding – given that building enrollment at Belmont High School has increased by 117 students over the past five years;

Priority 3 - Prevention of the loss of accreditation – based on facilities-related conditions cited in the most recent report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), dated February 22, 2013;

Priority 4 - Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments – based on a projected increase of an additional 408 students district-wide by 2019;

Priority 5 - Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility – given that most of the system components are original to the building and are in need of replacement;

Priority 7 - Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements – given that a number of spaces have needed to be repurposed for instructional programs that are different from their original intent;

and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town or the School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

On a motion offered by Ms. Lougée and seconded by Ms. Shuster it was

VOTED 5-0-1, with one absence, to authorize Superintendent Phelan to submit to the MSBA a SOI for the renovation or rebuild of Belmont High School on or before April 10, 2015

3.4 Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals Update– Exhibit D

Superintendent Phelan provided an overview of the mid-year review process, including changes that are relevant for a superintendent new to a district. He addressed each of his goals and the progress he has made thus far. Dr. Fiore asked if there might be an opportunity for student feedback in the review process. Although he was not immediately sure how this could be done, Superintendent Phelan indicated that he was open to incorporating it into the process.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met earlier today to discuss the available revenue (AR) budget. They also discussed building rental fees with the goal to operationalize fees in a consistent way.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee

The Policy Subcommittee met with Superintendent Phelan and Director of Human Resources Mary Pederson to start the work regarding naming rights, sponsorships, advertising and honorary designations. The initial work focuses on definitions of each designation.

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

The Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee has not met.

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee met this afternoon to review the CPA applications. They also reviewed capital requests from the Town Clerk's office, the Library, and the IT department.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet on March 25.

4.6 Wellington Building Committee

The Wellington Building Committee has not met.

4.7 Financial Task Force

The Financial Task Force has not met.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes
March 10, 2015

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

VOTED 5-0-1 with one absence to approve the minutes of March 10, 2015.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

March 30, 2015
Precinct Meeting
Beech Street Center – 7:00 pm

March 31, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 am

April 14, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 am

April 14, 2015
School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:00 pm

7. **ENCLOSURES**


None

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:50 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Lougée and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

VOTED 5-0-1 with one absence to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by


Anne Lougée, Secretary