

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKING SESSION MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
SEPTEMBER 27, 2016**

Present: Dr. Lisa Fiore, Chair
 Ms. Susan Burgess-Cox, Secretary
 Mr. Thomas Caputo
 Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
 Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
 Mr. Anthony DiCologero
 Ms. Mary Pederson, Human Resources Director

Absent: Mr. Murat Bicer
 Ms. Andrea Prestwich
 Ms. Elyse Shuster

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Dr. Fiore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Fiore noted that there was no quorum at the meeting. Those present agreed to have a working session to discuss issues on the agenda that would not require an official vote of the Committee.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Dr. Fiore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

Ms. Sharon Thomas expressed concerns about a lack of information regarding the High School Advisory Council meetings. She stated that she would like to know when and where meetings take place, and whether anyone can attend and ask questions.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chair's Report

Dr. Fiore provided information on the following events:

- Saturday Morning Music Program begins this Saturday at 8:00 a.m.
- Soccer Night at Harris Field on October 1st. The first boys and girls double header
- Dan Scharfman Memorial Run on October 2nd at 9:30 a.m.
- Broadway Night at Belmont High School Little Theater on October 7th and 8th
- Belmont Against Racism and Belmont World Film presentation of "Tested" at the Belmont Studio Cinema on October 10th at 7:30 p.m.

1.6 Student Representative Report

There was no student representative in attendance.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan provided a brief report on the following events:

Three student athletes received were recently recognized for their athletic performance during the week of September 11th.

Field Hockey: Katie Guden – Max Field Hockey Northeast Player of the Week.

Girls Soccer: Carey Allard – Eastern Mass. Girls Soccer Association Player of the Week.

Football: Ben Jones – Boston Globe & Boston Herald Division II Player of the Week.

The Belmont Goes Solar project has provided 50 panels for use on school buildings. Planning will begin to determine exactly how and where the solar panels will be used. Superintendent Phelan thanked members of Belmont Goes Solar for their work.

Superintendent Phelan congratulated families and staff for the Level 1 designation that Belmont Public Schools received. Ms. Darias will provide a more detailed report.

The modulators have been placed on the Chenery site. Superintendent Phelan explained that the work will begin soon to provide utility connections and students should begin using the modulators by mid-fall.

Superintendent Phelan met with several principals over the last week to see how the start of school was going. He and Ms. Darias plan to take Learning Walks at each of the schools on a monthly basis.

Superintendent Phelan thanked the Belmont Boosters for the recent Golf Tournament they held to raise money for Belmont athletics.

The Town of Belmont voted no on the Minuteman Building project. Town Meeting will meet to vote on whether the town will withdraw from the Minuteman District.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Accountability Report – Exhibit A

Ms. Darias provided the School Committee with a report on the 2016 Accountability Data. All 6 schools earned the Level 1 Accountability Determination for meeting the gap-narrowing targets for all students and the high needs subgroups. The high needs are the unduplicated count of all students belonging to at least one of the following subgroups: students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELL), and former ELL students as well as economically disadvantaged students. The annual Progress and Performance Index (PPI) measures a district's, school's, or subgroup's improvement over a two-year period for up to seven indicators.

Ms. Darias explained that similar to the district's focus on addressing achievement gaps, the statewide assessment data is used to help identify student groups that are not meeting with as much success as the aggregate. Ms. Darias provided detailed information with charts from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) website. The entire Accountability Report will be available for review on the Belmont Public Schools website.

3.2 Policy Issues Update – Exhibit B

Ms. Mary Pederson, Director of Human Resources, provided an update on policies that the School Committee Policy Subcommittee will need to update based on recent legislation. The four issues to be addressed include opioid use, transgender rights, fees for meals and domestic violence. The school department has begun to do some work on the opioid issue and transgender rights based on guidance from the state. A policy related to charging for meals is now required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Possible amendments related to domestic violence will focus on leave for people dealing with a domestic violence issue. The Policy Subcommittee will keep the full School Committee apprised of their work.

3.3 Religious Holidays – Attendance – Exhibit C

Superintendent Phelan explained that staff members of all 4 bargaining units have language in their contracts allowing them to request up to 2 days of religious leave provided the request is made by the end of the first week of school. He shared data showing the religious leave requests from 2013-14 through the current 2016-17 school year. The number of staff requesting religious leave has increased over the years. Ms. Pederson also shared the particular religious observance for which leave was requested each year. The number of absences on Good Friday increased 169% from the 2015-2016 school year to the 2016-2017 school year. The administration is taking the following steps to mitigate the number of additional absences on Good Friday:

- Not offering or approving any professional development on that date;
- Asking Principals to adhere to the contractual requirements for personal leave, such as 72-hour notice;

- Reaching out to subs now, asking them to sign up for the jobs that are already in the system for all religious leave absences, including Good Friday; and
- Recruiting and hiring new subs.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

There was no report from the Finance Subcommittee.

4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

There was no report from the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee.

4.3 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

There was no report from the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee is meeting on October 13th to discuss the Minuteman Article for Town Meeting and to discuss other major Capital projects such as the High School, the Library, the Department of Public Works, the Police Station, the Incinerator Site, the Rink and the White Field House.

4.5 Warrant Committee

There was no report from the Warrant Committee.

4.6 Belmont High School Building Committee

Superintendent Phelan updated the School Committee on answers to questions that the building committee posed to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). He also explained that based on guidance from the MSBA, Belmont will likely have a choice of 3 grade configurations for the project: 7-12, 8-12 and 9-12.

4.7 Community Path

An engineering firm has been hired to do a feasibility study related to various community path designs. A meeting was held on September 25, 2016 to receive input from community members on the potential design and location of a community path. This was the first of several community forums. There will be upcoming meetings related to different phases of the project.

4.8 Library Long Range Planning Committee

There was no report from the Library Long Range Planning Committee.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

September 13, 2016

Dr. Fiore suggested, and the members present agreed, to postpone a vote on the minutes as there was no quorum.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

October 11, 2016

Finance Subcommittee Meeting

SAB Conference Room – 7:30 a.m.

October 11, 2016

Recognition of Professional Status Teachers

CMS Conference Room – 6:30 p.m.

October 11, 2016

School Committee Meeting

CMS Conference Room – 7:00 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**


Strategic Plan

2016 Veterans' Day Schedule

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:36 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Burgess-Cox and seconded by Mr. Caputo, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by 
Susan Burgess-Cox, Secretary