

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
APRIL 7, 2020

Present: Ms. Susan Burgess-Cox, Chair
Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Also present: Mr. Michael McAllister, Chenery Middle School Principal

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

Susan Burgess-Cox called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

Susan Burgess-Cox asked if anyone had concerns other than topics listed on the agenda.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

In the interest of time, Susan Burgess-Cox did not have a chair's report.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan did not have a report of topics not already on the agenda.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Remote Learning Update

Superintendent Phelan thanked Dustin O'Brien, Director of Food Service and members of his staff for all the work in organizing meals for students. He also thanked Steve Mazzola, Director of Technology for the work he and his staff have been doing to get students and staff prepared for working from home.

The Governor closed schools until May 4 and Belmont has been working with remote learning state guidelines, although remote learning cannot take the place of classroom learning.

Superintendent Phelan thanked the Foundation for Belmont Education (FBE) for their years of supporting technology in Belmont Public Schools. That is the platform being used now to reach students at home. Superintendent also thanked the FBE for their support with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as students and staff are using the values learned through SEL during this time.

This will be the last week Steve Mazzola will be delivering devices to the homes of students. Everyone is grateful for his work.

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias presented Belmont's remote learning plan. She explained the guiding principles for remote learning such as learning that lessens stress and anxiety as well as taking equity and access into account. Key components of the Phase II Pre-k-12 learning includes providing students with learning activities for three hours each day as well as Google Meet for virtual meetings and check-ins for students who may be struggling. Superintendent Darias shared sample schedules for students. Superintendent Darias provided an overview of the district's plan for remote learning going forward. The district has supplied a device for any family or teacher that needs one. The PowerPoint explaining the ongoing remote learning is available on the Belmont Public Schools website.

Susan Burgess-Cox invited the School Committee to offer comments or questions.

School Committee members expressed their appreciation for all the work the district has done. They discussed the feedback from the public that has been received over the last few weeks and noted what Belmont is doing is consistent with other towns in the area.

Superintendent Phelan explained phase 3 of the remote learning plan will include a dual learning plan in the event the closing of schools needs to happen again in the future.

The School Committee reviewed additional questions submitted by the public including the possible cancellation of fall sports, a change in the start date for 2020-2021 school year, canceling April vacation as well as budget concerns. All topics are being reviewed by the administration and/or Town officials. Superintendent Phelan intends to keep the community informed through his newsletters.

3.2 Potential Impact on COVID-19 on FY20 and FY21 Budgets

Superintendent Phelan provided an update on the current FY20 and FY21 budget work including the potential impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the budget. There are concerns at this time that the FY21 budget for the next school year will be challenged by a lack of revenue from the state and town. The school administration will work with the Select Board and Warrant Committee to determine the revenue for next year along with strategies to provide services to students, staff and families with less funding.

Superintendent Phelan stated there may be some savings provided from the lack of projected purchasing. However, some purchases are being made in relation to remote learning. He thanked members of the other Town departments for the work they have all been doing together on a daily basis.

The School Committee members discussed the challenges posed from the lack of state revenue along with the current lack of estimates from fees and special taxes the town collects.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee will meet on Thursday at 3:00 p.m.

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 met last Thursday for a discussion regarding requests from the Facilities Department and School Department. They will meet a week from this Thursday to go over the requests.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee met last week with Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator for a discussion on budget and town revenue.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee will meet tomorrow.

4.7 Community Path Committee

There was no report from the Community Path Committee.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

There was no report from the Financial Task Force II Committee.

4.9 High School Traffic Working Group

There was no report from the High School Traffic Working Group.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

March 24, 2020

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of March 24, 2020 as amended.

6. FUTURE BUSINESS

April 9, 2020

Finance Subcommittee Meeting – Remote – 3:00 p.m.

April 14, 2020

School Committee Meeting – Remote – 7:00 p.m.

7. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Andrea Prestwich it was **VOTED** unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by 
Andrea Prestwich, Secretary