

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
APRIL 28, 2020**

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Catherine Bowen, Secretary
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

1. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

1.1 Call to order

Andrea Prestwich, Chairperson Pro Tempore, called the School Committee Organizational Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Ms. Prestwich relayed the proceedings per School Committee Policy 8007.

1.2 Nomination of Chair

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** on a roll call vote 4-0-1 to elect Andrea Prestwich as School Committee Chair through April 2021. Prestwich abstained.

1.3 Nomination of Secretary

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** on a roll call vote 4-0-1 to elect Kate Bowen as School Committee Secretary through April 2021. Bowen abstained.

1.4 Adjourn

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the Organizational Meeting at 7:06 p.m.

2. BUSINESS MEETING

2.1 Call to order

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

2.2 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

2.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

2.4 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan announced schools will be closed for the remainder of the year based on the Governor's order. Superintendent Phelan is appreciative of all the emails from parents and guardians expressing hopes for some type of recognition for the students, particularly seniors. The district is working on these unique challenges.

Superintendent Phelan thanked Chenery student Ellie Lesser for the video she created about the importance of social distancing.

The Belmont Health Department will be notifying the School Department when it is safe for students to go into the schools to retrieve their belongings before summer break.

Remote learning is continuing thanks to all the teachers who have worked so hard to make this happen.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Update on School Closure

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias presented "Remote Learning Update" which included a recap of the school closure timeline, and district priorities for organizing educational plans in Phase II of Remote Learning. She noted information based on suggestions from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). One addition is for schools to include curriculum advancement. DESE also included recommendations to develop a system for identifying and supporting students not effectively engaged in remote learning, as well as a review of "critical standards" for each grade level. [Enclosure "Remote Learning Update"]

The district is continuing to plan for end-of-school year transition events and tasks, as well as planning summer work to adjust the 2020-21 curriculum based on the current situation. Administrators have been discussing different scenarios that might need to take place in 2020-21 such as staggered schedules or alternating days or weeks in order to comply with social distancing and related public health guidelines.

Assistant Superintendent Darias thanked the many staff in the district who have worked so hard under difficult circumstances to support the students of Belmont.

3.2 Update on COVID-19 on FY20 and FY21 Budget Process

- Discussion of Reimbursement of Fees (Vote)

Superintendent Phelan began a discussion on the FY20 budget as it relates to fees. The School Committee and Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee met last week. The discussion centered around the reimbursement of fees that families pay to access specific programs in athletics, music,

transportation, full day kindergarten, and preschool. The group looked at all the revolving accounts, as well as fee-based programs. The group then reviewed and discussed a set of principles to determine which fees should be reimbursed.

Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations shared a document explaining which fees would be reimbursed based on whether or not the School Department is still providing a service related to those fees. Superintendent Phelan explained the document showed an organizational structure of fees based on the guiding principles discussed. The chart organized fees by Instructional programs, Co-curricular programs, Extra-Curricular programs, Operational functions, and Food Service. The School Committee reviewed and discussed the list of reimbursement items.

Superintendent Phelan reviewed each fee on the list and explained how a determination was made whether to reimburse the fee or not. The School Committee discussed their views on the reimbursements.

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to adopt the fee structure as outlined in the document reviewed this evening. [Enclosure: *"Summary of April 28, 2020 School Committee vote regarding the potential refunding of fees pertaining to the 2019-2020 COVID-19 closure"*]

3.3 Discussion of Contract Service Payment (Vote)

Superintendent Phelan explained the plan to pay the bus company that is used by Belmont Public Schools. The district administrators have been working on ways to keep the bus company whole so they are able to pay their employees. The district has negotiated a new rate that will keep the drivers on the bus company payroll. The bus company will send certified payroll documents showing they did keep their employees. This contract was presented to the Finance Subcommittee and Warrant Committee last week. Superintendent Phelan asked for a vote by the School Committee on this contract.

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the April 2020 bus contract which was presented at a previous meeting.

3.4 Update on COVID-19 FY21 Budget Process

The School Committee met jointly with the Select Board to review the FY21 budget. In January 2020, the School Department was able to return 1.7 million dollars to the Town. The Town also reduced their budget and drew from one-time funds at that time as well, to create a level service budget for FY21. With the current health pandemic measures, revenue that would normally come from the state will be significantly reduced. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin and her staff have been working to determine what revenues would be impacted locally by the reduction. They are estimating a 20-25% gap in funding. The Town Administrator has been looking at ways to address this revenue gap, and has identified 3.9 million dollars of potential savings. Approximately 0.5 million come from department overtime budgets and other salary options, 2.3 million from deferred roadwork and capital projects, with the balance of the savings coming from insurance and payment schedules.

School administrators have also been working on comparable reductions. A list of reductions will be presented at the Finance Subcommittee meeting on April 30. The Town and Schools have been

working together for many years to create a balanced budget. The School Committee discussed options for reducing the budget.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

No additional report other than information presented by Superintendent Phelan on fee reimbursements.

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

There was no report from the Capital Budget Committee.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee met on April 15. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin spoke about the hiring freeze and attempts to reduce costs for the remainder of the fiscal year.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee met last Wednesday and discussed budget and timeline. Construction is still taking place and the steel continues to go up.

4.7 Community Path Committee

The Community Path Committee met on Monday. The Design Team held meetings with the MBTA and will be making recommendations based on the MBTA feedback.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II met on Thursday morning. A spinoff committee between the Warrant Committee and Select Board will look at positions that are vacant. The Town is planning to wait until July 1 for re-hires.

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 - None

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – Amy Checkoway noted the Rink Working Group is in the middle of the review process for rink submissions. She acknowledged the time and commitment of former School Committee member Susan Burgess-Cox. Due to her departure from the committee there is an opening on the working group and she suggested the possibility of another School Committee member taking part.

5.4 Approval of Minutes

April 14, 2020

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of **April 14, 2020**.

6. FUTURE BUSINESS

April 30, 2020 – Remote Meeting

FSC Joint meeting with School Committee

Executive Session – 2:00 p.m.

FSC Joint meeting with School Committee and WC Education Subcommittee

Open Meeting – 3:00 p.m.

May 12, 2020, 2020 – Remote Meeting

School Committee Meeting – 7:00 p.m.

7. ENCLOSURES

8. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary