

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**REMOTE MEETING**  
**AUGUST 25, 2020**

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

**1. OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to Order

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

Elizabeth Killeen, resident, commented on social emotional learning, and the needs for children to get together in a socially distanced way, that young kids were looking for normalcy, and dwelling on the virus may have the opposite effect of supporting students.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Andrea Prestwich thanked members of the community for their emails. She stated all the emails have been read even if School Committee members have not had a chance to respond to each one.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan thanked Belmont Media for hosting the many School Committee meetings. Families have concerns and his hope is to present a great learning model for the first phase and then the future phases. Thanks to the School Committee and Belmont Public Schools Administrative Team and staff for all the work, they have put in creating these learning models.

Superintendent Phelan updated the Committee on the work of the Facilities Department staff who have been working all summer to ensure the mechanical systems in the school buildings are performing to specifications. All window and screens that were deemed inoperable were contracted out to vendors and will be fixed by the start of school on September 16th.

Superintendent Phelan reported that a review of the work on HVAC has been bid out and will be contracted on Thursday. Work on the air exchange will take about two weeks of on-site evaluation and a week to ten days to draft a report, which will be submitted to the School Department. The scope of the work is to examine air exchange, identify areas that need fixes, and confirm areas previously identified. Some schools have not been able to be open. One parent has provided support in identifying devices for HVAC, another community group of parents have provided analysis and tools derived from the Harvard Chan School of Public Health.

The Facilities Department has spent \$25k on screen repairs, \$25k for air assessment, \$100k for industrial grade air purifier units (APU), and additional monies on MERV 13 filters, timers, and HVAC contracted work. Early guidance focused on droplets and surfaces, more recent guidance has focused on transmission through aerosolization. The Committee discussed the expenses, the increased cost of APUs, and need for flexibility in the APUs. A Massachusetts based company recommended by BALA will provide the APUs at ~\$1000 per unit. Steve Dorrance, Director of Facilities has ordered ~100 air purification machines to support the air exchange based on BALA's recommendation and the guidance of the HCSPH. All the facilities work and purchases will be reimbursed through federal grant funds. Devices and materials continue and were purchased with the same funds.

Athletics: DESE and MIAA provided an update on high school athletics to the Director of Athletics. The district is awaiting Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) guidance on some of the protocols for certain fall sports, and is leaning towards some programs to be pushed to different seasons. MIAA is creating a "Fall 2" (or 'Floating') Season to take place in March and April to provide an opportunity to hold those fall sports that cannot take place in September. – football and competitive cheerleading. Soccer and field hockey are under review and will have modifications put in place; golf and cross country may be able to take place this fall; volleyball and swimming may be moved to the floating season.

## **2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

## **3. MAJOR BUSINESS**

### **3.1 Presentation of Remote Learning Plan**

Superintendent Phelan explained three principals would be presenting a remote learning presentation.

Danielle Betancourt, Butler Principal will represent the elementary Principals, Karla Koza, Chenery Middle School Principal will present for the middle school and Isaac Taylor will present for Belmont High School. The Remote Plans have been developed with district educators and impact bargained.

Danielle Betancourt presented the learning model for the elementary schools. In planning this model, staff took into consideration children need interaction and connection, small groups, predictability, meaningful off-screen learning and practice and independence. After looking at several versions of remote models, the hope is this one will serve our students and families well.

Students will engage in a variety of learning experiences such as whole group, workshop (mini lesson, small group, independent practice). They will also receive asynchronous/independent (on screen) learning as well as independent (off-screen) learning. Principal Betancourt provide examples of schedules for each type of learning and tools that will be used.

Karla Koza, Chenery Middle School Principal presented the remote learning model for Chenery. She discussed how to minimize screen time and provide a robust curriculum. The goal is to help student connect with adults and other students. Guiding principles used to create the remote plan for Chenery included safety, social emotional wellbeing, equity, access, robust teaching, and learning. Work relied on research publications from North Carolina State University - Instructional Design Principles for Remote Teaching & Learning, among others.

The Chenery model retains a 6-day cycle with 8-40 minute learning blocks per day. Students will have 5 minute passing times and 25 minute lunch/recess. Each morning a “community check-in” is scheduled for 15 minutes along with A WIN Block (What I Need) each day. Art, Health, Engineering on Team will take place in rotation model for grades 5-8 and Physical Education on Team for grades 5-7.

Principal Koza explained WIN Block is a time for teachers to meet with student one on one or in small groups,. It will also encompass pull out time for RTI, counseling, Special Education and ELL. Students can have a break from screen time and complete schoolwork, and take a break. Principal Koza provided an example of the daily schedule, which will be available on the BPS website.

Isaac Taylor, Belmont High School Principal presented the remote model for Belmont High School. He explained the primary goal was to retain the full program of studies within this model and allow for adequate passing times. The model includes four courses per day – 80 minutes each on a rotating schedule with 30 minutes for lunch. There will be homeroom built in with the goal of having time for students and teachers to meet, allow for focus on the concepts of circles and strong relationship-building within an academic environment. There will also be SEL work in homeroom. X-block provides a way of personalizing learning on a proactive and reactive basis, 2/x week with an individual adult. Wednesday will include synchronous “meets”, and longer class periods allow for break-out activities.

School Committee members offered comments and asked questions related to the remote model presentations. They thanked all the principals, administrators and staff for all the work that went into creating these models.

Assistant Superintendent Darias explained specialized software has been purchased for music students and family tutorials have been purchased to help parents navigate the online learning their students will take part. Home study materials will be provided for students as well.

A School Committee members expressed their appreciation of the work that has gone into the plans. Member discussed the models and asked questions of the principals. Member Donner asked what is being done for families who are struggling to engage in online learning. Superintendent Phelan answered the district has been measuring the level of engagement and has been providing enriching services.

In answer to a question from a School Committee member, Superintendent Phelan explained there would be several meet and greet events scheduled by teachers but the schedule has not yet been established. Asst. Supt. Darias confirmed the value of having new technical integration specialists.

### 3.2 Discussion of Metrics in Phased Plan Timeline

Superintendent Phelan explained how decisions would be made to move into each phase. All decisions will be made with health and safety, social-emotional well-being, and academic engagement as the priorities. Substantial information related to the building assessment is outstanding and would be

inappropriate to move forward without it. (SC Meeting 8-25-2020 Remote Schedule PP and Phased Plan\_FINAL.pdf)

The phased return to learning presented the following timeline and groups:

Phase 1: Starting September 16

In-person learning for DESE defined students, preschool and LABB programs. Remote Learning for students in grades K-12.

Phase 2: Starting no sooner than October 19

In-person learning for vulnerable students such as additional special education services, English learning services, Kindergarten, grade one students.

Phase 3: Starting no sooner than November 9

In-person learning from phase 1 and 2, cohorts formed for Hybrid Learning for grades 2-12, Remote Only Cohort formed

Phase 4: TBD

Full student return (with some restrictions)

Supt. Phelan regularly coordinates with Dir. Chin, Health Dept., who outlined that the last 3 or 4 days are important to follow in context of the rolling 2 week averages. The Committee discussed the DESE case metrics guideline. Educators and students represent 165 different communities. The metrics would be reviewed weekly on Wednesdays. The Committee determined that meeting on a weekly basis would be necessary, anticipating that if metrics and building conditions were met phased changes may begin. The Committee discussed Sept 28 for phase 2, and Oct 19 for phase 3.

Members discussed the pros and cons of moving in and out of the phases, acute needs of younger learners for in-person instruction, and how to maximize teacher time with students. Member Gomez relayed the values of a “flipped classroom” model which maintains the core subject in on-line instruction while utilizing in-person time for relationship building and enrichment.

The School Committee will review a hybrid-learning model sometime the first week of September. Cohorts will be determined after that presentation. Meet and Greets will take place before school starts and again later in September and October. Schedules will be sent to families.

The School Committee discussed the timeline and metrics to move through the four phases. They noted the importance of indoor airflow quality. The airflow quality is a large barrier to moving forward. The School Committee discussed the importance of making decisions rapidly but wisely. The School Committee discussed the decision to purchase 100 air purifiers, which will be reimbursed by the federal government.

The School Committee discussed the fact that it may be easier to staff a remote model than a hybrid model and that needs to be taken into consideration. There was discussion on the possibility of changes to the timeline if the metrics are met. In answer to a question from a School Committee member, Superintendent Phelan stated the district could consider purchasing more than 100 air purifiers if necessary. School Committee members expressed an interest in hearing from Belmont Health Director Wes Chin regarding more specific numbers related to the metrics.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee will meet on August 27.

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 will meet on August 27.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet on September 2.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee will meet after Labor Day.

4.7 Community Path Committee

The Community Path previously met and reviewed all the public comments on the preliminary design; they will meet on August 28.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force 2 met last Friday and will meet in two weeks to review projections and create a dialogue for an override vote. Two budgets will be created, one with an override and one without.

4.9 Rink Working Group

The Rink Working Group reviewed questions related to the current bid proposal.

4.10 EDCO

EDCO met on August 7 and approved their school calendar, tuition and school entry plan.

5.4 Approval of Minutes

July 2, 2020 Finance Subcommittee

July 9, 2020 SC Joint Meeting with FTFII & Capital Budget Committee

July 16, 2020 Finance Subcommittee

July 16, 2020 School Committee

August 13, 2020 Finance Subcommittee

*On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously to approve the Finance Subcommittee minutes of July 2, 2020, Joint School Committee/FTFI and Capital Budget Committee minutes of July 9, 2020.*

*On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** 5-0-1 to approve the Finance Subcommittee minutes of July 16, 2020 as amended, Finance Subcommittee minutes of August 13, 2020 and School Committee minutes of July 16, 2020.*

**6. 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 meeting at 9:45 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary