

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**REMOTE MEETING**  
**MAY 26, 2020**

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair  
Ms. Kate 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. OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

There was no report from the Chair.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan noted the high school administration has been working on the planning for students to come to the high school to collect belongings that had been left after the shut down. High School Principal Isaac Taylor will be sending out information related to that.

The plans for the part live, part virtual high school graduation are under way for June 7. Students received diplomas and were able to have their pictures taken walking across the stage. The pictures will be used as part of the virtual ceremony.

Discussions are taking place on ways to celebrate elementary and middle school students who are moving up to a new school.

## **2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

No unfinished business.

## **3. MAJOR BUSINESS**

### **3.1 FY21 Budget Update Discussion**

Central Office Administrators have been discussing the FY21 budget with the Select Board, School Committee and Warrant Committee. It has been a challenge to come up with one budget that will work for everyone. The Schools have reduced their budget by over a million dollars which included four middle school positions that would have been able to support the two largest classes. Those classes would have been next year's grade six and grade seven. The hope is to settle on a budget number and then discuss with Town administrators about the possibility of using any additional money that may come from the state to fund these middle school positions, responding to enrollment growth. School Committee members discussed the concern for underfunding based on per pupil expenditure rates, with Belmont being below the state average and well below peer districts. There has been ongoing discussion about the School Department having flexibility to make adjustments within the budget, as well as to adjust to any additional funds that should become available to the budget later in the summer, once more is known about the opening and operating of schools, and what may be needed for the safety of students and staff due to COVID-19. The School Department will use some money from the CARES Act to use for purchases related to COVID-19.

### **3.2 CARES Act Update**

The CARES Act is part of the first stimulus package passed by congress and approved in March. The goal is to allow school districts to prepare, respond and prevent the impact of COVID-19. Funding has been sent to each state and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be the agency tasked with distributing the funds. DESE uses the Title I formula to allocate to each district. The Town of Belmont will receive \$127,474. Once the application is completed and funds are received, they can be used for anything related to the COVID-19 pandemic and impact of it. It can be used for items on the School Department's list of needs including devices for students or "personal protection equipment".

The recommendation by the School Department is to hire two technology integration specialists for one year. These staff members would be used to support teachers in remote learning efforts. The School Department will post the positions internally with hopes current teachers will fill those positions. The teaching positions will then be filled using substitutes.

Belmont is required to consult with private schools within Belmont's geographical boundaries. Private schools must be given equitable access to participate in the related CARES Act funds.

### 3.3 COVID-19 Impact on September – Process Update

Remote learning began in March. Planning is ongoing to determine the best way to open schools in September. School administrators have been working with other districts and teachers. They have also formed an advisory group who has been reading information on the topic. Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias has been able to facilitate two meetings with educators on Fridays to discuss materials related to best ways to open schools. The goal is to provide options depending on what happens in September. A community forum is planned for the June 9 School Committee meeting for community members to offer suggestions or inform school leaders of concerns they may have.

The School Department will open schools using CDC, state and local guidelines. It may be necessary to provide health screenings, increased cleaning in schools, masks/face coverings for all adults and students along with physical distancing and increased hand washing.

There are three options for re-opening:

- Traditional opening in September – staff and students return as they have in past years
- Hybrid opening (remote and in person)
- Remote learning for all

Central Office Administrators and Principals will use the feedback from the district-based advisory group to finalize draft plans. The draft plans will be presented to the School Committee at the June 9 School Committee meeting.

### 1.4 Last Day of School 2019/20 (Vote)

Superintendent Phelan explained the School Committee is required to vote on the last day of school each year. The School Committee had voted at a previous meeting to cancel April break, making June 17 the last day of school for 2019-20.

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve June 17, 2020 as the last day of the school for the 2019/2020 school year.

## 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

There was no report from the Capital Budget Committee.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee met jointly with the School Committee and Select Board last week. They will meet tomorrow, May 27 to vote on the FY21 budget.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee continue to meet. Construction has been continuing along with FFE meetings.

4.7 Community Path Committee

The Community Path Committee met with the design team to review the results of the discussion with the MBTA. They will plan a public forum to receive input on the twenty five percent design presentation.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II will meet on May 29 to discuss the FY22 budget and determine what type of override might be possible.

4.9 High School Traffic Working Group

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

4.10 Rink Working Group

There was no report from the Rink Working Group.

**5. OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None


5.4 Approval of Minutes

April 28, 2020 School Committee  
May 7, 2020 Finance Subcommittee  
May 12, 2020 School Committee

The School Committee agreed to vote on the minutes at the Finance Subcommittee meeting on May 28.

**6. ADJOURN**

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was voted unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by  \_\_\_\_\_  
Catherine Bowen, Secretary