

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 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

The School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Prestwich shared some questions from the Google Form.

Testing of staff for COVID: A survey will be available this week to see who is interested in testing. The application for Ginkgo free staff testing was approved. It includes one baseline test for all staff.

Increase of instructional time at Chenery? Yes, Principal Koza is looking at ways to increase instructional time on the at home hybrid days. The School Committee voted at their Finance Subcommittee meeting to allow two extra staff to support this work.

When the air quality report would be made publicly available? It will be available when the final report with executive summary is ready.

How does the governor's recent guidance on school re-opening affect our district's plans and timelines? The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recommended full in person learning for gray, green and yellow. Remote should be used only in extreme circumstances. Belmont does not have the capacity to have desks 3 – 6 feet apart with full attendance so we will stay in hybrid.

Kristin Bell asked the Committee to ensure clarity on the difference between “virtual participation” and “live-streaming”, and indicated that Belmont is doing the latter.

1.5 Superintendent’s Report

Superintendent Phelan listed the agenda items to be discussed at the meeting.

Superintendent Phelan reported Wesley Chin, Director of the Health Department has received information that young people have not been wearing masks occasionally outside of school. He asked Superintendent Phelan to remind everyone of the importance of wearing a mask and social distancing at all times.

2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Burbank Blue Ribbon Award

Burbank Principal Seeley Okie presented an overview of the Burbank Blue Ribbon Award. Thanks to everyone who made this award possible. A special honor goes to former Principal Dr. Clifford. She did a fantastic job at Burbank.

This award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. The Burbank School qualified for the 2020 nomination of National Blue Ribbon School as an Exemplary High Performing School. In 2019, the Burbank School is recognized as a School of Recognition for high achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics based on MCAS assessments. Only 1 out of 5 elementary schools in Massachusetts were awarded the recognition, and only 367 nationally were recognized. Burbank is the second elementary school in the Belmont district to receive the award.

School Committee members offered their congratulations to Principal Okie and the staff and students of the Burbank School.

3.2 2020/21 Enrollment Update

Superintendent Phelan took a moment to recognize tomorrow is Veteran’s Day. The district normally hosts celebrations at the schools with Veterans the day before Veteran’s Day. Due to the pandemic, those events could not take place. Superintendent Phelan wanted to acknowledge the Veteran’s and their service to our country.

Superintendent Phelan introduced Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias who presented the annual enrollment report, which looks at the enrollment for the district as well as class size. The report is being presented as it would in a normal school year.

From 2011 to 2019 the K-12 enrollment increased by 733 students. From 2019 to 2020 it decreased by 255 students. Homeschool students increased by 14 for 32. Ms. Darias provided an enrollment comparison by grade. These grades had decreases greater than 20:

Grade 10 – decrease of 23 students

Grade 6 – decrease of 21 students

Grade 5 – decrease of 50 students
Grade 3 – decrease of 41 students
Grade 2 – decrease of 29 students
Kindergarten – decrease of 95 students

The enrollment comparison by level from 2019/20 to 2020/21 shows 173 fewer elementary students, 77 fewer middle school students and 5 fewer high school students.

Ms. Darias explained the range for class size guidelines in October 2020 compared with October 2019.

Kindergarten

Guidelines: 18-22

Actual Range 2019: 21-23

Actual Range in 2020: 13-20

Grade 1

Guidelines: 19-23

Actual Range 2019: 21-23

Actual Range 2020: 17-24

Grade 2

Guidelines: 19-23

Actual Range 2019: 22-24

Actual Range: 2020: 20-24

Grade 3

Guidelines: 20-24

Actual Range 2019: 20-24

Actual Range 2020: 17-24

Grade 4

Guidelines: 20-24

Actual Range: 21-24

Actual Range: 18-24

Ms. Darias provided an overview of Chenery Middle School ELA, Foreign Language, Math, Reading, Science and Social Studies enrollments.

Grade 5 Guidelines: 20-24

2019-20 Average: 25

2020-21 Average: 21

Grade 6 Guidelines: 22-26

2019-20 Average: 24

2020-21 Average: 25

Grade 7 Guidelines: 22-26

2019-20 Average: 23

2020-21 Average: 24

Grade 8 Guidelines: 22-26
2019-20 Average: 23
2020-21 Average: 23

Ms. Darias provided an overview of Chenery Middle School Art, Music, PE, Health, Technology Engineering, and Library

Grade 5 Guidelines: 20-24
2019-20 Average: 24
2020-21 Average: 22

Grade 6 Guidelines: 22-26
2019-20 Average: 24
2020-21 Average: 24

Grade 7 Guidelines: 22-26
2019-20 Average: 22
2020-21 Average: 24

Grade 8 Guidelines: 22-26
2019-20 Average: 26
2020-21 Average: 24

Ms. Darias provided information on the changes to Belmont High School enrollment from 2019/20 to 2020/21.

Grade 9
2019/20 – 318
2020/21 – 335

Grade 10
2019/20 – 342
2020/21 – 319

Grade 11
2019/20 – 328
2020/21 – 337

Grade 12
2019/20 - 330
2020/21 – 322

Ms. Darias provided information on the BHS ranges by department from 2019/20 to 2020/21.

English
2019-2020 Ranges: 9-30
2020-2021 Ranges: 12-29

Foreign Language
2019-2020 Ranges: 9-31

2020-2021 Ranges: 9-30

Math

2019-2020 Ranges: 13-32

2020-2021 Ranges: 7-30

Physical Education

2019-2020 Ranges: 8-33

2020-2021 Ranges: 5-35

Science and Technology Engineering

2019-2020 Ranges: 16-29

2020-2021 Ranges: 17-35

Social Studies

2019-2020 Ranges: 15-31

2020-2021 Ranges: 16-33

Visual and Performing Arts

2019-2020 Ranges: 8-30

2020-2021 Ranges: 9-30

405 classes are held at BHS. 10% have 15 or fewer students, 20% have 16-20 students, 43% have 21-26 students, 23% have 27-30 students, and 3% have greater than 30 students.

The district had hoped to increase staff at the high school with projected state revenue but were not able to. Nearby districts are also struggling with enrollment. There are concerns across the state that families have kept their children home this year due to schools being in hybrid and next year. We assume some students will come back next year and the budget may not be able to support all the students.

Discussion of state enrollment trends indicate that Belmont is not unique in enrollment drop due to unusual circumstances of this year. We are working with our representatives to ensure that funding levels remain at 2019 levels.

3.3 FY22 Budget Update

The School Committee has been meeting each Tuesday to work on how to approach the FY22 budget. The budget issue is a result of only one operating override in the last twenty years. The override in 2014 was stretched out from three to six years. The district needs to present a budget without an override and a budget with an override. If the override does pass, it will mean an additional \$400,000 for the schools. There will be two community forums in December to get feedback from the community on the types of reductions they will have to live with. A separate list of budget items has been created in the event COVID is still an issue in FY22. Some of the one-year positions added this year might need to be added again depending on the circumstances.

Committee members discussed the need for an override, the pandemic has highlighted the operational limits currently, the importance of community engagement, and the potential to engage with the School Advisory Councils to educate the community at large.

3.4 School Update

HIGH SCHOOL

The recently created Advisory Group met last week and will meet again this week. They have been gathering data on hybrid models from other districts in order to create a model that works for Belmont. The group is composed of the Principal, two educators, two students, 2 high school parents/guardians. They are looking at hybrid plans from the following towns: Acton/Boxborough, Arlington, Bedford, Concord/Carlisle, Dover/Sherborn, Lexington, Lincoln/Sudbury, Waltham, Winchester, Wellesley, and Westford. Nine of the thirteen are using 1 – 3 in person days per week. Four of thirteen are using week A week B in person schedules. Seven of thirteen are using live streaming and six out of thirteen are not using live streaming.

A parent/guardian survey was sent out and received 730 responses. Parent preferences are well defined. 41 percent want hybrid, 31 percent want all remote and 27.8 percent want all in-person. The Task Force identified the top priorities based on stakeholder input. They will continue to review the potential models based on those priorities and make a recommendation to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will review the options and present them to the School Committee.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

The initial feedback on the middle school hybrid plan has been received and acknowledged related to extended learning opportunities. There will be an advisory group similar to the high school group. The administration will facilitate the gathering of representative feedback through a survey and discuss any enhancements and/or revisions to the current model with the proposed advisory group.

The School Committee approved 2.0 FTEs to support the increase in encore programming for the “at home” days, especially for grades 5 and 6. The challenge is there are only two cycles with hybrid right now. There are parts that need to be revisited quickly and some will need more feedback from families. Next week the School Committee will be presented with a timeline for elementary and middle school surveys. The elementary schools are doing well but there are questions that need to be addressed. A timeline for elementary and middle school surveys will be presented at the School Committee meeting on November 17.

School Committee member Evelyn Gomez offered a resolution related to the work of improving the educational models. After discussion, the School Committee agreed to hold off on the resolution for the time being.

Superintendent Phelan announced the fall athletic season was ending. 256 athletes participated in field hockey, golf, boys and girls soccer, boys and girls cross-country. The next discussion will be how to address the winter season. The district is waiting for formal guidance from the State and MIAA. Superintendent Phelan will take part in a meeting with the Athletic Directors from across the state to discuss if winter athletics will be possible.

3.5 Health Update

The district was able to successfully partner with the Health Department in the creation of a dashboard that is now on our website. The data is connected to schools and updated weekly indicating the number of COVID cases. In addition, when schools are impacted by COVID, a letter is sent to all families.

The Directors of the Aftercare Programs have been working with principals and Health Director Wes Chin to review protocols for allowing students to re-enter the schools now that the weather is getting colder.

Superintendent Phelan, School Committee Chair Andrea Prestwich and Health Director Wes Chin will meet to discuss the decision making process for school/district closures if needed. The closures will be based on stage guidelines.

A survey will be sent out to see how many people are interested in a weekly testing program.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met this morning to discuss the FY22 budget preparation and in particular, the contingent budget.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee

There was no report from the Policy Subcommittee.

4.3 Curriculum & 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

There was no report from the Warrant Committee.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The next meeting of the Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee is November 18 at 8:00 a.m. Teachers attended a furniture fair to test out furniture for the new school. Thank you to Michael McAllister for organizing.

4.7 Community Path

The Community Path is still working with the Design Team to get to 25% design documents.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II will meet on November 20. The free cash has come in and been certified

4.9 Rink Working Group

The Rink Working Group has been working on and off for a few years. They have decided to pause the work in order to get a better understanding on the public/private partnership. It was decided now is not the best time to move forward with this work.

4.10 EDCO

EDCO will meet on November 12. Janice Darias and Amy Checkoway will meet with the Interim Director next week about strategizing priorities.

4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee

The Long Term Capital Planning Committee met last week and continued discussions on how to approach work in the coming months.

4.12 Equity Subcommittee

The Equity Subcommittee met earlier today and established their Leadership roles. Evelyn Gomez is the Chair of the Committee and Tara Donner is the Secretary. They discussed setting goals for the year. Two goals were proposed – one to make sure they introduced the subcommittee to the community and to make clear how they can be contacted. The second goal is to support an equity audit. They discussed a few steps on how to focus on that. The next meeting is scheduled for November 23.

4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee

There was no report from the Structural Change Impact Committee.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda

On a motion offered by Catherine Bowen and seconded by Tara Donner, it was VOTED unanimously to approve the donation of 580 masks and \$50.31 from Ear Savers project.

5.2 Personnel Items

5.3 Business Items

5.4 Approval of Minutes

August 13, 2020 Finance Subcommittee Minutes
October 30, 2020 Equity Subcommittee Minutes

Superintendent Phelan noted subcommittee minutes could be voted at subcommittee meetings.

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was VOTED 4-0-1 on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of August 13, 2020 as amended.

The October 30, 2020 Equity Subcommittee minutes will be voted on at the next Equity Subcommittee meeting.

6. FUTURE BUSINESS

November 10, 2020
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
8:00 a.m. – Remote

November 10, 2020
School Committee Meeting
6:30 p.m. – Remote

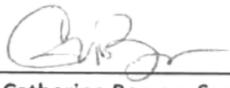
7. ENCLOSURES

November 1, 2020 Enrollment

8. 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 10:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary