

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
JOINT MEETING WITH POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
September 15, 2021

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 7, 2021
TIME: 2:54 PM

Present: Ms. Kate Bowen, Policy Subcommittee Chair
Ms. Amy Checkoway, SC Chair present until 4 pm
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary
Mr. Michael Crowley
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Sarah Winn, Assistant Principal BHS
Isaac Taylor, Principal BHS

Subcommittee Chair Kate Bowen called the Policy Subcommittee to order at 3:33 pm
SC Chair Amy Checkoway called the SC meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Kate Bowen announced two additions to the agenda: 1. Changes to the Belmont HS Handbook Attendance Policy, 2. Face Coverings Policy

1 - Changes to the HS Handbook Attendance Policy

Sarah Winn, Assistant Principal at BHS presented the proposed changes to the attendance policy in the BHS Handbook. In making the changes to the policy, Winn stated they looked at the policy of many other districts. In keeping with those other districts, BHS is proposing a guiding statement to the policy to express the value of attendance. The proposed changes include the removal of the 'N' policy. The SC noted the proposed changes are student-centered, push students to take responsibility for their actions, and provide a plan for involving parents/caregivers early in conversations and remediation. Kate urged thoughtfulness about how students will be informed about the attendance policy and get information about absences/consequences per extra curriculars, etc.

Chair Checkoway commented on the proposed vaccine mandate for extracurricular activities. She shared her support for moving forward with it but urged the SC to be thoughtful about implementation at the central office level and timing of it given the Fall activities are in progress.

Members of the Policy Subcommittee supported the proposed changes to the HS attendance policy. The consensus was to take public comment at the next SC meeting before taking a vote to approve the changes to the handbook. Kate motioned to support the changes for a review and a vote at the September 21, 2021 School Committee meeting. Motion moved by Mike Crowley and second by Meg Moriarty. Unanimous approval (3-0-0)

2 – Extra-curricular vaccine mandate

The Policy Subcommittee members discussed the proposal made by Jamal Saeh at the September 7, 2021 SC meeting to mandate vaccinations for students age 16 and older (in keeping with the FDA's full approval of the vaccine for individuals 16 and older) who participate in extra-curricular activities. They looked at models from Lexington, which mandates vaccination, and Newton, which requires participation in weekly COVID testing if not vaccinated. Superintendent Phelan informed the members that Arlington is thinking about enacting a mandate based on the Lexington model but he was not aware of other schools in the Middlesex League doing so at this time.

Members of the subcommittee agreed that the SC had expressed urgency to enact a policy modeled on Lexington's during the SC meeting on September 7, 2021. Thus, using the language that Member Saeh proposed, which was based on the Lexington policy, members amended the language for Belmont and added a preamble to explicitly state that the intent of this policy is to encourage vaccinations and ensure a safe environment. Age-eligible students who qualify for a medical or religious exemption will be required to participate in weekly COVID testing. Age-ineligible students will have 6 weeks once becoming age-eligible (16) to present proof of vaccination, defined as two shots. Supt Phelan clarified that this policy covers students ages 16 and older until there is emergency approval for ages 12 and older.

The SC acknowledged that this policy will require oversight from athletics and music as well as other staff needed to track student age, vaccination, and participation in rostered activities. Currently, less than 20% of the HS student population is not yet vaccinated.

Kate motioned to put forth the policy as written to the SC for a vote. Mike moved the motion and Meg seconded it. Unanimous approval (3-0).

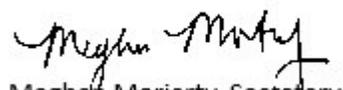
Kate made a second motion to put forth the recommendation to implement the policy 6 weeks from the date it is voted. Meg moved the motion and Mike seconded it. Unanimous approval (3-0).

3 - Face Coverings

No discussion of this item took place because it was discussed at the last Policy meeting, which served as the first reading. Thus, the updated policy will be put forth for a vote at the September 21 SC meeting, which will serve as the second reading.

Meeting adjourned by Kate Bowen at 5:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary