

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**REMOTE MEETING**  
**JUNE 8, 2021**

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair  
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary  
Ms. Andrea Prestwich  
Ms. Kate Bowen  
Mr. Michael Crowley  
Mr. Jamal Saeh  
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

Committee Chair Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**Recognition of 2020-2021 Belmont Retirees**

The School Committee recognized the following twelve Belmont Public Schools staff members who have retired in the 2020-2021 school year.

- Heather Blake – Burbank Nurse
- Romario Castro – Chenery Middle School Assistant Custodian
- James Davis – District wide Director of Athletics, Physical Education & Health
- Joan DiPace – Wellington Classroom Assistant
- Jennifer Duffy – Winn Brook Professional Aide
- Cynthia Femino – Belmont High School Administrative Assistant
- Cathy Grant – Administration Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
- Robin Hines – Burbank Professional Aide-Library
- David Learner – Chenery Middle School Psychologist
- Alice Melnikoff – Belmont High School Community Service Coordinator
- Hester Murray – Winn Brook Special Education
- Patricia Soliozy – District wide Director of Mathematics

School Committee members read a resolution for each retiree. School Committee members and Belmont Administrators thanked them all for their years of dedication to the students and staff of the Belmont Public Schools.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

*David Palmer – Upper and Lower School Math teams at Chenery Middle School had successful seasons. The 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade team competed in Mathematic Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools (MOEMS) and earned a team plaque for one of the highest team achievements. The 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade team competed in the*

*Intermediate Math League of Eastern Mass earning 2 team awards with 4 students scoring in the top 100 students in the league.*

*Jessica Hausman – Asked how Belmont Public Schools and the School Committee will plan for start times in the middle and high school.*

*James Propp- Co-Chair of Belmont Starts School Later parent group highlighted two features of successful outcomes- transparency and community buy-in where there is an attempt to get members from throughout the community to collaborate and plan for start times.*

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Checkoway reported on upcoming meetings and events.

Belmont Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) will host their annual meeting with officer elections on June 10 via Zoom. Middle and high school groups will host an outdoor Spring Jazz Festival at Clay Pit Pond June 10. The Belmont High School Performing Arts Company (PAC) will host an Impromptu Improv performance on June 11 and present "Some Enchanted Evening" on June 12 via the Belmont Media Center TV. Belmont Pride Parade will take place on Saturday, June 12.

The deadline to purchase Foundation for Belmont Education (FBE) Star Awards is June 10. High School graduation was held Saturday, June 5.

The School Committee will present the School budget at Town Meeting. Superintendent Phelan's evaluation will occur at the last SC meeting to be held June 22.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

With the culmination of a difficult year, Superintendent Phelan expressed his pleasure at being able to allow senior events in person and noted the High School hosted a successful graduation on Harris Field this past Saturday.

Mr. Phelan explained the administration's reasoning for the recent school early dismissals due to heat concerns (some 90 degree room temperatures); planning and information gathering was conducted in conjunction with the Belmont Department of Public Works, School Administration, Nursing department and surrounding Superintendents.

The district will host another remote only families information session on June 14.

**2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

2.1 No unfinished business

**3. MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Federal Grant Update

Superintendent Phelan presented Federal Grant Funding and priorities plan to the School Committee for their review and discussion (SC Document: FY22 ESSER Funds SC Meeting 6.8.21). The FY22 Budget ESSER II, III Funds will be used for academic recovery, mental health and social emotional recovery, equity, access and supports for underserved students and professional development for staff. The district will receive \$456,001 in ESSER II funds, which must be expended by 9/30/23. The ESSER III funding to the district is in the amount of \$1,001,654 and must be expended by 9/30/24. The Town of Belmont is awaiting clear guidance from the state

regarding the use of American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the appropriation to the School Department is still unknown. Superintendent Phelan indicated the School Department's goal is to create a two-year plan to support students and school community with all funds. Three options were outlined for expending one-time federal funds. Option I expends ESSER funds in Year one. (\$1.4M); Option II expends \$1.4M of ESSER funds in Year one and \$1.4M of ARP funds in Year two; Option III expends ESSER funds of \$700,000 in each of Year one and Year two. The list of prioritized one-time positions and professional development needs were presented next, along with potential needs depending on DESE and State guidelines due to the pandemic.

Superintendent Phelan gave his recommendation to expend ESSER II and III next year. The district can then partner with the Town to ask for matching funds (\$1.4M) for the second year. He clarified some positions on the one-time list are directly COVID related and others are positions that the district should have had previously that are also COVID related. For example, the High School never had a Social Worker but its need was amplified during this COVID year.

School Committee members communicated their preference for expending federal funds and discussed the one-time positions list prioritization. Most members preferred Option II or III and felt they may want to ask the Town for additional funds from the ARP to fully support the School Department. Including principal input in creating the list was appreciated. Suggestions to decouple the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) para professionals move up in prioritization, and move down a technology integration specialist were offered as was support to fund academic year tutoring and hire outreach workers to facilitate communication/connections with families.

The administration suggested adding hiring prioritized for June into the list as to not lose candidates for sought after positions such as social workers and math specialist. They agreed to present an updated one time prioritized positions list at the upcoming Finance Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday, June 8.

Committee Chair Checkoway took some questions and comments from the community.

*Tim Flood – Voiced frustration with the conversation and feels special education community is not being supported. His will is to prioritize academic recovery by spending the funds up front to support the most vulnerable students.*

### 3.2 Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Update

The Return to In-Person Learning Working Group submitted a presentation to recap the group's work for the 2020-2021 school year and brainstorm needs for next year. The goal is to support students as they transition from a COVID schooling experience to a more typical schooling experience and to start strong in-person in Fall 2021. DESE is requiring all students to be full in-person for the 2021-2022 school year, and the district will no longer have the remote only learning option. The School Department will continue to monitor State and DESE guidance and will update policies as needed (masks, vaccinations). The working group brainstormed possible investments in three key priority areas: Social emotional well-being, remote to in-person transitions, and academics.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee- A meeting was held this morning joint with Warrant Subcommittee for Education to go over FY21 Out Of District tuition expenses and decide where the district should be aiming with special education balances that are used to manage OOD expenses. The schools experienced growth in expenses in the amount of \$400K in FY21. The subcommittee has met many times to discuss what balances should be kept as carryover and to discuss the general policy around procedures in managing these volatile

mandated expenses. In the past, the guide was to maintain 1 year of Circuit Breaker funding, but they are currently working with the Warrant Committee to review the procedure/policy and agree to some amount. They suggested creating a working group going forward.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee – Upcoming meeting on June 10

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

4.4 Capital Budget Committee meeting

4.5 Warrant Committee

4.6 Belmont High School Building Committee

4.7 Community Path

4.8 Financial Task Force II – Recommendations were recently finalized

4.9 Rink Working Group

4.10 EDCO – Board continues to meet. All but one program will continue with other collaboratives and the EDCO FY22 budget was approved.

4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee

4.12 Equity Subcommittee-. A recent meeting established subcommittee officers with Ms. Checkoway as secretary and Mr. Saeh as Chair. The subcommittee reviewed the job description for Director of Equity to begin hiring process and will begin Equity audit for the district. There is an upcoming meeting on June 11.

4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee

## 5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda - Surplus BHS Furniture and Equipment

Superintendent Phelan thanked high school staff and administrators, facilities and Building Committee with the overall move of the high school belongings into summer storage.

**On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Andrea Prestwich, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0-0) to declare BHS Furniture and Equipment list as surplus and authorize its disposal.**

5.2 Personnel Items

5.3 Business Items

5.4 Approval of Minutes

- School Committee Minutes of May 4, 2021

**On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Meghan Moriarty, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0-0) to approve the School Committee Minutes of May 4, 2021.**

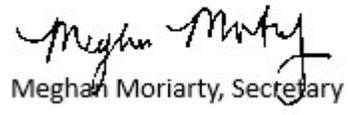
- Finance Subcommittee Minutes of May 4, 2021

**On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Jamal Saeh, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0-0) to approve the Finance Subcommittee Minutes of May 4, 2021.**

## 6. ADJOURN

**On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0-0) to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m.**

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

  
Meghan Moriarty, Secretary