

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2021

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: December 15,
2021
TIME: 2:34 PM

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
Mr. Michael Crowley left at 9:55 pm
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 Return to open Session.

Committee Chair Amy Checkoway returned the meeting to open session at 6:38 pm

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

Major business item 3.6 should read, "ITAC Appointments/ SEPAC Liaison"

Major business item 3.3 Health Update was presented first to give the Capital Budget Committee a chance to assemble.

1.4 Chair's Report

- Chair Checkoway indicated there were 12 applicants vying for open SC committee position.
- A statement for the solar array installation on the Chenery Middle School roof was read.
- Many SC members participated in the joint MASS/MASC conference last week.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Phelan highlighted the Belmont High School Tours which hosted over 1,000 community members. On January 10, 2022 they will host an additional tour for alumni and the BHS administration is working with the Senior Center to find a date for a tour.
- The Superintendent is working to align his goals with the District Strategic Work and Priorities for 2021-2022 and those will be presented at an upcoming meeting.
- The candidate searches for a Burbank Interim principal and a Butler Interim Principal are in the process with interviews scheduled within the next two weeks. Many other open positions available in the district. (*SC Document: Supt_Report_SCMeeting_11_9.pdf*)

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 No unfinished business

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Health Update

Superintendent Phelan introduced and thanked Director of Nursing Marybeth Rumley who offered a BPS COVID Health and Safety Update (*SC Document: SCHealth_Update_11-9-21*) including an overview of BPS COVID Testing. The National Guard has stepped in while CIC trains more staff. Rumley reported that having the National Guard been a positive experience for the students. BPS is participating in Test and Stay as an alternative for close contacts to quarantine. A total of 235 school days that would have been missed due to quarantine at home have been saved with the program, also with no positive test results. COVID Routine Safety checks have been performed weekly in the elementary schools since October 18, 2021 and Grade 6 began this week with take home nasal swabs.

Director Rumley provided Routine Safety checks data and results from the last three weeks and touched upon lessons learned during these weeks. Rumley reported 33 positive cases to date with 8 cases on quarantine from household exposure. 21% of the positive individuals were vaccinated. As of October 29, 2021, the vaccination rates by grade are as follows:

Grade 7	80.3%
Grade 8	84.5%
Grade 9	89.9%
Grade 10	87.8%
Grade 11	84.3%
Grade 12	84.3%

The Health Department has taken the lead on scheduling vaccine clinics, which are dependent on vaccine availability. Director Rumley encouraged everyone to participate in the Test and Stay program as a mitigation strategy that will identify positive cases early.

Begin joint session with Capital Budget Committee

3.2 Capital Project and Long-Term Capital Planning Committee Bylaw Discussion

Anne Marie Mahoney called the CBC to order at 7:14 pm. Members include Patricia Brusch, Susan Burgess-Cox, Roy Epstein, Jenny Fallon, and Rebecca Vose. Long Term Capital Committee member Chris Doyle was also in attendance.

The Chair of the CBC reviewed the list of capital projects as they pertain to the School Department. Of note, the Chenery Middle School is in need of roof repair. Facility Director David Blazon identified leaks caused by the walking paths in the roof and leaks in the back stairwell. He recommended doing repairs in lieu of replacing the roof to carry the Town over for three years. Replacing the roof may also mean replacing the existing HVAC units. The CBC will review the information to discuss the better option; replace (\$4 M) vs. repair (\$100K).

Ms. Mahoney asked about actual vs. projected student enrollment figures as they feed into Capital needs in the form of modular classroom units and access to rooms not being utilized for repairs. There was agreement to increase communications between the SD and CBC. Mr. Epstein requested a structured plan to review the school buildings over the next 10-15 years. Mr. Phelan pointed to his recent work with members of the Financial Task Force in balancing short term capital fixes with long term planning and mentioned there have been three (3) different Director of Facilities over the last 7 years.

School Committee members asked questions about the full inventory needs of school buildings, work impact to students, and a town-wide needs assessment. Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Phelan both reminded the group that a Town wide assessment has been done in past (2013) with SMMA and that it is time to adjust and update that report.

Next, Chris Doyle of the LTCC discussed a Long Term Capital Planning Committee draft proposal, which would amend Town Bylaws to replace the Capital Building Committee with a “Comprehensive Capital Committee”. The new committee would expand the existing group’s composition in numbers and scope, mandate a 30-year horizon, and would require a vote on the Warrant of Town Meeting for the Capital Improvement Plan. Planned changes would provide longer visibility on capital needs and funding requirements for the Town and would expand public participation in capital planning and the approval process.

A comparison chart of the two committees and their respective charges was presented, along with a draft of the bylaws for discussion purposes (SC Document: LTCPC_bylaw_change_1112021_v3.pdf).

School Committee members asked about role of Town Treasurer and additional town members on the committee and the necessity of having both SD and SC representatives. Both representative were sought due to their different roles –policy vs. administrative and because 80% of building assets are school based.

Capital Budget Committee adjourned at 8:18 pm

3.3 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias introduced Belmont Wellness Coalition members - Lisa Gibalerio, Sophia Suarez-Friedman, Wendy Conroy, Anne Wang along with student Ellie Lesser. BWC provided highlights from Belmont Middle and High School 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results. Similar surveys were taken in 10 other Middlesex League towns. In Belmont, Approximately 655 middle school (Grade 7 and 8) and 1055 high school students took part in the survey. Data was collected on Substance Use (vaping, alcohol, marijuana, perception of risk and harm of substances), Mental Health (self-harm/stress, depression, suicide- taking into account gender, race, pandemic effects), Bullying (at school or electronically- looking at grade, gender and race). The group provided a cross analysis of the following categories: substance use and mental health; mental health and non-school screen time; mental health and hours of sleep; mental health and electronic bullying.

It was noted, in general school demands/expectations ranked as the highest stressors for students. In high school, 31% respondents reported having overwhelming stress and 12% have considered suicide. In middle school, 18% of respondents have considered suicide. Belmont’s results compared similarly with the other Middlesex League towns.

Superintendent Phelan indicated this was the first year there was a social worker at the high school level and the service is needed. School Committee members voiced their desire to take the stigma away from mental health issues and want to focus on what the district can do to help. Member Moriarty proposed putting funds and resources towards trauma informed teaching when discussing the budget. Member Crowley encouraged non-complacency with these issues. Mr. Phelan reminded the School Committee of their instruction to the School Department to look at budget differently over the next three years. The administration is doing so from the view of student needs.

3.4 District Strategic Plan and Budgeting Update – postponed to future meeting

3.5 Superintendent’s Goals 2021-2022

Superintendent Phelan presented a draft of his 3 goals for the 2021-2022 school year (*SC Document: Supt_GoalsPacket_SC_11_9_2021*), which align with statewide standards using a model rubric for Superintendents.

Goal 1: District Improvement; Effective Strategic Financial Planning

In order to improve our ability to effectively meet both the academic and social-emotional needs of every Belmont student, I will lead the district through a strategic fiscal planning process that supports the 2023, 2024, and 2025 fiscal years. By June 2022, the district will have a three-year budget forecast that aligns with our students' needs and programming and staffing solutions, inclusive of community input.

Goal 2: Student Learning Goal

In order to ensure that every one of our students experiences a positive transition back to the 2021/22 school year, I will prioritize supporting principals and their school-based needs on a daily basis. I will do this by facilitating two-way communication at least weekly, responding to their requests and concerns in a timely manner, advocating for additional resources where necessary, and prioritizing school-based situations that arise throughout the year.

Goal 3: Professional Practice Goal

In order to ensure our district continues to make progress in its diversity, equity, and inclusion work, by June 2022, we will analyze and define clear takeaways from the district-wide audit results and design a corresponding strategic plan that includes school and community feedback.

School Committee members discussed the proposed goals and suggested additional use of data that will be helpful in providing him with feedback at a midcycle review as well as at the summative review. Superintendent Phelan suggested that evidence also includes the SC's everyday observations and communications with him. He will take SC feedback and incorporate it into the draft goals. The updated document will be presented at the November 23rd full SC meeting for a vote.

3.6 ITAC Appointments/ SEPAC Liaison

The School Committee has two seats on the Information Technology Advisory Council to be appointed. Chair Checkoway reported the current appointees' (Mr. Jonathan Greene and Mr. Philip Lawrence) terms have expired but they are both willing to continue in the role.

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty, and seconded by Kate Bowen, the SC voted unanimously (5-0) to appoint Mr. Jonathan Green and Mr. Philip Lawrence to the ITAC as the SC representatives.

Chair Checkoway turned next to appointing a liaison to the Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Member Moriarty had expressed interest in the role.

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway, and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted (5-0-0) to appoint Meg Moriarty as the SEPAC Liaison.

3.7 Discussion of Content Calendar 2021-2022

Chair Checkoway asked SC members for feedback on a content calendar for both past and future meeting agendas. Members mentioned a few items to include in future meetings including equity audit updates, finance updates, health updates. Superintendent Phelan reminded the members that the ten SC priorities and goals should be the basis of what gets on the content calendar and some other items may be more appropriate for the subcommittee meetings.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

4.2 Policy Subcommittee- reviewed the policy and processes for 4 topics, consulted MASC policies, and will report back after further review. Will review transportation and wellness as well as naming policies.

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

- 4.4 Equity Subcommittee
- 4.5 Capital Budget Committee
- 4.6 Warrant Committee
- 4.7 Belmont High School Building Committee – hosting a discussion on parking lot plans for west of Harris Field
- 4.8 Community Path -25% design submitted
- 4.9 Financial Task Force II
- 4.10 Rink Finance Committee - meeting with Perkins and Will on Nov 10 over continued discussion on new or renovated facility and financing options.
- 4.11 EDCO
- 4.12 Long-Term Capital
- 4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee

5. OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 Consent Agenda
- 5.2 Personnel Items
- 5.3 Business Items
- 5.4 Approval of Minutes
 - School Committee Minutes of October 19, 2021
 - Joint School Committee/Select Board Minutes of October 25, 2021

 - Joint School Committee/BMHSBC/Select Board Minutes of August 17, 2021-*moved to future meeting*
 - Joint School Committee/Select Board/Warrant Committee/Capital Budget Committee minutes of August 18, 2021-*moved to future meeting*

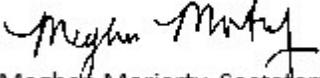
On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Meg Moriarty, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (3-0-1) to accept the SC minutes of October 19 2021. Bowen abstain;

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (4-0-0) to accept the SC minutes of October 25, 2021.

6. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Jamal Saeh and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously (4-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary