

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

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

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Andrea Prestwich
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 Amy Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

These meeting minutes may include statements by members of the public. Although the School Committee tries to reproduce these statements faithfully, the School Committee does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed in these statements and cannot guarantee that the information contained in these statements is accurate.

Elshad Kasumov – Asked about the possibility of parents dismissing children during lunchtime.

Mariola Magovcevic – Asked about a timeline for COVID testing and vaccine mandates.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda - none

1.4 Chair's Report

Chairperson Checkoway thanked the school department for their efforts to ensure that all students were back learning, in person at the start of the school year and she welcomed all families and staff, both new and returning. The SC received four (4) questions via the website/email related to vaccine mandates and masking, which would be addressed with the evening's agenda.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan thanked the community, faculty and parents for their patience and help last year. He is looking forward to a productive year with three goals in mind: 1. Start safely and complete the full school year without interruption. 2. Equity and culturally responsive teaching. 3. Visioning work for teaching and learning in the District.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 No unfinished business

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 School Opening

Superintendent Phelan spoke about opening schools for the 2021-22 school year. The overarching objective is to open safely and stay open to minimize disruptions to teaching and learning. *(SC Document: SC_Meeting_Slides_9_7_2021)*

The Belmont School Committee and the Belmont Education Association tentatively agreed to mandate vaccines for all staff. Next, that agreement will be formally voted and ratified by both parties.

Multiple mitigation strategies will continue to be used.

Director of Nursing Beth Rumley gave an update to the state program for COVID testing, “Routine COVID Safety Checks” and “Test and Stay”. The District will use Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) for the testing programs. Participation in testing is optional but highly recommended. Belmont Public Schools will implement the new statewide testing program with a “test and stay” protocol in lieu of requiring asymptomatic in-school close contacts to quarantine. Under test and stay, asymptomatic close contacts have the option to remain in school and be tested daily with BinaxNOW. Vaccinated staff and students are exempt from quarantine but strongly encouraged to participate in the COVID Routine Check (pool testing).

School Committee members asked detailed questions and made comments regarding testing. The SC encourages all families to register students to take part in COVID Routine Check. Director Rumley confirmed the ability to share testing participation percentages frequently. She also explained the test and stay program is for in school cases only and not for non-school based transmission per the Department of Health and DESE.

Communication and updates to the BPS community: Superintendent Phelan reminded the community that communications and updates that are sent out via email are also found on the BPS website. (<https://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/bps/Administration/School-Opening-2021-22>). He also gave a recap of summer activities for all levels at BPS –The Summer Enrichment Program served 220 students and more than 80 students for academic recovery; elementary schools hosted Jump Start programming; PTO/PTAs organized playdates, picnics and meet and greets; English Language Education (ELE) hosted summer camps; Chenery Middle School held orientations for students both new and returning to the district. Enrollment figures as of September 1 were shared with the group. *(SC Document: 2021-22/Enrollment_9_2021_SC.pdf)*

BMHS Grand Opening 9-12 wing: Faculty toured the new building on September 1 and student tours were given on September 7. Community tours will be offered in October. Superintendent Phelan thanked the building committee for their countless hours on the project keeping it on budget and on time during a pandemic.

3.2 BMHSBC Temporary Occupancy (vote)

School committee members reviewed the Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee conveyance letter along with the Temporary Certificate of Occupancy *(SC Document: BMHSBC_Phase1_TCO_letter_9_1_2021)*.

The document states the High School building can be occupied for its intended purpose. School Committee members thanked the BMHSBC for their work in this project.

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0-0) to accept the Temporary Certificate of Occupancy of the High School portion of the building for use and occupancy.

3.3 Student Vaccination Initial Discussion

Chair Checkoway offered support for student vaccinations and possible future mandates. A proposed letter to the State delegation to advocate for COVID-19 immunizations and a state mandate was presented. *(SC Document: Student_vaccine_mandate_letter_state_delegation_090721_edits.pdf)* The members of the SC were in favor of sending the letter in support of a mandate.

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Mike Crowley, the School Committee voted unanimously (6-0-0) to support the vaccine mandate letter as amended to the state delegation.

Next, SC member Saeh encouraged the Belmont SC to mirror an emergency, interim policy from a nearby Town, mandating vaccinations for all age eligible students who participate in school-sponsored sports and rostered extracurricular activities that occur outside of the school day. (*SC Document: Extracurricular_vaccine_mandate_Draft.pdf*) When asked about Middlesex League members view on mandating student vaccines for sport participation, Superintendent Phelan replied the Middlesex League as a whole was not pursuing this option because there was no majority in favor. School Committee members were in favor of moving forward with some version of a mandate after reviewing more initiatives on the subject from the surrounding towns. It was determined the correct process would include a joint Policy Subcommittee/SC meeting to produce a document as a first reading that would then be presented to the SC at an upcoming open meeting.

3.4 Math Challenger Program Update

Assistant Superintendent Darias provided an update to the new Challenger Geometry Program. (SC Document: *Challenger_Geometry_Program_Update_School_Committee_9_7_21.pdf*) Summer online work was assigned via Khan Academy. Students will have online coursework throughout the 2021-2022 school year through Edgenuity. Students will also attend one (1) weekly meeting with a teacher, after school.

The total number of students who began the summer portion of the program was reported as 210 (140 rising 8th graders and 70 rising 9th graders). A total of 202 students will continue the program for the 2021-2022 school year (135- 8th graders and 67- 9th graders). Program costs were reported as \$927.50 for summer instructors, \$24,000 for a 0.4 FTE math instructor and \$21,000 for Edgenuity license fees.

3.5 Athletic Event Gate Fees

Superintendent Phelan asked the School Committee to waive athletic fees for Harris Field and avoid putting up a new fence. Due to a shortened season last year, student athletic fees were reduced to give relief to families. The new Interim Athletic Director supports the extension of this practice to the current year. Concurrently, the fence separating Harris Field from the school campus came down during the new building construction such that the field has been temporarily, fully incorporated into the campus. The fiscal impact to waive fees is \$22,000 for the fall season.

School Committee members discussed the building project timelines, long-term sustainability of waiving fees and safety issues without the fence. The SC determined the request should be reviewed at the next Finance Subcommittee meeting. Superintendent Phelan revised his request to temporarily suspend collecting fees for fall until the SC votes.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley, and second by Jamal, Saeh, the School Committee voted unanimously (6-0-0) to temporarily suspend gate fees until the SC votes on it.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee -The August 18 meeting covered closeout to FY21 budget. The district was able to use federal funding during year and returned \$2.3M to the town. Some reasons for the return figure were lower Staff Exchange figures, contract negotiations differences, technology and supplies were covered by federal dollars and lower transportation costs due to COVID and remote schooling.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee- Met on September 3, and updated Face Covering policy 5005A.

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

4.4 Capital Budget Committee-Will meet in October

4.5 Warrant Committee

4.6 Belmont High School Building Committee

4.7 Community Path

4.8 Financial Task Force II

4.9 Rink Working Group

- 4.10 EDCO-SC will appoint a member to the board for their last year
- 4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee
- 4.12 Equity Subcommittee
- 4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee –Is meeting with town and school HR representatives to discuss ideas.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

- 5.1 Consent Agenda - CMS surplus Materials

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the School Committee VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to declare the Chenery Middle School materials and equipment listed in the packet as surplus.

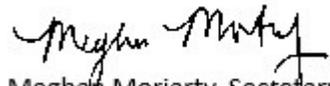
- 5.2 Personnel Items
- 5.3 Business Items
- 5.4 Approval of Minutes
 - School Committee Minutes of June 29, 2021
 - School Committee Minutes of August 10, 2021-moved to future date

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 accept the SC minutes of June 29, 2021.

6. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Andrea Prestwich, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary