

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING

JANUARY 18, 2022

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: February 16, 2022
TIME: 9:33 AM

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
Mr. Mike Crowley
Mr. Ralph Jones
Mr. Jamal Saeh
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Mr. Duncan Beecroft, Student Advisor

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to Order

Committee Chair Amy Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:30 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.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda - None

1.4 Chair's Report

In the interest of time, the Chair did not offer a formal report.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan introduced the new Burbank Elementary School Principal, Brenda Maurao and the new Butler Elementary School Principal, Julie Babson. Both came on board January 3, 2022, as interim principals.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- School Committee minutes of January 4, 2022

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the SC voted (5-0-1) to approve the School Committee minutes of January 4, 2022. Moriarty - abstain

- School Committee joint with Select Board minutes of November 9, 2021
- School Committee joint with Select Board minutes of November 10, 2021

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted (4-0-2) to approve the School Committee joint with Select Board minutes of November 9 and 10, 2021. Jones and Saeh - abstain

- Finance Subcommittee minutes of November 30, 2021

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the SC voted (2-0-1) to approve the Finance Subcommittee minutes of November 30, 2021. Crowley, Saeh – aye; Moriarty - abstain

- Curriculum & Instruction minutes of December 13, 2021

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Ralph Jones, the SC voted (3-0-0) to approve the Curriculum & Instruction minutes of December 13, 2021. Checkoway, Jones, Moriarty - aye

- School Committee Workshop minutes of October 13, 2021

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted (4-0-1) to approve the School Committee minutes of October 13, 2021. Jones - abstain

- Equity Subcommittee minutes of December 9, 2021

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the SC VOTED (3-0-0), on a roll call vote to accept the Equity Subcommittee minutes of December 9, 2021. Crowley, Saeh, Checkoway - aye

4. MAJOR BUSINESS

4.1 FY23 Budget Presentation (Community Forum)

Superintendent Phelan brought the first draft of the FY23 Budget to the SC and community for discussion (*SC Document: FY23_Budget_Discussion_DRAFT_2021-01-18_20SC_rev.pdf*). This multi-staged process focusing on district and student needs began with a draft presentation at a Finance Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Phelan reported the current draft has a general fund budget is \$68,930,222, which is a \$2.7M increase over the FY22 budget, and is within the amount calculated in the Financial Task Force 2 model.

The FY23 budget working assumptions were presented under the following categories:

- Positions

During FY22, additional fractional positions were increased due to student needs. These positions are included in the FY23 roll-forward budget. Examples of these positions presented included 0.40 Nurse and 0.40 MS Math. Superintendent Phelan presented the part-time athletic director position for FY22 as reinstated to full-time for FY23. Not all incremental adds in FY22 have been included in the FY23 Budget. Mr. Phelan then provided an overview of ESSER funded positions and the one-year reallocation positions.

- Salary and wages

The district is negotiating five union contracts. Budget includes estimated amount for COLA assuming step advancement.

- Restoration of FY22 non-salary reductions

Non-salary reductions in FY22 in amount of \$295K including clubs and activities may be partially restored in FY23, but will be offset with additional revolving cuts of \$150K.

- Texts, materials, supplies & equipment

Departmental operating expenses and equipment are indexed at FTF2 rate of 2.5%, tech budget at net decrease of \$50K and regular day transportation indexed for contractual increase.

- Special Education and fringe

Special education and fringe indexes ranged from 5% (tuitions, contract services) to 7% SPED transportation to 10% workers comp (Town and Schools). These %s are based on the Financial Task Force modeling.

The district's review of enrollment found overall enrollment is down the past two years, although Special Education and English Learner education enrollments are increasing. Superintendent Phelan reiterated the FY23 budget is being informed by current and emerging student based needs.

The district will incorporate SC feedback and will consider potential new positions for FY23 based on enrollment and needs for specific student populations. A placeholder of 6.0 additional FTEs in the FY23 budget will be used at this time in an effort to identify anticipated needs. Total estimated cost of these additions are (salary + benefits) ~\$540K bringing FY23 General Funds budget to \$69,470,222. Federal funds will leave operating budget by FY25.

Chair Checkoway took comments from SC members.

Members appreciated the breakdown of needs by population. Member Saeh asked about fractional FTE increases and 6.0 placeholders. He inquired as to whether the Math Challenger instructor position(s) will be impacted if the 7/8 grade math acceleration class(es) is reinstated. Superintendent Phelan confirmed the district is not going back to the previous accelerated math model but will grow from the current Challenger program.

Member Moriarty asked if the district staffs at the mandated SPED level or above that level. Mr. Phelan indicated the district strives to best support every child with services; the term “mandated service” is used so the community understands there are requirements for certain things. Moriarty inquired why Athletic Director reinstated as previous position and not split into Wellness and Athletic.

Member Crowley hopes the district will evaluate the progress of the Challenger Math program and will look at other synergies as 7/8 students will be in same building in the 2023-2024 school year. Mr. Crowley also recommended some of the FY22 reallocated positions be looked at to continue into FY23 due to their long-term need (social worker, reading, math)

Chairperson Checkoway asked for more information on the structure of the Special Education department and how the two new SPED elementary chair positions are helping. She would like to see what the impacts are. Checkoway anticipates some of the federally funded positions may be beneficial to keep.

Member Bowen inquired as to student participation in co-curriculars (PE, Arts) and how students are accessing these co-curriculars. Bowen suggested coordinating Athletics Director with Wellness and Mental Health as well as PE.

Chair Checkoway took comments from community.

Lisa Pargoli – Asked where the temporary positions (ESSR) are being tracked. She indicated the positions should not be reinstated they cannot be afforded.

Bill Anderson – Felt it is misleading to call unavailable federal funds for FY24/25 a “staff gap” and he recommended adjusting the last bar graph. Mr. Anderson cautioned the district and committee from putting projections out to community.

Kara Sassone – Inquired how the anticipated additional staff for the new school to district (7/8 wing) will be addressed.

Allison Lenk- Asked if there is a limit on out of district students or non-resident employee children, and how many are currently registered along with implications of costs.

Superintendent Phelan commended Chair Checkoway on her desire to have the budget dialogue early and in front of the community in order to provide individuals with a forum for asking questions and receiving answers. Phelan commented the challenge ahead is that the district will fully expend the ESSER funding in FY23, leaving only the use of remaining ARPA funds and “Free Cash” in FY24. The move of grades 7 and 8 students to the new school will need to be planned carefully for the 2023-2024 school year as it will come with additional expenses.

4.2 Health Update

Superintendent Phelan presented a BPS COVID Health and Safety Update and reiterated the goal for the BPS is to keep school open for students and in-person learning. (*SC Document: Health_Updates_SC_1_18_22_2*) Recent information from Governor Baker, DPH and DESE reported on a new program that will provide weekly take home antigen test for all staff and students. The District will “pause” test and stay, and contact tracing, with more information forthcoming from a DESE webinar

tomorrow. Superintendent Phelan reviewed recent vote and motions from the January 11, 2022 SC and gave updated data on positive community cases in m attendance for staff and students and vaccination rates/pool testing/consent forms.

School Committee members asked questions pertaining to reporting, PCR vs. antigen testing, vaccination opportunities.

Chair Checkoway took questions and comments from the community.

Corinne Olmsted- Asked if there is distinction from DESE, BoH, CDC with vaccinated and unvaccinated students quarantine requirements, Ms. Olmsted indicated it may be detrimental to students for Belmont to have 10 day quarantine at elementary levels.

4.3 Rink Design Update

School Committee member Meghan Moriarty along with Mark Healy, Chair of the Rink Design Committee hosted a discussion on various aspects of the rink project. The Design Committee is coming before SC for permission to work with BMHSBC and SB to study other rink design options beside what the SC voted on previously. Mr. Haley commented that the original Perkins & Will design was preliminary and some aspects were out of normal ratios (ex. 11K ft. locker room for a 20LK ft. fieldhouse). The proposed review will include renovation options, rink location, parking review, program needs. The Select Board encouraged the Rink Design Committee to have a schematic design completed before Town Meeting, Spring 2023.

Some School Committee members were concerned that another review of the process would set back the current schedule of the BMHSBC as it pertains to the fields and may upset other athletic groups who were not given space in the current design.

SC allowed the Rink Design Committee to conduct a review of alternative design possibilities, while keeping previous talks in mind. The group will come to SC before any decisions made and anticipates an update in March.

4.4 BHS Program of Studies (vote)

At the previous SC meeting, High School administrators presented the BHS Program of Studies for 2022-2023 (*SD Document: 2022-23_ProgramOfStudies_Presentation1_2022*), which Included three new course proposals. AP World History: Modern, Chinese 5 Honors, and Statistics and Probability Honors.

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Ralph Jones, the SC voted unanimous (6-0-0) to approve the Program of Studies with recommended additions for the 2022-23 SY.

4.5 2022/23 Calendar (vote)

At the previous SC meeting, Superintendent Phelan presented the school calendar for 2022-2023 (*SC Document School_Calendar_2022-2023_DRAFT_version2_12152021*). The proposed first day of school will take place September 7, which is inconsistent with SC policy but based on construction needs of Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee.

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Kate Bowen, the SC approved unanimously (6-0-0) to accept the 2022-2023 School Calendar as presented.

4.6 YRBS Follow Up

Committee member Mike Crowley led a follow up presentation to the YRBS findings of December 2021. Ralph Jones and Mike Crowley met with Belmont Wellness Coalition and Assistant Superintendent Darias to make recommendations going forward.

- Maintain Social Worker staffing
- Develop a youth mentorship program
- Additional staff training on youth mental health

CMS and BHS principals have partnered with McLean Hospital to offer a webinar on February 3, 2022, and BWC will hold a community meeting on January 25 to support this work.

5. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES

5.1 Community Path – Discuss Letter from School Committee

Last Spring, the SC sent a letter of support for the community path to Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Community Path group is waiting for funding approval of their project submission and anticipates hearing back in late February. Committee member Kate Bowen recommended the SC provided another letter of support for submission. SC supported submitting an updated letter to note transportation improvements. Chair Checkoway will work with Member Bowen to execute the letter.

5.2 Other Subcommittee Updates

Long-Term Capital Planning Committee has an upcoming meeting to talk about plans for the year. The group will schedule a follow up meeting with SC meeting in February.

Finance Subcommittee has a meeting Wednesday morning to review revolving accounts and updates to the 3-year Out of District plan.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Consent Agenda

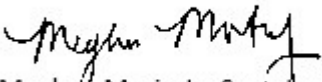
- Vote to Accept Donation to Winn Brook Elementary

On a motion offered by Amy and seconded by Ralph, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to accept the donation of \$4,244 to the Winn Brook Elementary School for a music materials purchase.

7. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Mike Crowley, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:


Meghan Moriarty, Secretary