

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
JUNE 14, 2022

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: July 6, 2022
TIME: 3:04 PM

Present: Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Chair
Ms. Amy Checkoway, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
Mr. Michael Crowley
Mr. Jeffrey Liberty
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Absent: Mr. Jamal Saeh

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Moriarty called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda - none

1.4 Chair's Report

- SC Chair Moriarty thanked all community members, the entire School Committee, and School Administration for their input and help with the School budget presentation to Town Meeting
- SEPAC is hosting a remote parent information session on technology safety on June 16, 2022
- Possible SC meetings for summer planning, rink committee and diversity training

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan thanked students and families for their patience throughout the year and expressed his gratitude that student were in-person. Mr. Phelan thanked various groups for their work on the TM budget presentation, mental health, DEI and other topics.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- School Committee Joint Minutes of May 2, 3, 24, 2022
- Policy Subcommittee Minutes of May 9, 2022 – moved to a future meeting
- Equity Subcommittee Minutes of May 18, 2022

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jeff Liberty, it was voted (4-0-1) on a roll call vote to approve the School Committee minutes of May 2, 2022 with amended attendance. Bowen abstained.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jeff Liberty, it was voted unanimously (5-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the School Committee minutes of May 3, 2022.

On a motion offered by Jeff Liberty and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was voted (4-0-1) on a roll call vote to approve the School Committee minutes of May 24, 2022. Crowley abstained.

On a motion offered by Jeff Liberty and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was voted by subcommittee members Liberty and Checkoway (2-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the Equity Subcommittee minutes of May 18, 2022.

4. MAJOR BUSINESS

4.1 District Configuration Planning

Superintendent Phelan reported that the district has been working towards re-configuration/building planning for seven years and is nearing the end of the overall plan. The process is being brought back to the community as it was interrupted during the pandemic. Mr. Phelan reviewed a BPS District Configuration conceptual map and the original timeline (2018 – 2025) along with the current situation (*SC Document: DistrictConfigurationTransitionPlan_BSCPresentation06_2022*). At this time, Superintendent Phelan is seeking a one-year position to aid in the completion of the transition work in an effort to ensure that many complex tasks and details are addressed successfully. The individual will oversee/liaison on the following:

- Skanska/Building Committee, Belmont Facilities, Food Services, Nursing, and Transportation transition planning
- Faculty and Staff work – Faculty and staff input opportunities and work with principals/directors
- Curriculum & Instruction – plan cross-departmental work, Atlas Rubicon, NEASC accreditation
- Technology Integration – Liaise with Director Steve Mazzola
- Communication & Input Gathering – Teaching and Learning
- Leadership Work – Working with appointed Upper Elementary Principal and dividing and communicating with current staff
- District Visioning Work – Facilitate work with all stakeholders to finalize Vision for Teaching & Learning and NEASC “Portrait of a Graduate”

The district aims to deliver a high quality, fully operational facility that addresses students’ developmental, social, emotional, and academic needs. Superintendent Phelan offered a list of items that need to be addressed. The work would be best served by one person being responsible for all parts who will report to the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. There was an acknowledgement of SC feedback that this request should have been revisited with the community earlier as part of the budget process.

Chair Moriarty acknowledged that community members and SC members may not have been aware of the previous timelines and work. Comments and questions were taken from the SC.

Member Crowley – Commented the timing of the request is problematic now that budget process is over. Mr. Crowley also inquired what has changed with the original plan for Asst. Superintendent Darias to do the work. Superintendent Phelan replied that the transition work is behind due to the pandemic and the Administration (4 individuals) cannot take any more time off from their daily responsibilities to do this work. During the budget process, Superintendent Phelan indicated he would focus on the building-based needs first to see what the district could afford.

Member Crowley - Inquired about the new appointed principal position and if funding sources have been identified. Superintendent Phelan clarified the district would like to identify the principal of the new school (4-6 building), but the individual will not begin until the following year. There will be no impact to the FY23 budget. There are three possible funding sources, but they need to be confirmed.

Member Checkoway - Noted in the May 3, 2022 minutes there was public discussion on the topic of a potential position to support the reconfiguration work. Checkoway acknowledged there is a need for the requested position and suggested the responsibilities be put on paper so that everyone involved in the process is clear what the role is and who is making decisions about what. Ms. Checkoway had questions regarding the visioning process and stakeholder engagement plan and timeline.

Member Liberty - Asked to clarify to whom new one-year position will report, to Superintendent or Asst. Superintendent. Mr. Liberty also asked about the request for an Upper Elementary Principal and not for a 7/8 Grade Principal. Superintendent Phelan responded that the one-year reconfiguration position will report to him and stated that the current CMS Principal will be the 7/8 Middle School Principal. Mr. Liberty encouraged the Administration to follow SC policy 4001 for recruitment and selection and consider outside applicants. Mr. Phelan will seek a current internal principal/asst. principal who has already been through a comprehensive interview process. Phelan stated it is more important for the Upper Elementary School to have someone who is known to staff to answer transition questions and build culture and confidence among staff, as the Upper Principal will not formally begin until the 2023-2024 school year. He also clarified the appointment of the 4-6 school will be from an internal pool, assuming there is a qualified candidate, and will be permanent.

Several members voiced support for the needed reconfiguration position, but requested more information regarding funding in advance of a decision. It was also suggested to keep diversity as a priority in hiring during the transition. Although the School Department has flexibility to make changes to their budget after it is set, there is sensitivity about this topic, and it was suggested that Superintendent Phelan inform the Select Board and Warrant Committee of the position request. The possible funding sources for the new position will be discussed again at a SC meeting next week.

Member Bowen - Relayed her support of keeping kindergarten class sizes manageable

Superintendent Phelan - Reminded the School Committee that a Reading Specialist position had been prioritized from the budget discussions.

Member Liberty – Indicated he was pleased configuration work is being brought forth again and acknowledged the lean central office, although he also has concerns of the timing for the position request.

4.2 Superintendent's Evaluation

Chair Moriarty summarized the Superintendent Evaluation process and reported that the overall rating for Superintendent Phelan was Proficient. The evaluation provides feedback on 4 standards (Instructional Leadership, Management and Operations, Family and Community Engagement and Professional Culture) and ratings ranged from needs improvement to proficient (*SC Document: Supt_Evaluation_Report_SC_2021-22*).

Chair Moriarty asked the School Committee for questions and comments.

Member Liberty- Commended the Superintendent on growth in some areas and the sheer volume of work that was produced. Mr. Liberty hopes for a better timetable for the evaluation process and would like to set goals earlier in the school year and have benchmarks throughout the year. Superintendent Phelan indicated there is a two-year evaluation option for Superintendents per MASC.

Member Crowley - Also commended the Superintendent for the volume of work and specified two areas of growth.

Member Checkoway- Found the Chair's feedback summary fair and helpful with synthesis of information and feels the SC can do even better with goals/evaluation process in terms of consistency.

Chair Moriarty read a direct quote from a member, which expressed thanks for Superintendent Phelan's continuous hard work, care and leadership with ongoing and increased challenges as Superintendent.

Superintendent Phelan noted that he appreciated the feedback and especially thanked central office leadership Janice Darias, Mike McAllister and Tony DiCologero for their efforts and professionalism throughout the year.

4.3 CMS/BHS Handbooks

Superintendent Phelan introduced Chenery Middle School Principal, Karla Koza, and High School Principal, Isaac Taylor, who gave a summary of the CMS Resource Guide and updates to the BHS Handbook (*SC Documents: CMS_Resource_Guide_Presentation_6_2022* and *BHS_Attendance_Policy_Presentation_2022*). CMS is categorized by DESE as an elementary school and no handbook is required, and the school has a resource guide in its place. Both documents have been vetted by the district's attorney and will be approved by Superintendent Phelan.

Principal Koza stated the creation of the resource guide for Chenery was initiated in 2019, but was put on hold with the pandemic. It aligns with school core Values and expectations, looking at the whole child through the lens of middle school learners. Highlights include logistics of the school, philosophy/expectations, education and academic supports, school environment. and discipline philosophy/process. Koza noted an evolving code of conduct with policy and procedures.

Next, Principal Taylor shared changes to the BHS attendance policy. Previously the topic was in two different sections of the handbook and was cumbersome. Changes were piloted this year and are summarized below:

1. The time that is considered tardy v. absent was changed: Students are tardy when they are between 2-15 minutes late (previously was 0-27 minutes); language was added to clarify what occurs after 5+ excused absences.
2. Revised follow up process for unexcused absences and tardiness. Language was added to provide teachers with strategies and process for follow up and was revised to clarify who is responsible.

School Improvement Plan groups were not included in the handbook updates. School Committee members recommended prioritizing communication of the changes with parents.

4.4 World Language Trip – Out of Country Peru (vote)

Superintendent Phelan welcomed Director of Social Studies, Deborah McDevitt, and Social Studies educator, Josh Streit, who are looking to re-establish a service-learning trip to Peru over February break 2023 (*SC Document: Social_Studies_Trip_Peru-SC_Presentation_6_14_2022*). The cost of the trip is \$3,900 with one scholarship available. Director McDevitt indicated the department has been able to accommodate any request for scholarships in the past through fundraising opportunities. Mr. Streit shared the itinerary highlights, which included stops in Lima and Machu Picchu, and a service project in the Sacred Valley of the Incas.

SC members were supportive of the trip and appreciated fund raising for those in need and the service component.

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was voted unanimously (5-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the Belmont Social Studies Trip to Peru in 2023.

4.5 School Committee Subcommittee Assignments (vote)

Chair Moriarty reviewed the proposed SC assignments for other town committees and SC subcommittees.

At the SC Retreat of May 19, 2022, after discussion, Member Bowen motioned to pause Financial Subcommittee meetings during 2022-23 and instead include all School Committee members in financial discussions during full SC meetings.

The SC may meet over the summer to further discuss and update the subcommittees (*SC Document: School_Committee_Subcommittee_Assignment_proposed_2021-2022_6_2022*). Some assignments were determined, and the conversation to potentially phase out the Equity Subcommittee to include the topics into other subcommittee work was brought forth again. It was determined that the process to maintain or phase out a subcommittee will need to include the Administration, DEI director, and all SC members.

Chair Moriarty next informed the SC that ITAC representatives Jim Berets and David Goldberg terms are expiring June 30, 2022, and are interested in continuing in that role.

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Meg Moriarty, it was voted (5-0-0) on a roll call vote to appoint Jim Berets and David Goldberg as the School Committee representatives of the ITAC.

5. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES

EDCO - Member Checkoway gave an update on the dissolution of EDCO. The Board met for the last time on June 9, and is on track to officially dissolve by June 30, 2022. Documentation is due to DESE for the Commissioner's approval. Financially, Belmont (and all member districts) will receive a small reimbursement of approximately \$50,000 for overpayment of assessments. The classification of the reimbursement will determine who it will be reimbursed to (Town or Schools) and if it is to be used for a general or specific use.

Rink Building Committee – Member Moriarty noted that this was newly formed at TM with a recommendation to build on the site where the rink currently is located. The SC will need a future meeting(s) with the RDC and Building Committee.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 Consent Agenda - None
- 6.2 Personnel Items - None
- 6.3 Business Items - None

7. ADJOURN

Chair Moriarty adjourned the meeting at 9:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

