

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
JUNE 7, 2022

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

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

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

Absent Ms. Kate Bowen
Mr. Jamal Saeh

Recognition of 2021-2022 Belmont Retirees

The School Committee recognized the following six Belmont Public Schools staff members who have retired in the 2021-2022 school year:

- Gina Hayes – District Payroll Manager
- Rene Magier – Burbank Speech & Language Pathologist
- Barbara Mahoney – Wellington Cafeteria Staff
- Richard Preston – District wide Audio Visual System Technician
- Jocelyn Record – Butler Professional Aide
- Adrienne Talamas – High School Foreign Language Educator

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

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Return to Open Session

Chair Moriarty called the regular business meeting to order at 6:41 pm.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

Matt Taylor- In the context of the upcoming Town Meeting presentation on the district budget, asked what level of services Belmont Public Schools is trying to obtain with regards to the budget and would like to see specific data to show if Town funds are being (well) spent.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda - none

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Moriarty shared some upcoming community events:

- June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month – Annual Belmont Pride parade June 11, 2022
- SEPAC - remote information session on internet safety June 16, 2022
- School Committee Community Safety Forum took place on May 31, 2022 and is posted on BMC's website

- Math Working Group held first meeting held May 31. Documents are posted on the BPS website
- TM Budget Presentation was moved to Monday, June 9, 2022 - Article 22
- Boys Lacrosse Team playing in MIAA Division I first round

1.5 Superintendent's Report

In the interest of time, Superintendent Phelan did not present a formal report.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- School Committee Minutes of May 19, 2022 and May 31, 2022
- School Committee Finance Subcommittee Minutes of May 17, 2022 and June 1, 2022
- School Committee Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee Minutes of May 24, 2022

On a motion offered by Jeff Liberty and seconded by Mike Crowley, it was voted unanimously (4-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the School Committee minutes of May 19, 2022.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Meg Moriarty, it was voted (3-0-1) on a roll call vote to approve the of School Committee minutes of May 31, 2022 with recommended edits. Checkoway abstained.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Meg Moriarty, it was voted unanimously by subcommittee members Moriarty and Crowley (2-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the Finance Subcommittee minutes of May 17 and June 1, 2022.

On a motion offered by Jeff Liberty and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was voted unanimously by subcommittee members Liberty and Checkoway (2-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee minutes of May 24, 2022.

4.1 Library Update

Corinne Olmsted, Library Trustee/School Committee Liaison, and Peter Struzziero, Library Director, provided a short update of library summer programs and activities relevant to students and families. (*SC Presentation: Library_Update_Presentation_6_7_2022*). Included in the list of activities were story times, summer reading programs, pride month events, Juneteenth events, college admissions support, summer fun, and a public forum on the new Library building.

Director Struzziero thanked the School Committee and Superintendent for their continued support and partnership. Mr. Struzziero mentioned the summer reading lists have been posted on BPS and library websites and the Library reading programs will begin June 25 in a hybrid model with the majority of time in-person. He also hopes for a restart of the fifth grade library card initiative next year.

4.2 Science Plan of Action Presentation

SC Chair Moriarty gave an overview of the School Committee's curriculum role, indicating the SC only approves a major change in curriculum.

Director of Science, Technology and Engineering (5-12) Elizabeth Baker, Elementary Math and Science Specialist (K-4) Jessica DeFrances, and parent Cyndi Reitmeyer presented on the curriculum program review process and the plan of action for the Science and Technology/Engineering Department. Baker stated the purpose of the presentation was to remind the SC and viewers of the Curriculum Program Review Process, to summarize the internal and external reviews, and to articulate the Plan of Action for the K-12 Science and Technology/Engineering Department. It was reported that each curriculum department undergoes a seven (7) year review cycle, which includes four phases and has a steering committee made of administrators, parents, and educators from all school levels.

The presentation (*SC Document: Science_Tech_Engineering_Presentation_SC_6_7_2022*) summarized the work of the steering committee to ensure alignment with Massachusetts standards. DeFrances indicated the recent cycle began 2020 and will conclude in 2027. Due to the pandemic, the Science Department is in year 1 of the cycle and is in the midst of implementing the new Plan of Action.

Guiding Questions keep the MA Science, Technology, and Engineering Frameworks in mind and are categorized by three themes:

- Curriculum and Assessment
- Current STEM Advancements
- Department Resources and Needs

Baker, DeFrances, and Reitmeyer highlighted key takeaways from the internal and external review, indicated key initiatives from the Plan of Action Summary, and touched upon anticipated long-term investments (makerspaces).

Chair Moriarty took SC and student advisor comments and questions.

Student Advisory Representative Xuetao Wu – Appreciated additional electives like computer science and asked if teachers would have broader range to design their classroom curriculum (e.g., Makerspace project instead of final exam).

Member Liberty – Inquired if possible to disaggregate data using equity lens and asked about OSHA standards as they pertain to class sizes.

Member Checkoway – Encourage family communications to different age levels about this work.

Superintendent Phelan- Thanked presenters and Assistant Superintendent Darias for supporting the traditional curriculum cycle that was interrupted and also thanked Jennifer Scranton, Elementary Science Specialist, for supporting Jess DeFrances.

Member Moriarty – Was pleased to hear how the reconfiguration is working to support curriculum with STEM and STEAM. Students’ interest in electives that engage them stood out from the materials shared.

Assistant Superintendent Darias – Echoed thanks for the Science department team and their important work to keep up with changes and to lead the work for advancement.

4.3 Youth Mental Health Group Update

Member Crowley introduced Lisa Gibalerio of Wayside Youth and Family Support Network. The SC had designated a group to assess the previous recommendations of the Belmont Wellness Coalition. A main recommendation brought forth was to pilot a peer student mental health program. Based on a review of research and best practice, the students would not be guiding peers, but would serve advocates who also do some education. A need was identified for additional capacity and an onsite person to be effective. Recently Wayside secured and allocated grant funding for a 20-hour per week Youth Engagement Specialist position as an onsite liaison to the schools. Ten (10) hours per week will be used to develop a pilot in the fall at BHS.

Superintendent Phelan thanked Lisa Gibalerio for her work over the years beginning with the Health and Wellness Group.

Chair Moriarty took SC comments and questions.

Member Checkoway – Asked if an updated YRBS – either a full version or mini version - could be implemented sooner than the usual cycle

Member Crowley - Commented on the possible need to survey annually

Member Liberty -Asked about the design of the pilot, the term commitment and the role of that specialist

Member Crowley – Suggested evaluating the pilot and looking to expand to CMS if successful.

4.4 Food Service Program Update

Superintendent Phelan introduced Food Service Director, Dustin O’Brien, who gave a recap of the year and a look to next year (*SC Document: Belmont_Food_Service_Presentation_SC_6_7_2022*). Mr. O’Brien touched upon food services during COVID, a new building kitchen space, expanded breakfast programs, and revenue lines. Next, challenges of the increased participation in free meals program, supply chain issues, and staffing shortages were noted. The SC was reminded that the Food Services Department is financially self-sustaining and separate from the general fund budget. Since 2019, the department has seen an increase in food and labor costs, and direct expenses with an increase in the number of meals served. The federal government will likely not continue funding universal free meals. The district is awaiting the state decision about whether universal meals will continue next school year.

Chair Moriarty took questions and comments from the School Committee.

Member Liberty – Asked what accounts for food service profitability and if there is a relationship between free breakfast programs and tardiness

Member Checkoway – Inquired if there was impact on food quality given universal meal program and supply chain issues.

Superintendent Phelan explained that when meals are free, the food services department is making money, since the federal government has been reimbursing the district for each meal being served. The future concern is that less revenue (from the federal government) and an increase in food prices will affect the department’s revenue. Funding stays in the food services account and may only be expended on food service items. Information will be shared with families about the free meal program when it is known.

Finance Director DiCologero informed families they should plan for regular lunch prices next year to be safe.

4.5 Leadership Council Professional Development Update

Assistant Superintendent Darias explained that the school year typically ends with a Leadership review. The focus over the past five years was around equity work and this year the audience will expand to include educators. The IDEAS workshop “Difficult Conversations” will be presented to 24 Leadership Council member, 13 educators, and one School Committee member in late June.

SC members inquired about the organization of the professional development and how the district will assess the long-term efficacy of the training. Superintendent Phelan reiterated that the district has been doing PD equity work since 2018 and now has renewed energy and a base for DEI work.

4.6 Brendan Grant Memorial Field (vote)

Superintendent Phelan provided background on the Brendan Grant Memorial Field, which was named in 2007 after a High School graduate who passed away tragically on the field. Through various fundraising

events, the family has dedicated much time and effort to the community. Donations go to the maintenance of the field and scholarships to BHS seniors. With the construction of the new Belmont Middle and High School, the varsity baseball field was relocated (*SC Document: Brendan_Grant_Field_Re-naming*). Superintendent Phelan recommends re-naming the reconfigured varsity baseball field the “Brendan Grant Memorial Baseball Field”.

School Committee members and Student Advisor Wu voiced support for re-naming the field the Brendan Grant Memorial Baseball Field.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Meg Moriarty it was voted (4-0-0) on a roll call vote to approve the re-naming of the reconfigured varsity baseball field “The Brendan Grant Memorial Baseball Field”.

5. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES as needed

Member Checkoway asked to add an EDCO update to the agenda under liaison updates for the next SC meeting.

Capital Budget Committee (Moriarty) - in process of their last meetings before the new CCBC appointments.

Rink Building Committee (Moriarty) – will next June 8.

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 9:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

