

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
Homer Municipal Building Gallery Room, 19 Moore St. Belmont
September 13, 2022

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 17, 2022
TIME: 3:43 PM

Present: Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Chair
Ms. Amy Checkoway, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen - arrived 6:34 pm
Mr. Mike Crowley
Mr. Jeffrey Liberty
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 Meg Moriarty called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns - none

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

Agenda item 4.6 Music Fee Discussion was removed from the agenda
Agenda item 4.4 Health Update will follow item 4.1 School Opening

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Moriarty thanked all SC members for being in person and indicated SC materials will be provided remotely, while acknowledging future need to participate remotely.

Chair Moriarty encouraged community to communicate any building-based concerns with principals.

Google Meet recordings will be available for subcommittee meetings this year.

A Town Budget Summit will be held on Thursday, September 15, 2022.

The Student Advisory Council not able to report in September due to elections occurring this month.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan welcomed all to the 2022-2023 SY, and thanked Belmont Media Center (Jeff Hansel and Matt Simonelli) for the hybrid set up in the new meeting location in the Homer Building Gallery Room.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- School Committee Minutes of June 22, 2022

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jeff Liberty, it was VOTED, on a roll call vote (4-0-0), to accept the School Committee minutes of June 22, 2022. Bowen, Saeh - abstain

- School Committee Minutes of July 12, 2022

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) to accept the School Committee minutes of July 12, 2022.

- School Committee Minutes of July 20, 2022

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Jeff Liberty, it was VOTED, on a roll call vote (5-0-1), to accept the School Committee minutes of July 20, 2022 as amended. Saeh – abstain

- School Committee Minutes of August 3, 2022 Joint with SB – moved to a future meeting
- School Committee Minutes of August 9, 2022

On a motion offered by Jeff Liberty and seconded by Mike Crowley, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) to accept the School Committee minutes of August 9, 2022.

- School Committee Minutes of August 10, 2022 Retreat

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously, (6-0-0) to accept the School Committee minutes of August 10, 2022.

- School Committee Minutes of August 15, 2022 Retreat

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Mike Crowley, it was VOTED, (5-0-1) to accept the School Committee minutes of August 15, 2022.

- SC Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee Minutes of March 1, 2022

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED, (2-0-0) to accept the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee minutes of March 1, 2022. (Moriarty, Checkoway-aye)

- SC Policy Subcommittee Minutes of May 9, 2022

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED, on a roll call vote (3-0-0) to accept the Policy Subcommittee minutes of May 9, 2022. (Bowen, Crowley, Moriarty -aye)

4. MAJOR BUSINESS

4.1 School Opening

Superintendent Phelan reported on the first days of school for the 2022-2023 school year, indicating things went well. (*SC Document: School Opening/Health Update Presentation*) Day One for staff with everyone in person was on Tuesday, September 6, 2022 with welcoming remarks from the administration and SC Chair. Day One for students was on Wednesday, September 7, 2022 and was an early release day for students and included district-wide professional development in the afternoon for staff.

Mr. Phelan gave a staffing update reporting 2 Unit A openings and 9 Unit D openings. Preliminary enrollment numbers for the district were reported at 4,367 as of September 7, 2021 compared to 4,358 as of October 1, 2021. Students continue to register and official annual enrollment data will be submitted to DESE on October 1, 2022.

An update was also given on the school lunch program, with free lunch continuing for the year. The state is mandating all districts use the My School Bucks student PINs this year, causing a slow down in lunch lines. Delays are improving daily.

School Committee members asked questions regarding the free lunch program and accompanying state nutrition guidelines. SC member also asked staffing questions around open vacancies with the Administration citing an exit trend this year of former staff moving closer to home. Approximately 5 or 6 new educators (of 39) are individuals of color. Some questions arose about school safety and keeping the community informed of lockdown drills. Superintendent Phelan reported Police Chief MacIsaac has attended professional development training and has implemented modifications.

Chair Moriarty noted that during the new staff luncheon and opening day events, new staff members seemed excited about being in Belmont. During his convocation to all staff, Superintendent Phelan communicated educators should focus to make classroom a fun place to learn again in order to engage student achievement.

4.2 Health Update

Superintendent Phelan turned to a health update reminding all that the BPS Health Team meets weekly to review data, and discuss guidance and protocols. (*SC Document: School Opening/Health Update Presentation*)

DESE will no longer provide funding for take home tests or pool testing and will not provide testing support. In addition, weekly reporting to DESE is no longer required. BPS has protocols for illness but no symptom checker. Mr. Phelan reviewed the recent nurse communication and health guidance/protocols and reported on an upcoming Town sponsored COVID-19 vaccine and Flu shot clinic (September 15, 2022). Additional clinics are planned (October 6, 2022).

BPS vaccine status was provided by grade for those with 2 doses/considered fully vaccinated and for those who are not compliant (no vaccine, partially vaccinated, and/or not up to date).

School Committee members asked detailed questions regarding vaccine/booster eligibility of students and the breakdown of those who are non-vaccinated vs. no booster. Superintendent Phelan indicated BPS would focus on encouraging participation in vaccine and booster events. Nurses will monitor cases reported to them for positive clusters in the classrooms and mitigation strategies will be considered accordingly.

4.3 Custodial Fee Discussion

Chair Moriarty referenced an internal memo from Finance Director DiCologero requesting an increase in rental custodial rates. (*SC Document: Custodial Rate Detail Discussion*) Mr. DiCologero explained the requested rates were the smallest increases for rental users to cover the cost of recent AFSCME pay rate increases.

Superintendent Phelan held internal meetings to review the rental process. With the new Middle and High School building, demand in use will increase. He believes the district will have to decide whether to protect the building and focus on student and community needs or use it as a revenue generating entity. Director DiCologero recommends differentiating direct cost as a reply to SC members' questions. He indicated the primary goal for this meeting is to inform the SC of the proposal to cover the increased salary costs.

In anticipation of community questions, Mr. Phelan noted the district does not charge afterschool programs for custodial coverage because they are already working in the building and the district always works with these partners on behalf of Belmont families. Other partners such as PTO/PTAs are not usually in need of extra custodial services for events.

4.4 English Language Update and Funding Need

Chair Moriarty read a summary from English Language Director Rinder to request an additional FTE for mandated EL services. Superintendent Phelan communicated a change in data as student enrollment continues. The August data reflected a funding need of 1.0 FTE, but program numbers continue to increase projecting an additional FTE need (for a total of 2.0). Assistant Superintendent Darias explained the district is looking at different levels and it would be helpful to post for multiple positions simultaneously and not stagger the postings.

It was reported the funding source for the additional position(s) would be the staff exchange. In response to SC members' questions, Director Rinder explained the number of students that exit the program annually is normally 100. This past year, it was fewer than 80. Rinder reported seeing a sharp increase in foundational learners, with half of CMS and BHS identified students brand new to the English language. The EL program is currently 60 students higher than last year, with more in the testing process.

Chair Moriarty took questions and comments from the School Committee members.

Member Saeh asked questions regarding the additional FTE need and requested data on the staff exchange and program numbers for the next meeting if a vote is requested

Members Moriarty and Liberty inquired as to the EL student surge's impacts on other services, like SPED. Member Checkoway indicated that it looked like there is a need for 2.0 FTE.

Members noted the staffing timelines are misaligned for budget proposals. Member Liberty encouraged the group to estimate high for the budget and return money to the Town in the end. Chair Moriarty and Superintendent Phelan cautioned about push back from other Town committees and having to balance student need with fiscal responsibility.

Member Saeh also suggested making a strong case for EL/SPED due to mandated services for next budget cycle. Other suggestions from SC members included improving projections about the anticipated need during the budget process and relying more on updates from directors and educators to understand needed staffing levels.

Assistant Superintendent Darias asked if the administration could post anticipated openings tomorrow to start gathering a candidate pool. The SC agreed and it was determined more data would be brought to next week's SC meeting.

Chair Moriarty asked for clarification if Superintendent Phelan was looking for a vote or if he was just informing the SC of the additional positions since they cover mandated services. Superintendent Phelan confirmed he was coming to the SC for a vote because it is technically an increase from the approved FY23 budget, although the School Department has bottom line authority. The desire is to follow the appropriate process and have the request formalized in minutes.

4.5 School Committee Subcommittee Update and Vote

Chair Moriarty referred to three previous retreat meetings where the SC discussed subcommittees and goals. The members confirmed they were ready to vote the subcommittees and liaisons (*SC Document: School Committee Subcommittee Assignments 2022-2023*), and will make suggested edits to subcommittee goals via email to the Chair.

On a motion by Kate Bowen and second by Mike Crowley, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) to approve the designee assignments for the 2022-2023 SY.

5. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES as needed

5.1 Energy Committee – School Committee Appointee Vote

Chair Moriarty stated that James Booth is in attendance to be reappointed to Energy Committee. It was thought he was reappointed last year, but this is not reflected in minutes. Mr. Booth gave an overview of the committee and his interest and role with the committee.

On a motion offered by Jamal Saeh and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to appoint James Booth to the Energy Committee as the SC appointee.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Consent Agenda - Surplus Items

- Furniture - Wellington Elementary School
- Computer Stations - Chenery Middle School
- Benchmark Assessment System Kits – All Elementary Schools
- iPads, Chromebooks, Monitors... – Technology Department
- Professional Development Textbooks and Workbooks – Administration

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) to accept the items listed as surplus.

Belmont Housing Advisory Committee - Member Bowen reported the BHAC met and will have monthly meetings and plan to do outreach regarding affordable housing.

Long-Term Capital Budget Committee – The School Committee appointed Kate Bowen to the Long-Term Capital Budget Committee while the Town awaits approval from the State of the new Comprehensive Capital Planning Committee.

On a motion offered by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Jeff Liberty, it was VOTED unanimously to appoint Kate Bowen to the Long-Term Capital Budget Committee (6-0-0).

7. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Jamal Saeh, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

