

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2019**

Present: Ms. Susan Burgess-Cox, Chair  
Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Secretary  
Ms. Kate Bowen  
Ms. Amy Checkoway  
Mr. Michael Crowley  
Ms. Tara Donner  
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

Susan Burgess-Cox called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Susan Burgess-Cox led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizen's Concerns

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

Susan Burgess-Cox announced the vote on the re-appointment of Jim Berets to ITAC (3.1) would be moved to the end of major business (3.4).

1.5 Chair's Report

Susan Burgess-Cox stated she would forgo a Chair's report but welcomed everyone back from summer break.

1.6 Student Representative Report

There was no student representative in attendance.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan stated he would save his report until the end of the meeting.

**2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

### **3. MAJOR BUSINESS**

#### **3.1 BMHSBC Report Out – Synthetic Fields/Turf – Exhibits A & B**

Bill Lovallo, Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee Chair (BMHSBC) updated the School Committee on the meetings held regarding the possibility of using artificial turf at one of the fields at the new High School.

The topic started being discussed two years ago. Landscape consultants have looked at different field orientations and opportunities to maximize the site with a building that will be more than fifty percent larger than the school is currently. The current fields are not fully meet regulations and the mission is to design any new fields with appropriate regulations. The BMHSBC included one turf field in the design of the new site. The type of material to be used for the artificial turf was never discussed but its clear people have concerns regarding artificial turf. Materials would not be used that are known to be harmful. There is time to dialogue about what the different components are and what they are made of. There have been studies on fields made with crumb rubber although the results are not completely consistent. A decision on the materials used for a turf field can be put off for now.

The School Committee heard from Julie LeMay, Belmont Board of Health Chair. Ms. LeMay has also been involved with research related to artificial turf fields and was able to explain some of the research. School Committee member Mike Crowley noted concerns by community members regarding potential health risks with crumb rubber. Bill Lovallo and School Committee members discussed some natural options that can be researched. School Committee member Tara Donner asked if the increased cost of natural materials, as detailed in the handout we were provided, would preclude the BMHSBC from selecting natural options later in the building process. BMHSBC Chair Bill Lovallo responded it likely would.

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee agreed to gather more information about more natural turf options and they will keep the School Committee informed about what they learn.

#### **3.2 School Committee Report out on Minuteman – Exhibit C**

Superintendent Phelan introduced Jim Gammill, member of the Minuteman Working Group which was created in 2018 to study the issue of which vocational schools Belmont students might be able to attend if Belmont left the Minuteman District.

Jim Gammill explained in Massachusetts students have the right to Career and Vocational Technical Education (CVTE). Students in Belmont have been able to attend Minutemen for the past forty years. The Minuteman Working Group determined there was no other reliable source of CVTE programming for Belmont if Belmont were to leave Minuteman as a member district.

Minuteman offers a dual academy model where each academy has its own leadership and academic faculty. The academic subjects are coordinated with vocational courses in fully integrated classrooms. In 2019, Minuteman was chosen as a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education for closing the achievement gap.

In 2016, a Special Town Meeting was held and a vote was taken to begin a three year process to withdraw from Minuteman. The decision to withdraw was based on uncertainties around the Minuteman building project, enrollment, finances, regulations and Minuteman strategic plans.

As of 2019, the financial gap between Minuteman member districts of out-of-district students is much smaller and there have been regulatory changes which are more favorable to members. The new Minuteman High School is complete and there is a waiting list for grade 9. If Belmont is a non-member, the Belmont district is still responsible for providing CVTE programming for students who do not get into Minuteman. The Minuteman School Committee is also focused on what is best for member students rather than non-members which is another reason to consider remaining a member town.

Mr. Gammill explained the costs of membership which include Belmont's commitment to paying a share of the \$100 million debt service over 30 years. Belmont will be responsible for paying \$472,667 which is three years of missed debt service assessments. There will also be a commitment to pay 1% of the annual debt service even IF no Belmont students attend Minuteman.

Some of the benefits of staying as a member town include students having priority acceptance over non-member applicants. The charges per student for members will be based on average past enrollments. Belmont will be able to vote on the annual Minuteman budget and take part in Superintendent searches along with having a say on the Minuteman School Committee.

### 3.3 School Opening Update

Superintendent Phelan noted the opening of school went smoothly. He thanked the faculty and staff for their work in preparing for the 2019-20 school year. He thanked the Police Department and Fire Department for their help in organizing the traffic flow to make it easier for students and parents to get to school. Thanks were also given to Mary Pederson for the hiring of new staff over the summer, Janice Darias for her work with Professional Development and Tony DiCologero for getting the buses up and running.

### 3.4 School Committee Vote on Appointment of IT Liaison

Susan Burgess-Cox explained the Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC) appointment is for a three year term. Jim Berets has been an ITAC Representative for several years and would like to continue.

On a motion offered by Susan Burgess-Cox and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously to approve the three year appointment of Jim Berets as ITAC Representative.

## 4. **SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)**

### 4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee did not meet over the summer. The first meeting is September 17<sup>th</sup>. Some of the topics will be the rink and Financial Task Force 2 update.

### 4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

There was no report from the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

### 4.3 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

There was no report from the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

#### 4.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee will meet at 8:00 a.m. on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet at 7:30 p.m. on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee will meet at 7:30 a.m. on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4.7 Community Path

The School Committee will need to appoint a liaison to the Community Path at an upcoming meeting.

#### 4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II reviewed the last report in more detail and also spent time discussing the previous report. The next meeting will take place on September 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4.9 High School Traffic Working Group

The High School Traffic Working Group discussed the traffic on and around the Belmont High School. They also looked at traffic patterns around Wellington in preparation for some improvements to be made in that area around traffic calming and sidewalk replacements.

Superintendent Phelan mentioned there have been more students biking to Belmont High School than anticipated so the School Department will purchase four more bike racks.

### 5. OTHER BUSINESS

Tara Donner and Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias provided some updates on the plans for creating electronic packets and a Google calendar for the School Committee members to access.

5.1 Consent Agenda - None

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items - None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

June 18, 2019

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was **VOTED** 4-0-2 to approve the minutes of June 18, 2019 as amended.

### 6. FUTURE BUSINESS

September 16, 2019  
SC/BOS Joint Meeting on Rink RFP  
BOS Meeting Room – 7:00 p.m.

September 17, 2019  
Finance Subcommittee Meeting  
SAB Conference Room – 8:00 a.m.

September 24, 2019  
School Committee Meeting  
CMS Community Room – 7:00 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**  
Strategic Plan

8. **ADJOURN**

At 9:09 p.m. on a motion offered by Andrea Prestwich and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted by   
Andrea Prestwich, Secretary