

Butler PTA General Meeting October 21, 2015

Minutes taken by Lisa Listerman, Recording Secretary

In attendance:

Rola Baghdady, Katherine Bridges, Kalid Alsobhi, Sham Sokka, Laura VanderHart, Andrea Russo, Kerri-Ann Sanderson, Kate Weinstein, Susan Burgess-Cox, Michael McAllister, Kathleen Conneely, Lisa Listerman, Adam O'Neil, Sabrina Tan, Noriko Tonomura, Eric Perkins

Rola Baghdady, Co-Pres. of the PTA, called meeting to order. Thanked everyone for attendance. Introductions and Welcome.

Barbara Bulfoni, Co-Pres. of the PTA: PTA is required to perform an audit. Audit committee will consist of same volunteers (Mauro Lance, David Engerman, and Cara Cogliano). They are working with treasurer to submit before Nov. meeting. This information will also go in the newsletter.

GUEST SPEAKER

Welcome to Superintendent Phelan, who will discuss why the Belmont Public Schools are focusing on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and give an update on the enrollment in the District.

BUDGET and ENROLLMENT

We are in good shape with the budget.

Everyone is encouraged to check in on school committee meetings, which are on-line to view. Presented the budget on the 6th- you can go on-line to see details and specifics about what was done with the money.

Are we still talking that enrollment is a big deal? Yes. Forecasting a lot more students in next few years.

Added 10 teachers with override. 5 teachers next year, 5 the year after.

All the details that were outlined were followed. The only exception is kindergarten teacher - held that position and put it in year 2. Guidance counselor position at Chenery was added to year 1 as this was seen as urgent need.

The other funds are for SPED or special services for out of district. By adding money to that line, keeps money where it should be and aligns the budget.

1st override in 13/14 years. Spending money exactly as they said they would.

The District grew by 81 students this year.

Anticipate growth of up to 90 students per year. Calculated 93 students per year moving into district.

Superintendent Phelan took questions:

Anything set aside for increased enrollment?

5 positions added next year to support class size at elementary level and study halls and middle school level or freeze positions at high school.

Despite increase in enrollment, we have the same number of buses we have had for many years. We would have liked to have another bus, but didn't ask for it. May ask for a bus next

year. More courses have been added at high school or middle school. Added coding in Science and Math, added Music and Art, Education and Wellness, added 1st grade at Butler and 4th grade at Wellington.

The District grew by 81 students this year.

Anticipate growth of up to 90 students per year. Calculated 93 students per year moving into district.

Questions:

What will we do about space?

Used to have 6 elementary schools when enrollment was this high. There is a space task force looking into this issue, to get varying viewpoints (i.e. modular classrooms at other schools besides high school). We are being crunched everywhere. A lot of shifting of space.

Does this growth affect after school programs?

No, it does not because those are private/ separate organizations. They will not be included in projections for modular classrooms. They would have to apply for license for larger space. BPS will con't to work with those after school programs.

How does this affect class size?

Hopefully, the addition of teachers mitigated class size. Try to cap class size at 25.

4th grade is at 326, so class size of 25 when they are 5th graders.

All classes are over 300 students. Averaging 340 per grade (in '90's, we were averaging 260 per grade). This is not a bubble/ just one grade, it is across the board.

The population increase is felt mostly at the middle school.

Per pupil expenditure from state is based on 4,303 students, but we have more students.

PPE is based on numbers from the previous year.

Belmont has lowest PPE in the state (we spend \$9 or 10 per student) despite being a level one district.

Why is that?

Belmont is a fiscally conservative town, with good teachers, kids who are well-prepared, and conscious leadership who have built good schools.

Will we ask for another tax hike from the town?

Doesn't expect to do that anytime soon.

Goal: 3-5 years of making money stretch by staying true to spending. He thinks we can do well with that.

Where can a Belmont parent find specific research about finances? School or town's website, town warrants, large town report comes out 1x year. Look at DOE website and compare to other towns' data and info.

New families' placement into elementary schools and the deadlines. Any plans to make this more predictable for new families who register after June deadline?

No plans to change this. There is an organized, strategic approach, but it does involve some waiting. The first thing we try to do is place family into school of their home district. But Wellington filled up quickly last year. Couldn't have classes of 15 at Butler, 29 at Wellington - want to balance class size across the district.

Look strategically at class size across the district while also paying attention to home district.

Only a few were asked to go to schools other than their home district.

Strategic Plan

1.Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): decided last year to investigate SEL and look into best practices to implement.

Working on 4 core competencies: self awareness, self management, relationship skills, decision skills

5 layers to this initiative:

- Classroom level
- School wide practices
- Direct instruction (Second Step)
- Events across district
- Family engagement

This year is an adult learning year. We are increasing tools in teachers' tool box. Next year, skills will be brought into classrooms to be taught to students. Measurement will be done school by school. Will do pre and post tests. Measure the adults this year.

Work to set up standards for students next year.

Ex: At the end of 3rd grade, should be able to maintain relationships, take responsibility for behavior, etc.

DOE has SEL standards. This will provide a common vocabulary and expectations.

Rachel Polliner is a consultant hired and paid for by FBE. There are training teams at each school to meet with their own building staff - how to help students feel safe, welcomed, help students de-escalate, etc.

Asking teachers to figure out what they already do well.

6 SEL committees, one for each school. One district-wide committee.

Power point is on the web.

We are helping building skills with elementary students, practice skills in middle school, implement in high school.

Concern: it is so subjective

The purpose would be to have common conversation about how young person is growing and progressing in the area of SEL.

He worries about giving students safe, productive experience with scaffolding each day.

In Belmont, we can take risk to work on SEL because we are fortunate to have rigorous expectations/ teachers and students are high achieving. He argues this will actually help outcomes over time.

There are huge academic benefits when a child feels safe and ready to learn.

SEL and Academics are interchangeable.

If they can build up their own competency in social arena, gives teachers more energy because they aren't dealing with smaller conflicts.

We are fortunate to be part of a community that views SEL as important. Will incorporate Mindfulness and other tools to support students. We want this to be a place where adults model behavior.

What will support be for parents and how can parents be involved?

There will be 3 Community nights (1 for Elementary Schools) - Rachel Polliner will have an assembly for parents.

Health and Wellness group offer variety of speakers - under Partners section will say FBE - Wellness Committee - click on it and can see all speaker series.

Parent Communication - for teachers to think how much are you telling parents about what you are doing with SEL? Turn conferences more into a discussion about what your child needs. Parents are encouraged to ask questions about SEL at our conferences.

Idea: have an SEL night, much like a Math and Science Night

2. Achievement gap - investigate what that looks like in Belmont. Who is not achieving and why? What are best practices?

OTHER

80-90 breakfasts were served this week at Butler

Can we get breakfast menu out? It is standing menu, so doesn't change.