

Butler School PTA General Meeting -- February 10, 2016
Minutes taken by Lisa Listerman, Recording Secretary

In attendance: Rola Baghdady, Barbara Bulfoni, Yvette Leeson, Darae Choi, Eric Perkins, Eileen Hanson, Sami Baghdady, Rose O'Neil, Chen Tan, Katie Dunks, Kathleen Conneely, Xueyan Fu, Chang Peng, Lisa Listerman, Michael McAllister

Last December General Meeting Minutes Approval

Rola moved to approve December mtg minutes. Barbara seconded. All approved.

GUEST SPEAKER

Superintendent John Phelan shared the space challenges facing the Belmont Public Schools and the High School building project.

At the 2/22 town meeting there will be the vote to approve the HS new building. This is great news for Belmont and high school programming.

There is a task force put together to look into facts of our enrollment.

A lot of new students are coming into the district, which is a big part of why we need more space. From 1996 until the present, enrollment has steadily increased. For example, there has been 80 students growth from this time last year.

Use of Modular classrooms as way to address enrollment growth.

Modular classrooms are actually quite nice. The cons is that the moduls are not part of the main buildings (consider that with the snow or inclement weather moving from one to the other can be a struggle).

Middle school: for the next SY there is the need to add 6 modular classrooms to be put on premises. The folks currently teaching in less than ideal spaces will go into classrooms. Chenery principal and staff will decide how moduls will be used. The moduls will be on the actual tennis court (still deciding if there will be a covered passage). Moduls will be in place not earlier than November (as the town will vote them in a meeting in may).

Elementary level: 2 spaces have been identified (an after-school office can be used as a classroom) so for next year (SY 2016-2017) there will be no need to add moduls in the elementary schools. We will need to start having conversations next year for possible needs at Butler or Burbank. For this year we can pause the discussion to see what enrollment yields in the Fall.

If needed moduls will need to be at Butler or Burbank as both Wellington and Winn-Brook have no physical space for modular classrooms.

High school: will expand by adding 3 more modular classrooms

Next year there will be 11 more classrooms to deal with the increased enrollment at that level.

Goals of task-force:

- short-term needs - solved by modular classrooms
- longer-term needs - the issue revolves around the Chenery (strain of the district)
One of the options can be to pull 5th grade back into elementary schools, adding another elementary school

The enrollment is very uncertain for the next years as there are 2 big developments (Uplands apartments and Cushing Square) in Belmont and it is unclear what the impact will be.

We had 30 new students registered in Belmont after Winter break (up until now).
Mr. Phelan agrees that a 3-grade middle school is more ideal for students

Question: Can we cap enrollment?

Answer: No, have to accept everyone in public school.

1st and 3rd grade have the highest numbers at Butler this year.
It will be a tricky school assignment year. This will only impact families new to the district. It is an equity issue - we have to ensure that class sizes remain equal.
Only 16 families are currently going to school out of their district.
There will likely be "buffer zones", i.e. can go to different schools, depending on enrollment needs of that year, i.e. if you live on a particular street, you can go to one elementary school or another.

Question: Is Belmont's situation similar to nearby towns?

Answer: Yes! Communities like Lexington, Winchester, Arlington - these are towns where older people who have already raised kids are moving out. Young families are moving in.
People come to Belmont to send their kids to school here because of strength of school.
This has kept property value high.
When people see the new high school, more people will want to move in.

How long does it take to build a high school?

State says: 5-6 years

This is entirely dictated by the State (which pays \$30-40 million of cost)

BUDGET

We are fortunate to have great result with override.

The money was used this year for special services and to add 10 teaching positions. The budget provides money for 5 more positions next year and then more for the year after that.

Trying to reduce class size where we can.

Adding enriching classes at the high school (such as Coding, Wellness, etc.)

Hoping this is a smooth financial year into next year.

We've been applying for 10 years for a new high school. Thank you to Supt. Phelan for driving it forward!

Framed the application in terms of what would be good for the students.

With support of the town, the schools put in for capital request for Maple Terrace project.

Will help traffic in back of school, create safe environment.

We hope that capital project moves forward. Hopeful it will be in funding cycle for next year.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 8 p