

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
JULY 12, 2010**

Present: Ms. Ann Rittenburg, Chair
Ms. Laurie Graham
Ms. Becky Vose
Ms. Karen Parmett
Ms. Laurie Slap
Mr. Dan Scharfman
Dr. George H. Entwistle 3rd, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Janice Darias, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Business, Finance and Operations

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Rittenburg at 6:10 p.m. in the Chenery Middle School Large Community Room.

We began with a moment of silence in memory of Denis Fitzpatrick who passed away yesterday. Ms. Rittenburg led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:12 p.m.

1. New Business

2a. Joint meeting of the School Committee and the Belmont Municipal Light Department (BMLD) Substation Site Selection Committee to consider the proposal for transfer of school property

Ms. Rittenburg explained that preliminary meetings had been held with Dr. Entwistle prior to this joint meeting. Mr. McLaughlin, chair of the BMLD Substation Site Selection Committee, presented the two questions for the School Committee to consider: 1) Can the School Committee transfer the land without any issues relating to the size of the Belmont High School campus and agreements with the Massachusetts School Building Authority; and 2) Will the School Committee approve the proposal to transfer the land in exchange for storage space, upgrades to the fields and grounds, tennis courts, and refurbishing the BHS parking lot?

Mr. Tim Richardson, Manager of the BMLD presented the information with a PowerPoint presentation and explained the timeline required to be ready for a vote at Town Meeting in the fall. Dr. Peter A. Valberg, Ph.D., an expert on electromagnetic field issues and a faculty member of the Harvard School of Public Health, explained the research, safety issues, and the process that would be followed to ensure the safety of the proposed substation.

Ms. Rittenburg read each of the four parts of the Motion, which had been drafted by Town and School counsel. Members of the School Committee asked questions about each part.

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MOTION RE: SURPLUS HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS PARCEL

MOVED that, pursuant to General Laws Chapter 40, Section 15A, the School Committee hereby determines that the parcel of land, being a portion of the High School campus located at 221 Concord Avenue, shown as "New Substation" on the sketch plan labeled DRAFT – CS – 5 (the "CS-5 Plan"), a copy of which is on file with the Superintendent of Schools, is no longer needed for school purposes, that the area shown on the CS-5 Plan as a driveway from Orchard Street to said substation parcel is no longer needed solely for school purposes and may be also used by the Municipal Light Department for the purpose of vehicular and pedestrian access to said substation parcel and for the installation, inspection, maintenance, repair and replacement of subsurface electrical wires and conduits and related facilities and utilities by the Municipal Light Department, and that the playfield area shown on the CS-5 Plan as between said driveway and Hittinger Street is no longer solely for school purposes and may also be used by the Municipal Light Department for the installation, inspection, maintenance, repair and replacement of subsurface electrical wires and conduits and related facilities and utilities, and that this determination shall take effect upon the happening of the last to occur of the following events:

1. The Superintendent of Schools shall have determined and reported to the School Committee in writing, based on the advice of engineering professionals engaged by the Municipal Light Department or other competent professional advice, that the proposed electrical substation and related wiring at this site do not constitute a significant health or safety danger to high school students or staff;
2. The Superintendent of Schools shall have determined and reported to the School Committee in writing, based on the opinion of attorneys engaged by the Municipal Light Department or by the School Department or on the written assurance by staff of the Massachusetts School Building Authority, that the transfer of said substation parcel from the custody of the School Committee to the custody of the Municipal Light Board, and the joint use of said driveway and playfield area is not likely to jeopardize the eligibility of the Town for School Building Assistance grants for renovation of the high school;
3. The Superintendent of Schools or this Committee shall have entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Municipal Light Board whereby the Municipal Light Board agrees: (a) that its new substation project if funded by Town Meeting vote (the "Substation Project"), shall include, as mitigation for the disturbance of the high school campus, a new softball field, a new soccer field, upgrades to the existing tennis courts so that eight (8) official size tennis courts are provided, and repaving and restriping of the high school parking lot for at least 257 cars, all as shown on the CS-5 Plan, for the use of the School Department, and as further mitigation that the area shown on the DS-5 Plan as "Under-utilized area" shall be improved for a combination of additional parking spaces and/or landscaping and signage, as directed by the School Department; (b) that said Substation Project shall include an indoor storage area of at least 5,000 square feet with a separate entrance as part of the new substation to be built on said substation parcel and that said storage area will be licensed by the Municipal Light Board to the School Department on a year-to-year basis until said storage area is needed for Municipal Light Board purposes; (c) that the land and building shown as "EXISTING SUBSTATION #3 (TO REMAIN)" on the C-5 Plan shall be decommissioned by the Municipal Light Board once the new substation is in operation and that the Municipal Light Board shall either demolish Existing Substation #3 or shall remove from Existing Substation #3 all wires, transformers and other personal property, as such demolition or removal option is chosen by the School Department, and shall determine that Existing Substation #3 and its associated land parcel is no longer needed for municipal light plant purposes;
4. The Belmont Town Meeting shall have transferred said new substation parcel from the custody of the School Committee to the custody of the Municipal Light Department and shall have transferred said

driveway and playfield areas from the custody of the School Committee solely for school purposes to the custody of the School Committee to be used jointly for school purposes and for municipal light plant access and utility purposes.

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Dr. Entwistle recommended that the motion be adopted.

Ms. Vose made a motion to accept the above motion. Mr. Scharfman seconded the motion. Ms. Rittenburg asked if there were any further discussion. It was voted 6-0 unanimously to approve the motion at 7:12 p.m.

The School Committee took a short recess and returned to session at 7:20 p.m.

2b. Consideration of a citizens' proposal for funding of Freshman Sports

Ms. Rittenburg began the agenda item by explaining that this was the follow-up to an issue raised during the "Citizen's Concerns" agenda item at the June 23, 2010 meeting of the School Committee and that since that time, a group of citizens led by Ellen Sullivan, Leigh Lynch, and John Stadler had submitted a formal written proposal (Proposal to Provide Supplemental Funds to Enable the Belmont Public Schools to Offer Freshman Sports) to the School Committee for their consideration; consideration of that proposal is the purpose of the agenda item."

Ms. Rittenburg began by asking Dr. Entwistle and members of the Leadership Team to answer questions related to the athletic program in general and freshmen sports in particular before addressing the policy issues of the proposal.

Dr. Entwistle asked the Director of Finance, Mr. DiCologero to explain the costs associated with freshmen sports. He noted that the program costs \$45,000 in direct costs; in addition there are indirect costs that are not differentiated by level (freshmen, junior varsity and varsity). Freshmen athletes would have to pay user fees in addition to the \$45,000. Dr. Entwistle asked the Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Student Activities, Mr. Davis, to talk about athletic opportunities for freshmen. Mr. Davis explained that there are 28 teams; of those, 8 are freshmen level teams. The elimination of freshmen teams does not keep freshmen from participating in any of the sports that do not have cuts (e.g., cross country) or from being selected for JV or Varsity level teams. Mr. Davis noted that in addition to the \$45,000 cut from freshmen athletics, \$100,000 was cut from the overall athletic budget in FY11. Mr. Davis noted that in the past there were approximately 149 "opportunities" in freshmen sports, which represented approximately 75 students (many of whom participated in more than one sport). Dr. Entwistle asked Mr. DiCologero to explain the revolving account balance. Mr. DiCologero noted that the balance is approximately \$75,000. In February 2010, the balance had been projected to be \$35,000 and had not been updated in subsequent documents until very recently. He noted that this is similar to most previous years when balances of up to \$80,000 are carried from one fiscal year to the next, and that such a balance is necessary to cover start-up costs incurred in the summer before fees are collected.

Ms. Rittenburg invited Leigh Lynch to present the citizens' proposal to the School Committee. Ms. Lynch gave an overview of the proposal to the School Committee.

Ms. Rittenburg shared a copy of Policy 1015 "Awards to Schools". It states "The Belmont School Committee, on behalf of the schools, may accept awards, gifts, grants and donations for educational

purposes. Only those gifts that are deemed consistent with the goals, policies, programs and the best interests of the district will be accepted." Ms. Rittenburg stated that the School Committee's job is to determine if this proposal is consistent with the goals, policies and programs and in the best interests of the district. Does the proposal meet the criteria of Policy 1015 for acceptance?

Members of the School Committee began discussing the proposal. Ms. Rittenburg asked Dr. Entwistle to explain his recommendation. Dr. Entwistle summarized the services, staff, and programs that have been reduced or eliminated in FY11 as a result of an appropriation that is \$2.1 million less than what would be required to fund the Student Needs Based Budget. He concluded by stating that the Leadership Council does not feel that this proposal is in the best interest of the Belmont Public Schools.

All the members of the School Committee shared their views, and asked clarifying questions. Following their discussion, citizens in attendance were invited to come to the microphone and share their opinion. Thirty people, including students, parents, and community members, came to the microphone. The majority of the speakers were in favor of the proposal; there were some who expressed concerns about other cuts to the budget that hadn't generated this level of support, and several who hoped to see a similar show of support for and participation in the development of the FY12 school budget.

Mr. Scharfman read the motion (combining 2 separate motions that he had prepared):

"Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds and user fees sufficient to operate Freshmen Sports on a break even basis for the 2010-2011 School Year, and that the School Department establish and make public such procedures as necessary for authorizing and tracking the use of said funds. Resolved that the School Committee immediately establish a sub-committee to support the School Department in insuring that funds donated to provide supplemental funding for Freshmen Sports are donated in accordance with the policies and best interests of the Belmont Public Schools, including minimizing financial risk, minimizing the impact on School Department staff, and coordinating the efforts with existing and newly established fund raising efforts."

Ms. Vose seconded the motion. Ms. Rittenburg asked Dr. Entwistle for his recommendation. He spoke for the Leadership Council and continued to recommend against approving the motion. He stated that the role of the Leadership Council is to advocate for resources that affect the largest number of students and have the most critical impact on student learning and that this proposal does not meet those criteria.

Mr. Scharfman shared written copies of the motion he had prepared. Ms. Slap indicated she supports the motion but would like to add a date. Ms. Rittenburg requested they be addressed as two separate motions.

Mr. Scharfman withdrew the motion.

Mr. Scharfman made a new motion: "Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds and user fees sufficient to operate Freshmen Sports on a break even basis for the 2010-2011 School Year, and that the School Department establish and make public such procedures as necessary for authorizing and tracking the use of said funds."

Ms. Vose seconded the motion.

Ms. Rittenburg invited the School Committee members to discuss the motion. Ms. Vose wanted to clarify that the motion is for one year only. Ms. Rittenburg noted that her major concern with the proposal was that it narrowly targets freshman sports, further stating that she would be more in favor of the proposal if it targeted athletics, in general. Ms. Slap stated that she was comfortable with the motion, because freshman sports were on the priority list of items to be restored if the override had passed. Ms. Rittenburg noted that middle school athletics were also on the list. Ms. Vose added that she liked the suggestion made during the public comments regarding intramurals, because intramurals provide an opportunity for universal participation. Ms. Parmett noted that the proposal brought forth by the citizens is a proposal to fund freshman sports and that she is not comfortable revising their proposal for them. Mr. Scharfman suggested adding middle school cross country and intramurals. Mr. Stadler, one of the three who submitted the proposal, suggested wording the proposal to say "include but not limited to freshman sports and middle school cross country, and work with Mr. Davis to see what else can be funded.

Mr. Davis then noted that, from a legal standpoint, other groups who give money are charitable foundations and asked about how this money would be donated; questioning whether it would be through an existing group, or under the auspices of the School Committee. Mr. Scharfman suggested that the only practical method would be to work through an existing group, given that they do not have time to set up a new group.

Mr. Scharfman made a revised motion: "Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds and user fees sufficient to operate those athletic programs included in the override budget including but not limited to freshmen sports, middle school cross country and middle school intramurals, on a break even basis for the 2010-2011 School Year, and that the School Department establish and make public such procedures as necessary for authorizing and tracking the use of said funds."

Ms. Slap seconded the motion.

Ms. Graham noted her concern about funding sports when funds for other areas were needed.

Ms. Rittenburg called for a vote at 10:45. The vote was a tie: 3 in favor (Mr. Scharfman, Ms. Vose and Ms. Slap) and 3 against (Ms. Rittenburg, Ms. Graham, Ms. Parmett). The motion did not pass.

Discussion continued among the School Committee members, Dr. Entwistle, and Mr. Davis to arrive at a motion that would be acceptable to more members. Mr. Davis expressed concerns about being able to restore freshmen sports, especially for the fall season, and restoration might not be at the level of service of previous years. For instance, it may not be possible to schedule the same number of games as in past years. Dr. Entwistle reiterated this concern, and noted that the viability of the offerings would have to be Mr. Davis' decision. Dr. Entwistle also expressed concern about making commitments (to the league, to coaches) before the funding is secured.

Mr. Scharfman made new motion: "Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds for the benefit of athletic programs in the Belmont Public Schools for the FY2010-2011 year."

Ms. Vose seconded the motion.

The members of the School Committee discussed the new motion. Ms. Graham reiterated that it needs to be Mr. Davis' decision how the money will be allocated.

Mr. Scharfman revised the motion: "Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds for the benefit of athletic programs in the Belmont Public Schools for the FY2010-2011 year, based on viability."

Ms. Slap seconded the motion.

Dr. Entwistle stipulated that, while Mr. Davis will advise the School Committee, the School Committee makes the determination of where the funds are allocated, and must be engaged in the process. Ms. Parmett requested that this be made part of the motion. Ms. Rittenburg suggested advancing \$10,000 from the revolving account balance to the group, in order to allow them to get started on fundraising and to allow Mr. Davis to begin trying to reinstate programs and schedule contests. Mr. Davis stated that he would determine the amounts the group needed to raise and the dates by which they needed to raise it with respect to fall, winter, and spring athletic seasons. He then suggested August 1st for the fall season, November 1st for the winter season, and February 1st for the spring season.

Dr. Entwistle reiterated that, if the money is raised by the stipulated dates, Mr. Davis will report what he is able to spend it on and the School Committee will authorize the expenditures based on the priority list and the viability of various programs.

Mr. Scharfman revised the motion: "Resolved that the School Committee authorize the School Department to accept donated funds for the benefit of athletic programs in the Belmont Public Schools for the FY2010-2011 year, and that up to \$10,000 may be advanced from the Student Activities revolving account to be reimbursed from anticipated donations, and that the Athletic Director will determine the programs that will run in the Fall 2010 season by August 1 2010, in the Winter 2010-2011 season by November 1 2010, and in the Spring 2011 season by February 1 2011."

Ms. Vose seconded the motion.

It was voted unanimously (6-0) approved.

Adjournment

Ms. Vose made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:35; Mr. Scharfman seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously (6-0) approved.

Respectfully submitted by



Laurie Graham