

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM  
February 14, 2012**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair  
Ms. Rebecca Vose, Secretary  
Ms. Laurie Slap  
Mr. Dan Scharfman  
Mr. Kevin Cunningham  
Ms. Anne Lougée  
Dr. Thomas Kingston, Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to Order

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the Chenery Middle School.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Graham led the pledge of allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham reminded the Committee of the following upcoming events:

Two budget forums are scheduled, one for tomorrow February 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. and one for Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. Both will be held in the Selectmen's Board Room – Town Hall and will be recorded by the Belmont Media Center. These meetings will be an opportunity for the community to see how the budget looks at this time as well as a chance for questions and input.

February 15<sup>th</sup> Wilson Farms will be holding their annual shop at Wilsons day and 20% of the proceeds will go to the Belmont Public Schools. She also stated that the Box Top Program is going forward and anyone who would like to take part should try to get their box tops in by March 1<sup>st</sup>. They can be dropped off at any of the schools.

The FBE will be holding their annual auction on March 17<sup>th</sup> at the Belmont Hill School. This event is a fundraiser for the entire school system. The tickets are 50 percent sold so people should try to get them in advance. Tickets can be purchased by going to the link on the BPS website.

Belmont High School students will be performing Beauty and the Beast on March 15th, 16th and 17<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are \$15 if bought in advance and \$18 at the door.

Ms. Graham announced that 30 students from Belmont High School and 14 students from Chenery Middle School received awards in the 2012 Boston Globe Art Competition. There were also a number of honorable mentions and gold and silver key winners.

## 2.6 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston announced that next week is winter break week which was begun in the 1970's as a cost savings and fuel savings measure. Even though the school buildings will not be open, the Central Office will be open during the break.

Dr. Kingston reminded the Committee that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) will be conducting their evaluation visit during the week of March 11<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the full schedule was included in the School Committee packets.

Dr. Kingston explained to the Committee what the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal waiver that has been granted to Massachusetts means. It allows Massachusetts to vary from the original compliance under the No Child Left Behind – title I legislation. For Belmont the waiver essentially means that our measuring of student achievement changes. Originally under the Title I legislation, all students were expected to be 100 percent proficient by 2014. What is now required under the new waiver is that the gap between underachievers and students who are proficient is closed by half by 2018. Another benefit is that the Massachusetts State system for accountability which is a five tiered system is now in full compliance with federal law.

Ms. Darias updated the Committee on the meeting she attended on the State waiver. She explained that the federal designations that she has been reporting to the School Committee such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) will no longer be the designations that we are looking at. We will be looking at instead annual measurable objectives based on MCAS participation but also other progress and performance indicators such as closing the proficiency gaps in English, Math and Science in terms of the percent that are in warning and failing versus advanced categories.

## 1.7 Director of Finance, Business and Operations Report

Mr. DiCologero reported on his attendance at the Munis Workshop. He explained that Munis is the accounting software system used by the Town and School Department. The workshop featured future upgrades but the priority for Belmont is learning how to better manage data in terms of developing next year's budget, developing projection reports for next year and developing FTE Staffing Reports to manage the dollars in the staffing that we have this year. Mr. DiCologero stated that the workshop was an opportunity to meet other districts using Munis and to get some leads from the Munis tech support people on how to continue to pursue that.

Mr. DiCologero reported that he is continuing to work on the budget and work with the Finance Subcommittee. The next iteration of the budget should be released by March 21<sup>st</sup>.

## 2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

## 3. MAJOR BUSINESS

### 3.1 Student Advisory Council Update:

Ms. Graham introduced the Student Advisory Council members: Eve Dill, Rachel Hanna, Maggie Leccese, Katie Leinbach, Hannah Silverfine, and Linda Wei.

The students updated the Committee on projects they have been working on such as trying to increase communication between Student Officers, Student Government, Student Senate, School Committee Representatives, Student Council and the rest of the school. One way they are attempting to do this is by creating a Facebook page for various student events. There is a Facebook page for the senior class and they are discussing the creation of a Facebook page for the entire school. This would allow notifications to other students so they know what is going on at the school. The goal is to enable or encourage more students to take part in events.

The students announced that the semi-formal dance will be held from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 pm this year instead of 7:00 to 11:00 p.m. as in past years. The plan is to serve dinner and have student bands play.

### 3.2 Vocabulary Instruction PLT – Exhibit A

Winn Brook 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers Melissa Crough, Brie Graber, Kristin Knutson, Hester Murray, and Erica Ross gave a presentation on the results of their PLT.

The teachers presented their PLT project using a poster along with binders and a PowerPoint presentation. The topic they focused on was vocabulary and the question they came up with was “how do we implement a vocabulary program to improve word choice in our students’ writing”. They looked at what was available for research and relied heavily on “Bringing Words to Life” by Isabelle Beck. Once the activities were picked they decided on 3 tiers for vocabulary words. The first tier was basic sight words and at the opposite end tier 3 words were very specific and are usually only discussed in content area instruction. Tier 2 words were words were high frequency words used by mature language. They chose words from tier 2 having 5 words per two week cycle with the idea that if they chose a fewer number of words for two weeks that the student would be able to focus their attention on looking for and using these words. Once the words were chosen they put together a two week cycle. New words were introduced on Wednesdays using a game called Definition Schmefinition. A word wizard wall was created which was a bulletin board in the hallway where all the students could look for the words in context in school or at home and write them on a card to put on the wall. Students were excited to learn new words and find them in their everyday lives. In response to questions from Committee members, PLT members reported that they saw significant gains in word choice in their assessments. They also said that they had enjoyed and benefitted greatly from working with each other in this structure. Also, they reported that they have shared the methodology with colleagues across the district.

### 3.3 EDCO Update

Dr. Kingston explained that EDCO began in 1968 and was the Educational Collaborative of Greater Boston at the time. It provided services to districts that would join as members to acquire more effective services at a lower price. Some of the services were for special education students. Belmont has relied heavily on EDCO for professional development. As the law changed in the 1970’s and made it possible for these agencies to become public EDCO had a private non-profit organization which renamed itself the Education Collaborative. Ms. Graham explained that the districts that participate are Acton, Arlington,

Bedford, and Belmont, Boxborough, Brookline and several other districts. She explained that EDCO is one of the few collaboratives that has this private entity. A lot of legislation is being created saying that these organizations need to be separate with separate oversight. Ms. Graham noted that the need to make these changes at EDCO was prompted by concerns regarding other collaboratives, not at EDCO.

Dr. Kingston explained that because of the pending legislation, the nonprofit board reviewed the legislation and has determined that they will recommend transferring the activities of that nonprofit board to EDCO and dissolve the nonprofit. The School Committees of each of the member districts will be required to vote to approve this transfer.

#### 4. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES/LIAISONS

##### 4.1 Wellington Building Committee

Ms. Graham reported on a recent neighborhood meeting that took place. The topic was noise concerns that neighbors have had. There were about 40 to 45 people in attendance including people from Skanska. Neighbors were able to ask questions and express their concerns about noise coming from the rooftop fans on the Wellington School. The Wellington Building Committee will work with the School Department to ensure that the systems are working properly. One of the rooftop units will be moved sometime during April vacation.

##### 4.2 Finance Subcommittee

Mr. Cunningham reported on the long-term planning that has been taking place. He said that meetings of the Finance Subcommittee have been set up on Tuesday mornings until after vacation. The Subcommittee is targeting Town Meeting to have something to present.

##### 4.3 Student Representative Update

Mr. Scharfman asked Ms. Wei what would be helpful for the student representatives attending School Committee meetings. Ms. Wei answered having handouts ahead of time.

#### 5. OTHER BUSINESS

##### 5.1 Consent Agenda

##### 5.2 Personnel Items – Informational

Personnel Status Updates – Exhibit B

##### 5.3 Business Items – None

##### 5.4 Approval of Minutes

January 24, 2012

February 7, 2012

On a motion offered by Mr. Scharfman and seconded by Ms. Lougee, it was

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes of January 24, 2012 as amended.

On a motion offered by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Ms. Slap, it was

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes of February 7, 2012 as amended.

7. FUTURE BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:

February 15, 2012  
Budget Forum  
Selectmen's Board Room  
7:30 p.m.

February 16, 2012  
Budget Forum  
Selectmen's Board Room  
9:00 a.m.

February 15, 2012  
Policy Subcommittee Meeting  
SAB Conference Room  
9:00 a.m.

February 16, 2012  
Task Force on Athletics & Extracurricular Activities  
CMS Large Community Room  
6:00 p.m.

February 28, 2012  
Regular School Committee Meeting  
CMS Large Community Room  
7:30 p.m.

8. ENCLOSURES

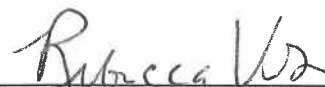
NEASC Schedule

9. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Lougee and seconded by Ms. Vose, it was

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by

  
Rebecca Vose, Secretary