

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
November 15, 2011**

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 of Curriculum and Instruction

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 Update of the Student Advisory Council

Student Advisory Council members Sara-Eve Dill, Rachel Hanna, Maggie Leccese, Linda Wei, Katie Leinback, and Hannah Silverfine attended the meeting and shared their opinions on a variety of issues affecting Belmont High School with the School Committee.

In their presentation, they discussed the value of the academic offerings at Belmont High School, including a variety of Advanced Placement classes, electives, and foreign languages. They noted the impact of class size on the ability of a teacher to support and interact with all students. They discussed the value of the fine and performing arts courses, and the important role they play in students' high school experience. They also spoke about activities and athletics, and the fact that there are so many opportunities that make the school a better community. They had previously met with Mr. Scharfman to provide input for the Task Force on Extracurricular Activities and Athletics.

The members of the School Committee asked them questions and thanked them for their presentation this evening.

1.3 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston explained that Mr. DiCologero went home sick; however Ms. Slap and Mr. Cunningham will include information from Mr. DiCologero on the capital budget requests when during their presentation later in the agenda.

Dr. Kingston noted that he and the members of the School Committee had participated in a wonderful conference last week, at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, held jointly with the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents.

Dr. Kingston updated the committee on the status of the playgrounds. The request for cost estimates is proceeding. The hope is to have a plan of action for the Butler playground within a month. The playground next to the Winn Brook School, Joey's Park, is maintained by the town, and therefore they are working in concert with the town department officials to have a plan of action within a month as well. Burbank play area is in good shape. Additional mulch has been ordered for that playground.

There are two upcoming events for parents and the Belmont community:

- A Midsummer's Night's Dream at Belmont High School, BHS Auditorium, November 17-19

- A presentation on Bullying and Cyber bullying, led by Dr. Elizabeth Englander, Director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, CMS Auditorium, November 17, 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Kingston noted that online payment for food service will come into effect in early December. Instructions will be mailed home, and there will be information on the web site as well.

Dr. Kingston invited Ms. Darias to update the School Committee on a proposed collaboration with Earthwatch Institute a volunteer, non-profit organization that engages people in scientific field research and education with the goal of promoting the understanding and action necessary for a sustainable environment, to provide opportunities for teachers and students to participate in research with scientists in the field. Ms. Darias and Science Director Deborah Darlington have met with Holly Muson (a Belmont parent of a middle school and high school student), who is on the Earthwatch Advisory Board, and Denise Trapani, Director of Major Gifts for Earthwatch. With our approval, they have launched an effort to raise private funds to make a 3-year commitment to the program in Belmont. Assuming the funding is achieved by June 2012, the goal is to offer 2 fellowships for teachers (one elementary school, one middle school) to participate in a research expedition in March 2013. The expeditions are called "Live from the Field" because the teachers are in the field doing research with a scientist, while at the same time blogging and skyping back to their classrooms/school/district. The second part of the proposal is to offer a teen expedition in the summer of 2013 for high school students and a high school teacher. By sending teachers from all 3 levels, we hope to engage students in all levels in this learning experience.

1.4 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham reminded people that they can purchase tickets for the school play in advance at Brine's Sporting Goods, or at the door the evening of the performance.

Ms. Graham offered thank yous and kudos to the Belmont High School Band for the Masquerade Concert on held on October 27. It was very enthusiastically conducted and led by the performers, and very well received by the audience.

On November 5 the Foundation for Belmont Education held its 11th annual Spelling Bee. The Cheetahs were the winners. Ms. Graham congratulated to all the spellers, and thanked the Foundation for Belmont Education for their support of the Belmont Public Schools. They raised over \$18,000 at this event.

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

2.1 Update on Bullying Prevention Plan

Ms. Amanda Rei, K-12 Guidance Specialist, updated the School Committee on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. Many of the aspects of the plan that were approved last year have now been implemented. These include:

- The launch of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention web site;
- The completion of the first administration of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) survey, which gave us baseline data for this year;
- Professional development for staff (led by teachers who attended train the trainer sessions led by MARC in October);
- Professional development on-site led by Dr. Englander for Leadership Council;
- A presentation for parents and community members to be held Thursday, November 17; and
- The implementation of bullying prevention and intervention curriculum, K-12. The focus is on a well-articulated program for social and emotional learning. The DESE released guidelines on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning Curricula.

Ms. Rei also shared a club that has formed at Chenery: Chenery Allies for Equity and Safe Schools (Café Safe Schools). This is a club where anyone can come and share their experiences, questions, or concerns with other students and faculty advisors in a safe place.

The School Committee members asked questions about the different aspects of the BPI plan, and thanked Ms. Rei for the presentation and the work she has done to support the BPI plan implementation.

2.2 Finance Sub-committee Update

Dr. Kingston shared the Capital Budget requests that the Mr. DiCologero prepared. The School Committee will be asked to review and vote at the meeting on Friday, November 18.

Mr. Cunningham shared the final report of the Subcommittee to Prepare for Long-Term Financial Planning. He explained the goals of the subcommittee, which included:

1. Make recommendations to improve the current yearly budgeting process.
2. Make a recommendation as to whether/how the SC should form a Finance Subcommittee.
3. Analyze and document the Belmont Public Schools as a complex financial system.

Under goal number 1, Mr. Cunningham explained the five recommendations of the subcommittee, including:

1. Communicate information about the budgets much earlier. (underway)
2. Avoid setting a "split" early in the process. (underway)
3. Deliver the "level services" budget before the "available services" budget. (under discussion)
4. Deliver the "available services" budget later. (under discussion)
5. Stakeholders should work together collaboratively and professionally. (underway)

Dr. Kingston noted that he met with the new Interim Town Administrator this morning. He worked previously in Brookline, where they also reinvented the process for budgeting.

Ms. Graham thanked the subcommittee for their work and their recommendations. The School Committee will have to decide on the recommendations.

Ms. Graham also noted the difference between long-term budget planning and the 18 Month Improvement Strategy. We will continue with the 18 Month Improvement Strategy; the long-term financial planning ties in with goal 6 and makes the implementation of the 18 Month Improvement Strategy possible.

Mr. Scharfman noted information he had learned from the MASC/MASS Conference last week about ways in which school and town departments can work together to achieve cost savings and maintaining the level of service that the citizens expect. Ms. Vose also noted the consolidation of the buildings and grounds as one example of this collaboration. Ms. Slap also noted that she and the chair of the Warrant Committee are working on a range of amounts to define available revenue.

Ms. Graham noted that the School Committee will discuss the two recommendations at the meeting on Friday, November 18.

2.3 Extra-curricular Activities Task Force Update

Mr. Scharfman shared an update of the Task Force. On November 9 the Task Force had a public forum. The findings were shared, and people had a chance to give feedback. People shared how much they value the extra-curricular activities. There was feedback that it would be helpful to create a resource documenting all opportunities in the town. There was particular confusion around activities at the middle school. Another point made at the forum was that extra-curricular activities are very important, not "extra."

Future plans include more meetings and another public meeting to share the report. The report will be delivered to the School Committee in January.

The Policy Subcommittee has asked the Task Force to catalogue the forms of support (financial) for extra-curricular activities.

Ms. Graham asked that the recommendations be prioritized in order of what is the most manageable to accomplish quickly. Mr. Scharfman said the recommendations will be grouped by tasks to complete right away, longer term plans, and items for further study.

Mr. Cunningham asked if it is possible to manage all the activities, or simply understand what exists. Is there an appropriate agency or "home" for the programs or for the completing the tasks of the recommendations (e.g., the listing of all programs).

2.4 MASC Delegate Report

At the request of Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Scharfman updated the School Committee on the five resolutions voted at the MASC/MASS conference. He noted that these are resolutions to pursue means to influence legislation, not to change laws.

3. FUTURE BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:

November 18, 2011

9:00 a.m. – School Administration Building

December 6, 2011 – Business Meeting

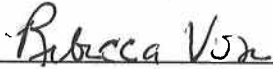
7:30 p.m., Chenery Community Room

4. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:45 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Vose and seconded by Mr. Scharfman, it was

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

Respectfully submitted by



Rebecca Vose, Secretary