

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CENTRAL BOSTON ELDER SERVICES, BOSTON
October 18, 2011**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair
Ms. Rebecca Vose, Secretary
Ms. Laurie Slap
Mr. Dan Scharfman
Mr. Kevin Cunningham
Ms. Anne Lougee [absent]
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 7:02 p.m. in the Conference Room of Central Elder Services, 2315 Washington Street, Boston.

1.2 Introductions

Ms. Graham asked the members of the School Committee and School Department to introduce themselves, and then each parent present at the meeting to introduce him or herself, identifying the school(s) that their child(ren) attend. There were 23 parents of Belmont students who are part of the METCO program in attendance at the meeting.

1.3 Presentation by Belmont Against Racism

Jonathan Jacoby, President of BAR, and June Roberts, Treasurer, presented Dr. Kingston and the School Committee with a \$13,000 donation for the METCO Support Fund. This fund pays for late transportation for high school students in the METCO program, and also funds grants (submitted by administrators, teachers, parents) for programs that build collaboration and relationships between Boston and Belmont families. Mr. Jacoby thanked the many supporters of BAR, including families in Boston and Belmont, who made this donation possible. In addition to individual donors, money is raised through their annual fundraiser: a breakfast on the Martin Luther King Day holiday. This year's breakfast will be held on January 16 2012 at Belmont High School.

1.4 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston spoke about the benefits to the district of participating in the METCO. He noted that it is a relationship that benefits all students, Belmont and Boston, in the mission of achieving high academic performance, social maturity, and civic engagement.

Dr. Kingston spoke about two policies, one completed and one in progress. The completed policy is the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy, adopted and implemented last year. He encouraged parents to visit the Bullying Prevention and Intervention web site under the "For Families" tab of the BPS district web site. The policy under development currently is the Head Injury Policy, which has as its goal the protection and support of students who suffer a head injury. He spoke about the need to engage parents and educators in learning about head injuries.

Dr. Kingston invited Diane Wiltshire, Director of METCO for the Belmont Public Schools, to give an update on the program.

Ms. Wiltshire thanked the School Committee and School Department for coming to Boston for the meeting, and she thanked the many parents for attending.

Ms. Wiltshire explained that there are currently 120 students in the Belmont Public Schools through the METCO program. Nine students graduated last year; all are attending college. She noted that they were the first middle schoolers to benefit from the Extended Day program, and also to have the support of a tutor in the METCO office at the high school for three of their four high school years.

Ms. Wiltshire commended the three (of four) seniors in the Class of 2012 who have been nominated for a Posse Scholarship. A speaker from last year's BAR MLK Breakfast, Ms. Yanette Sano, who is a Posse graduate and currently works for the Posse Foundation, came to Belmont High School to speak to all of the students about this opportunity.

Ms. Wiltshire recently attended a training session on how to apply for a Gates Millennium Scholarship. She encouraged parents of high school students to attend training sessions for parents, and reminded them to pick up one of the handouts about upcoming training sessions (dates and locations).

Ms. Wiltshire shared a summary of MCAS scores for high school students. 100% of the high school students scored proficient or advanced on the English/Language Arts MCAS. 77% of the high school students scored proficient or advanced on the Math MCAS. 75% of the high school students scored proficient or advanced on the Physics MCAS.

Ms. Wiltshire will be taking a group of high school students on a field trip to the University of New Hampshire on November 4. This is a trip paid by the university and benefits students because they get to experience a college campus/environment.

Ms. Wiltshire announced that the Extended Day Program for Chenery Middle School students will begin on Monday, October 24. The program will run on Mondays and Tuesdays, allowing the students to stay after school to participate in activities and receive extra help from their teachers.

The METCO tutor at Belmont High School was hired early in the year, and then had to resign the position when he was offered additional classes to teach at the high school. A new tutor has been hired, and will be in the METCO office at Belmont High School to provide support to students. Ms. Wiltshire reminded parents that the first tutor for all students should be the student's teacher of that subject, noting that going to extra help is very important for success in a class.

Ms. Wiltshire encouraged parents to participate in the Legislative Committee meetings for METCO, which are held on Saturdays, once a month.

Ms. Wiltshire also encouraged parents to attend the METCO Directors' Conference. This year's conference will be held on Friday, December 2nd. The conference themes are cultural competency, the achievement gap, and diversity in the curriculum.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham thanked the parents for attending the meeting. She explained that the School Committee is a six-member board; however, Anne Lougee, the newest member, was unable to attend.

Ms. Graham spoke about the successful opening of the new Wellington Elementary School last month.

Ms. Graham invited parents to attend the presentation for parents on Bullying Prevention and Intervention, which will be held on November 17 at the Chenery Middle School Auditorium.

Ms. Graham invited Mr. Scharfman to speak about the Task Force on Extra-Curricular Activities and Athletics that he is chairing. He explained the work of the task force in collecting information about how activities and athletics operate in the Belmont Public Schools. He noted that there will be a public forum on November 9 to collect feedback from the community. He invited the parents to attend that meeting, and/or to share their feedback now or later via email.

Some parents shared feedback, including: the difficulty of paying a fee per sport; and a question about activities related to growth industries (gaming, IT, STEM, health care, sciences, robotics).

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

2.1 Community Conversation

Ms. Graham invited parents to ask questions and/or share feedback on any topic.

Topics shared/discussed included:

- The allocation of the METCO grant funds
- Tutoring services for students, both at the schools and at METCO, Inc.
- Correlation between MCAS scores and report card grades
- A bus for high school students
- Questions about activities (school-run as well as activities in the town) – how to find out about them, how to register/participate
 - Ms. Graham noted that clearer communication is a goal of the School Committee, especially in areas such as these where making families and students feel welcomed is a primary goal. Ms. Graham made a commitment to work with Ms. Wiltshire to create an inventory of activities and opportunities.
- Possibilities for free tutoring (Phillips Brooks House Association, interns from colleges and universities, like Simmons)
- The accountability of principals to ensure inclusiveness and equity

3. FUTURE BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:


November 1, 2011 – Business Meeting
Chenery Middle School Community Room, 7:30 p.m.

4. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:21 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Scharfman and seconded by Ms. Vose, it was

VOTED unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by



Rebecca Vose, Secretary