

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
February 28, 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. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1.1 Call to Order

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

VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote (6-0) to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with union and non-union personnel. Ms. Graham announced that the Committee would return to Open Session at the conclusion of Executive Session.

2. OPEN SESSION

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

2.1 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Graham led the pledge of allegiance.

2.2 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

2.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

2.4 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham reminded everyone that on March 10th the Butler School will be holding its auction. Tickets are being sold for \$20.00 if purchased ahead of time. Tickets purchased at the door will cost \$25.00. The auction will be held in Newton and information can be found on the Butler School website. The following week is the Foundation for Belmont Education's Auction and tickets are still available. Information on purchasing tickets to the Foundation Auction can be found on the FBE website. During the week of March 13th, Beauty and the Beast will be performed at Belmont High School. Tickets are selling fast but are still available. Ms. Graham encouraged everyone to attend all three of the events.

Ms. Graham reminded School Committee members that the annual Day on the Hill, which is sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (M.A.S.C.), is taking place on March 27th. She encouraged Committee members to attend. She has also extended an invitation to the School Committee Student Representatives through Deb McDevitt.

2.5 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston explained that if there is a snow day, the School Department will be notifying the commercial media. He will try to make that announcement no later than 5:30 in the morning. The Belmont Public Schools website will have a posting indicating that school is cancelled because of the weather. In all cases, if school is held and there is inclement weather and snow on the ground and any parent is concerned about the safety of his or her child, it is always within the discretion of a parent to keep the child at home. Dr. Kingston stated that he will be telling the principals in an email that on a day in which we have snow but school is still open, the principals should exercise what is called a liberal leave policy. That policy would allow students to be excused because of the weather.

2.6 Director of Finance, Business and Operations' Report

Mr. DiCologero reported that he is continuing to work through the FY13 budget process with the Finance Subcommittee and the external groups that are interested in reviewing the School Department budget.

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

4. MAJOR BUSINESS

4.1 BHS Program of Studies Update – Exhibit A – Dr. Michael Harvey, Principal of Belmont High School.

Dr. Harvey reported on the Belmont High School Program of Studies. The Program of Studies is the listing of courses that is approved by the School Committee. There are three main changes to the document for next year.

Fine and Performing Arts

There were some changes to the course descriptions for Sculpture 2 Honors and Concert Orchestra. Those changes were made to reflect the assignments given in the course. The courses are not new.

Mathematics

There is an addition of a proposed course called Advanced Mathematical Decision Making. This will be an elective option for students in grade 12. This course is recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for students who do not choose to take calculus. The course stresses problem solving and real world application of mathematical skills. This course will be in place of two half-year electives in Personal Finance and Business Finance. The suggestion was to drop Personal Finance and Business Finance from the course offerings.

Science

There is an added course called Science Ethics and Controversies which is an elective course for seniors. The course will focus on the ethical side of scientific research and will look at current topics in the field.

Dr. Harvey explained that the Program of Studies is a catalogue of all courses that have been approved by the School Committee. The courses listed are those that could possibly run, although some do not run due to enrollment or staffing. The courses that do not run remain in the Program of Studies so it will not be necessary to have them approved again at a later time.

Dr. Kingston stated that copies of the syllabus for the courses listed in the Program of Studies would be provided at a future meeting. Ms. Graham suggested it might be helpful to have Ms. Soliozy, Director of Math, provide an explanation either written or at a School Committee Meeting of the history of the course and why it's changing.

Mr. Scharfman moved that the School Committee approve the Program of Studies for 2012-2013. Dr. Kingston reminded the Committee that Dr. Harvey would be bringing the syllabus to a future meeting. Mr. Scharfman withdrew his motion but stated that he would be prepared to move to approve the Program of Studies even without seeing the syllabus. Ms. Vose stated that she supports Mr. Scharfman's offer to withdraw the motion. The Committee will vote on approval of the Program of Studies at a future meeting.

Ms. Graham thanked Dr. Harvey for his presentation.

4.2 Student Services Update – Mr. Ken Kramer, Director of Student Services

Mr. Kramer explained the handouts that were included in the packet. One handout explained some of the terminology that is used in Special Education. It also provided a broader understanding of some of the regulations. He explained that this particular handout is used for new teachers during orientation. The second handout explained the escalating costs in Special Education. Certain costs go higher in certain areas while others are stable or somewhat predictable. Mr. Kramer stated that when people see the Student Services budget categories, those financial figures encompass services that are provided for all students in the district. There are certain line items that are just for students who are on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). He stated that it is important to understand Special Education as a sub-component of the Student Services office.

Mr. Kramer explained that IEP stands for Individual Education Plan, and a 504 Plan refers to section 504 which is another type of disability protection law. It is actually an adult law that is extended down into the school system for students with disabilities. Both the IEP and 504 provide entitlement services for students who have disabilities. He explained RTI which stands for Response to Intervention. The reauthorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) mandated that interventions be provided for students prior to putting them on IEPs for specific learning disabilities (SLD). School districts and States have adopted the intervention model. RTI enables teachers to take a closer look at what is going on with the child and provide some interventions before developing an IEP. A student may not necessarily be disabled but just be lacking a certain skill which could be made up for with intervention.

The Student Services budget provides for these various different services. The bulk of the services are Special Education; but service providers include speech and language, psychologists, and teachers working with students across range of 504s, IEPs and RTI plans.

Mr. Kramer explained that if we are providing the best services and the best practices for all students, we are not necessarily going to be identifying as many students as having disabilities. We are going to be providing the right educational levels and services for all students.

Mr. Kramer explained the process for requesting services for a child. Each school building has a first point of contact such as a teacher, guidance counselor, or school psychologist who will be alerted to the fact that a particular student may have an issue. The student is discussed at a Student Support Team meeting. Out of that discussion may be a list of interventions that may be appropriate or possibly a referral for a Special Education evaluation. Any parent can request an evaluation at any time.

5. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES/LIAISONS

5.1 Wellington Building Committee

Ms. Graham stated that the Planning Board is meeting tonight to discuss the movement of one of the rooftop units. They will be discussing when it can be moved, and they will also be discussing what type of sound barriers may be put in place to mitigate noise issues.

The punch list is still ongoing. The Mr. S. gymnasium sign has been put up.

5.2 Finance Subcommittee

Mr. Cunningham explained that the Finance Subcommittee has continued to meet weekly and will be meeting with the Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee on February 29th to bring information to them to help assess the budget.

Ms. Slap announced that the subcommittee is working on a new budget model which will help the process move along more easily in the future.

5.3 Task Force on Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Mr. Scharfman stated that the Task Force met a couple of weeks ago and will meet again on March 7th. Since the time that the Task Force presented their recommendations to the School Committee, they have received some information that the finances of the program are substantially different than they thought they were. There were some numbers they had been using that had not been updated that led them to make some wrong assumptions about cost. They have learned that the projected gate receipts have been coming in lower than expected for several years.

For the past several years money has been very tight so that there has been an effort to find additional areas to cut costs. There are more families taking advantage of the waiver program. The Task Force had recommended reducing fees, but the balance that had built up in the revolving account is likely to be depleted in the next year and will run into deficit in the following year 2014. The Task Force will be revising their recommendations and bringing them to the School Committee at a later meeting.

5.3 Student Representative Update

The student representative updated the Committee about the plans for the Semi-Formal. Approximately 20 tickets have been sold so far.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Consent Agenda

6.2 Personnel Items – Informational

No personnel items

6.3 Business Items – None

6.4 Approval of Minutes

January 24, 2012

February 14, 2012

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

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

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

VOTED unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes of February 14, 2012, as amended.

7. FUTURE BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:

March 13, 2012

CMS Large Community Room

7:30 p.m.

8. ENCLOSURES

No enclosures

9. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:40 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Scharfman and seconded by Ms. Lougee, it was

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

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Vose
Rebecca Vose, Secretary