

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM  
March 13, 2012**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair  
Ms. Rebecca Vose, Secretary  
Ms. Laurie Slap  
Mr. Dan Scharfman  
Mr. Kevin Cunningham  
Ms. Anne Lougee  
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 Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. At 6:35 p.m. the Committee entered Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with union and non-union personnel given that a discussion in Open Session might have a detrimental impact on the Committee's bargaining position. Ms. Graham stated that at the conclusion of Executive Session the Committee would return to Open Session for the regular portion of their meeting.

2. OPEN SESSION

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

Ms. Graham announced that the Director of Finance Report would take place before the Superintendent's Report.

2.4 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham announced that the Boston Sunday Globe ran a story on the Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards which featured prominently a painting by Stacy Brandt who is a Belmont High School Student. There were about 50 students from Belmont High School and Chenery Middle School who submitted entries to the state-wide contest with students receiving either honorable mention, Silver Key or Gold Key Awards. There were about 15 students in the Gold Key category. Those students' will be going to New York for a national completion. Many of the students had works that were for sale in the silent auction that was held in December. Some the student art work has been displayed at the School Administration Building as well as the Belmont High School corridor. Ms. Graham congratulated all the students who submitted entries.

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

- Thursday - Opening night of Beauty and the Beast.
- Friday - Belmont Rotary Club will be holding its annual Dollars for Scholars Spaghetti Dinner at the Beech Street Center to raise money for Belmont High School student scholarships.
- Friday - Burbank School Family Art Night.
- Saturday - The Foundation for Belmont Education annual fundraiser – tickets are sold out.

- Friday – School Committee Joint Meeting with Board of Selectmen – 8:00 a.m. – Selectmen's Board Room for budget discussions.

## 2.5 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston announced that there is now a specific designation for Special Education on the Belmont Public Schools' website after a request from the Special Education Parent Advisory Council. He also mentioned that the Chenery Middle School has a new website.

Dr. Kingston announced that MCAS testing would begin soon and each of the schools has sent home information about MCAS administration and how it will work. Dr. Michael Harvey, who was in the audience, stated that a schedule had been sent out to parents of students in grades 9, 11, and 12. Those students will not be taking the MCAS and will be starting their school day with a delayed opening.

Dr. Kingston explained that the TELL survey will be taking place until the first week in April.

Ms. Darias explained that TELL stands for Teachers Empowering Leadership and Learning and that there is a website [www.tellmass.org](http://www.tellmass.org) that people can go to for more information. The TELL survey is an initiative sponsored by the Department of Education and it is paid for through the Race to the Top Grant at the state level. All districts whether they are Race to the Top districts or not are encouraged to participate. The survey asks all of the school based licensed educators to respond to questions about their working conditions recognizing that a school where a teacher feels valued and has opportunity for growth is a school where there is also positive learning for children. As a Race to the Top District, Belmont is required to take the data that is learned about the district and develop at least one action step to work on in the coming year.

## 2.6 Director of Finance, Business and Operations' Report

Dr. Kingston announced that he and Mr. DiCologero would be updating the Committee on the FY13 budget. He stated that he and Mr. DiCologero had been in consistent weekly meetings with School Committee Finance Subcommittee to discuss the School Department budget for this fiscal year but particularly where the School Department is in planning the budget for next fiscal year. He explained that at this point it is not unusual to find that there is a difference between the original submission and the new iteration of the budget which will be presented publicly at the School Committee's Public Hearing on Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. The School Committee will then be voting on a formal submission of a budget on March 27<sup>th</sup>. The budget might still be modified and be amended up until the time of Town Meeting when other additional information becomes available.

Dr. Kingston emphasized that the administration is predicting what is considered to be a somewhat larger gap than had initially been projected but he stated that he thinks the budget is manageable. One of the reasons the Administration and School Committee will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Friday is to understand more completely where additional available funding might come from.

Dr. Kingston explained some of the following changes that have occurred:

In the initial draft it was reflected that there was a \$41,500,000 existing budget allocations and that the estimated level services budget would come in at \$43,200,000. The adjustment right now anticipates an additional \$200,000 so the level service projection is at \$43,400,000. That change is the change from 4% increase over the present fiscal year to a 4.5 % increase in estimates going forward.

The estimated available revenue funds remain the same as of right now at 42,700,000; and, therefore, there is a change in the difference between the level service budget and the available funds budget. The available revenue budget is less than the level service. The difference right now is about \$709,000. Dr. Kingston stated that he wanted to emphasize again that it is believed that this is a manageable gap and the School Department will be working over the next several weeks to compose ways of closing it.

Dr. Kingston explained the current proposed plan to close the budget gap. The Town of Belmont provides more than 3/4 of the School Department budget; and the remaining funds come from grants, Chapter 70, revolving fund accounts, and LABBB tuition credit. Technical assumptions include presuming that Health Insurance estimates will have a 0% increase next year, the one outstanding contract will be comparable to the Unit A contract, the estimated drop in Special Education out-placement tuitions remains

stable, that the overall student enrollment will be flat, that the new Consolidated Facilities Manager position will not be filled until October, that an expected decrease in Special Education transportation will remain, that the current fee structures for the revolving accounts and fee based programs will remain the same. Dr. Kingston stated that it is important to note the general targeted areas for reduction are going to remain with one major exception. The one exception is not to take \$43,500 out of the Athletics Revolving Fund to offset gap in the general fund.

Dr. Kingston explained the remainder of the proposed budget using a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that the biggest priority for restorations is teaching positions.

Mr. DiCologero updated the Committee on the transportation routes. Based on guidance from a member of the School Finance Office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mr. DiCologero explained that he will be applying a new methodology that will now allow some students to be eligible for free bussing that otherwise would not have been previously. This new methodology more equitably applies what the state standards are. The cost will be approximately \$30,000.

### 3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

### 4. MAJOR BUSINESS

4.1 Update from Jim Davis, Director of Athletics, Sarkis Asadoorian, Athletic Trainer and Stacie Marino, Health and Wellness Teacher on the Positive Decision Making Course

Mr. Davis gave an overview of the Positive Decision Making Course. The course was developed in the summer of 2010 as an upper level elective course. It was offered for the first time during the 2010-2011 school year. The data from the information was shared in the fall of 2011 with the public and School Committee. The Positive Decision Making course was developed in response to the information learned from the YRBS. The course is currently a required course for juniors. It is a semester long course that meets two times each week.

Ms. Marino shared the course syllabus with the School Committee. She explained some of the major units of the course such as Preventative Health which allows students to investigate their family medical history, disease prevention, and how to make lifestyle and behavior changes. There is also a unit on stress management which allows students to learn coping skills to deal with stress such as meditation. Another major focus of the course is developing and carrying out healthy relationships and healthy ways to deal with emotions.

Ms. Marino explained that at the end of the course each student completes a media project. They are given a variety of topics related to the course that they can choose from and they create a 5 minute film.

Mr. Asadoorian explained the nutrition portion of the course which helps student understand healthy eating and disease prevention. Students can talk to their families about medical histories. They study the top causes of death based on CDC information and how people are affected by these illnesses based on genetics and behavior choices. They learn how nutrition affects health and how to understand what is in food.

Mr. Asadoorian explained the website [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) which students use to create their own nutrition guidelines. The students will create their own profile on the website and make their own diet plan. They can also use a food tracker to understand what the nutritional impact the foods they eat during the day have on their bodies.

- 4.2 Final discussion and vote on Program of Studies 2012-2013 – Exhibit A  
Science Ethics and Controversies Course Proposal – Exhibit A-1  
Advanced Mathematical Decision Making Description – Exhibit A-2  
Advanced Mathematical Decision Making Course Proposal – Exhibit A-3  
BHS Elective Course Offerings 2009-2010 – Exhibit A-4  
BHS Elective Course Offerings 2011-2012 (Guidance Reference) – Exhibit A-5

Ms. Graham announced that Dr. Harvey and Ms. Soliozy would come to the table for a continuation of the discussion began at the last School Committee meeting regarding the BHS Program of Studies for 2012-2013.

Dr. Harvey explained that the two courses he plans to add are Advanced Mathematical Decision Making which is an elective for grade 12 students. This course is recommended by the DESE for students who are not taking calculus in their fourth year. The other course is a science course called Science Ethics and Controversies. This is also an elective for grade 12 students. He shared hard copies of the course outlines.

Dr. Harvey explained that the courses he plans to delete are Personal Finance, which is a half year elective for grade 12 students, and Business Finance, which is also a half year elective for grade 12 students.

Ms. Soliozy explained the rationale for deleting these courses. With the implementation of the new curriculum standards, there is a move to graduate students who are college and career ready. One of the problems that is being seen at the college level is that many students enter college with the need to take a remedial math course before they can take a college level math course. The Advanced Mathematical Decision Making Course should enable students to enter college with the ability to go directly into a college level math course. She explained that there are a number of students at the high school who struggle in math, and the Advanced Mathematical Decision Making Course will allow them to take the skills that they have and set them into a context for decision making in a way that they have not had to solve problems before.

Ms. Soliozy explained that the curriculum has been developed at the Dana Center through the University of Texas. It has been studied by Massachusetts, and Massachusetts has implemented it in areas over the last two years.

Ms. Soliozy stated that there are courses in the Program of Studies that are not always offered due to staffing or lack of student sign up. With the Business Finance and Personal Finance courses, she explained, the content does not have enough advancement in the mathematics where it will increase the level of student skills. She stated that as the reason why the courses were removed from the Program of Studies.

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

**VOTED** (5-0-1) with one abstention to approve the Belmont High School Program of Studies 2012-2013.

Mr. Harvey explained the MCAS schedule and why the delayed opening was implemented.

4.3 Motion to decline participation in School Choice for 2012-2013

*In accord with MGL Chapter 76, Section 12B, Belmont Public Schools decline to participate in School Choice for the 2012-2013 school year.*

Each year school departments are mandated to vote on whether or not they will participate in school choice. Belmont participated 4 years ago, but a determination was made that it was not cost effective for the schools.

On a motion offered by Ms. Vose and seconded by Ms. Slap, in accord with MGL Chapter 76, Section 12B, the Belmont School Committee

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) that Belmont Public Schools decline take part in School Choice for the 2012-2013 school year.

4.4 Vote on extension of Interim Superintendent's Contract

Ms. Graham updated the Committee on the changes to the Superintendent's contract.

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

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) to extend the contract of Dr. Thomas Kingston for the period covering July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013.

5. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES/LIAISONS

5.1 Wellington Building Committee

Ms. Graham stated that the Wellington Building Committee had not met since the last School Committee meeting but there were still ongoing issues with the punch list.

5.2 Finance Subcommittee

Ms. Slap stated that the update that Dr. Kingston gave is only the second iteration of the budget. She explained that at the next meeting with the Warrant Committee, one of the things to be discussed is the new available revenue estimates as of March 12<sup>th</sup> and it looks as though there may be some one-time money that will be identified.

Ms. Slap asked about the plan for the new math program. Ms. Soliozy, Director of Math explained that all opportunities would be explored and it would be possible to start the program in phases. The whole program would take an investment of \$200,000.

Mr. Cunningham explained that the process that is occurring is that the School Committee and School Administration have defined a statement that says how much they think it will cost to run the enterprise. The available revenue is unchanged since January. Resources and funding have been identified, but they just have not yet been agreed to about where they will be allocated in the Town. Part of the process that is taking place is defining as a Town where funds should be allocated.

Mr. DiCologero updated the Committee on his meeting with other Town Departments on the MUNIS System. His purpose in taking part was to let them know the needs of the School Department regarding MUNIS. There is some additional capacity that MUNIS has that so far the School Department has not been taking advantage of. He has identified a set of data that he would like to get access to. He will continue to work with colleagues from the other Town Departments on exploring ways to get different forms of data.

5.3 Task Force on Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Mr. Scharfman stated that the Task Force met last week and has begun to discuss the changes to their initial recommendations with the actual financial realities that have come to light through delving into the numbers more. He explained that there was concern among some members of the Task Force regarding confusion about how some of the numbers had evolved and exactly how costs were being allocated and concern about sustainability of the program over the long term.

Mr. Scharfman stated that the programs can be funded until at least next year so there will be time to work on funding for the long term. The Task Force is meeting again on April 4<sup>th</sup>. The key aspects of the budget for the Task Force is how fees will be set, but the School Committee will not be voting on fees until later in the spring. Mr. Scharfman announced that there will be another Public Forum sometime in early May to discuss the costs of the program.

5.4 Student Representative Update

Maggie Leccese reported that the Semiformal Dance was a success. Students are looking forward to seeing Beauty and the Beast this weekend.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Consent Agenda

6.2 Personnel Items – Informational

Personnel Status Updates – Exhibit B

6.3 Business Items – None

6.4 Approval of Minutes

February 28, 2012

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

**VOTED** unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes of February 28, 2012.

7. FUTURE BUSINESS

Upcoming Meetings:

March 20, 2012  
Public Hearing  
7:30 p.m.

8. ENCLOSURES

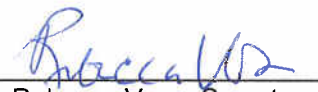
March 1, 2012 Enrollment  
March 1, 2012 Enrollment indicating changes  
Guidance Summer Proposal  
2012 Summer Enrichment Catalogue

9. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:35 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Vose and seconded by Ms. Slap, it was

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

Respectfully submitted by

  
Rebecca Vose, Secretary