

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
FEBRUARY 12, 2013**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair
Ms. Pascha Griffiths, Secretary
Mr. Kevin Cunningham
Ms. Anne Lougée
Ms. Laurie Slap
Dr. Thomas Kingston, Interim Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Business, Finance and Operations

Ms. Griffiths left the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Graham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns - a question was asked about the process for commenting on agenda items. Ms. Graham answered that when the item is discussed at the table, after School Committee comments and questions she will allow time for citizen's to comment.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham announced the following events:

- Belmont High School Cradles to Crayons Pajama-rama Fundraiser – February 14
- Wellington Cradles to Crayons Pajama-rama Fundraiser – February 15
- Chenery Middle School Symphonies Concert – February 14
- Special Education Advisory Council parent meet and mingle followed by presentation titled "No Sibling Left Behind". Cindy Haddad will be the presenter – February 27
- Belmont High School Solo Ensemble Concert – February 27
- Belmont League of Women Voters Candidates Night – March 11

1.6 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston stated that he often will receive questions or comments from parents when he makes the decision to open or close schools during inclement weather. He suggested parents go to the Belmont Public School website and click on the link to his blog. There he explains how he came to the decision to close schools during the hurricane and the recent storm. Dr. Kingston explained that right now the last day of school will be June 20 unless there are more snow days.

Dr. Kingston announced that on March 20 there will be a program for parents which will include a presentation by Dr. Larry Berkowitz, Director of Riverside Trauma Center. Dr. Berkowitz will speak about adolescent suicide ideation and prevention. The program is being presented in response to concern about the results of the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Dr. Kingston announced that he received a letter from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding the recent Coordinated Program Review (CPR). In January, a team from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reviewed Belmont's special education programming, programs for English language learners, and our Title I program. There are but two corrective findings. In 2007 the Department had 17 findings for special education alone. Dr. Kingston said that this new report is excellent news because effecting mandated corrections can be costly, and the 2013 report indicates that our operations are cost-effective as well as programmatically sound. A separate DESE team also examined the operation of the business office and found things to be in good order. Mr. DiCologero thanked his staff and the staff in the school buildings for helping keep the business office in compliance. Ms. Darias thanked our program directors, particularly Pupil Personnel Services Director Ken Kramer and Director of Literacy and English Language Learners Lindsay Rinder for their leadership.

Ms. Darias announced the MCAS schedule for this March.

1.7 Director of Finance, Business and Operations' Report

Mr. DiCologero stated that the Business Office has been working on developing the FY14 budget. He thanked the Finance Subcommittee, Mr. Darias and Dr. Kingston for all of their help in developing the budget documents.

Ms. Graham explained that the Superintendent will be presenting a draft budget to the School Committee.

2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Discussion of Science Committee Findings – Exhibit A

Dr. Kingston explained that a committee was created to look into the course load of science teachers. The report from the committee found that the teacher's course load has gone from 4 class

assignments to 5 regular period assignments. The committee was asked to study limitations found and what accommodations may be needed due to the lack of class time. The teachers reported that they have had to drop lab time and have been forced to spend less time on content by having students do more work outside of class. They also reported that they are skipping review days and now have less time for wet labs. The report stated that there is not much help given outside of class.

Dr. Kingston stated that the report included some recommendations. He mentioned that the science class rooms and prep rooms are not in the best condition and the long term plan includes the renovation of Belmont High School. He stated that there is also a request in the budget to cover chemical waste disposal.

3.2 Class Size Report – Exhibit B

Dr. Kingston explained that there has been concern about class size. He thanked the Class Size Advisory Group consisting of Janet Carey, Chair, Martha Brown, Butler PTA, Angela Chan, Wellington PTO, Lisa Connell, Chenery Middle School Teacher, Laurie Graham, School Committee Chair, Heidi Johnson, Chenery Middle School Assistant Principal, Rosalind Kabrhel, Winn Brook PTA, Lisa Mehrez, Belmont High School PTO, Mark Sivers, Burbank PTA, and Patty Soliozy, Director of Mathematics. He stated that he appreciates the thought and care that went behind this report. He noted that there is not convincing research that decreasing class sizes by small amounts is helpful.

Dr. Kingston stated that the group looked into the possibility of available space at the various schools and examined enrollment projections. The Class Size Advisory Group identified specific classes and grades that need size adjustments. Dr. Kingston noted that in the budget being presented, there is no room to honor any of their recommendations. The group also made suggestions about long-term planning. Dr. Kingston stated that expenditures have been cut over the years to meet available revenue and the town needs to consider what its priorities are and whether something like an operational override is something to consider.

Ms. Judy Phelan expressed concern about Wellington School bearing the burden of oversized classrooms. She wondered if there is space that is not being utilized that could be used for additional classrooms. Ms. Phelan asked about the possibility of the preschool program being located somewhere other than Wellington if there is not a redistricting.

Mr. Brad Abbruzzi, parent of a Butler student questioned why the issue of class size at Wellington is an immediate concern, when Butler has classrooms with 26 students. Dr. Kingston stated that he would have to check in to the numbers at Butler because the enrollment figures do not show 26 students.

Ms. Leah Lesser, parent of Wellington and Chenery students, had questions about the number of aides at Wellington and whether more would be hired. Dr. Kingston explained that there are 4 grade level aides at Wellington.

3.3 Draft Budget Presentation – Exhibit C – Vote to approve submission of preliminary Budget to Board of Selectmen and Warrant Committee

Dr. Kingston expressed appreciation to the Finance Subcommittee and School Committee with special thanks to Kevin Cunningham for all the work that has been done preparing the budget presentation. Dr. Kingston's presentation will be available on the Belmont Public Schools website.

Dr. Kingston explained the following items:

- Strategic Goals that impact budget priorities
- Definitions of the types of budgets
- Budget scenarios
- Major differences among budget scenarios
- Technical budget assumptions (including allocations, cost drivers, adjustment to meet available revenue)
- Summary of key adjustments
- What the available revenue budget cannot provide
- Next steps

Dr. Kingston explained that a level service budget would maintain the quality of instructional services at its current level, taking into account changed conditions. A level service budget would not include major new initiatives. Dr. Kingston explained that an available revenue budget would provide services with only the revenue available, regardless of service needs or changed conditions.

Dr. Kingston explained that the School Committee needs to vote to receive the School Department Draft Budget and transmit the document to the Warrant Committee.

Dr. Kingston stated that he believes the budget will get better. He acknowledged the fact that 80% of the tax rate is paid by residents.

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

VOTED 4-0-0 as Ms. Griffiths had left the meeting at 9:00, to accept the FY14 Draft Budget Proposal – Exhibit C for transmittal to the Warrant Committee and Board of Selectmen.

4. **SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)**

4.1 Student Representative

There was no Student Representative in attendance.

4.2 Finance Subcommittee

There was no update from the Finance Subcommittee.

4.3 Policy Subcommittee

There was not update from the Policy Subcommittee.

4.4 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

There was no update from the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee.

4.5 Capital Budget Committee

Ms. Lougee stated that the Capital Budget Committee will meet on February 14.

4.6 Warrant Committee

Ms. Slap stated that the Warrant Committee would meet on February 13.

4.7 Wellington Building Committee

Ms. Graham stated that due to the recent storm, no work had been done on the Wellington rooftop units. The work will now take place during the February vacation.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

February 5, 2013

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

VOTED 4-0-0, as Ms. Griffiths had left the meeting at 9:00, to approve the minutes of February 5, 2013 as amended.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

February 13, 2013

Warrant Committee Meeting

CMS Large Community Room – 7:30 p.m. (School Dept. presents FY14 Draft Budget)

February 26, 2013

Finance Subcommittee Meeting

SAB Conference Room – 8:00 a.m.

February 26, 2013
School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:30 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**

There were no enclosures.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:35 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Lougee and seconded by Mr. Cunningham it was,

VOTED 4-0-0, as Ms. Griffiths had left the meeting at 9:00 p.m., to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by


Pascha Griffiths, Secretary