

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
Central Boston Elder Services, Boston, MA
OCTOBER 21, 2014

Present: Ms. Laurie Slap, Chair
Ms. Anne Lougée, Secretary
Mr. Kevin Cunningham (arrived 7:15)
Dr. Lisa Fiore (departed 8:15)
Ms. Laurie Graham
Ms. Elyse Shuster
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent

Also present: Ms. Diane Wilshire, METCO Director for the Belmont Public Schools
Ms. Jean McGuire, Executive Director, METCO, Inc.
Boston parents of Belmont METCO students (Boston Belmont Parent Group)
Mr. Jonathan Jacoby and Ms. June Roberts from Belmont Against Racism (BAR)

RECEPTION

The Boston families and School Committee and Department members attended reception from 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Slap called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1.2 Introductions

1.3 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Plelan introduced himself to the group and gave a brief summary of his work experience prior to his appointment as Superintendent of the Belmont Public Schools. He acknowledged Ms. Roberts and Mr. Jacoby from BAR (Belmont Against Racism) and thanked them for BAR's contributions to fund after-school transportation for Boston students who choose to participate in afternoon and evening extra-curricular programs.

1.4 METCO Update

Ms. Wiltshire reported that of the 11 graduates in the class of 2014, eight are currently attending college and the remaining three have chosen to work prior to enrolling. There are currently 111 METCO students this year – 50 at the high school, 39 at the middle school, and 22 at the elementary schools.

Ms. Wiltshire reviewed achievement data from 2013-14, noting that 93% of the 10th grade students are proficient and/or advanced in both ELA and Math. She reported that the National Honor Society has invited three juniors and one senior to apply for membership and four seniors are semi-finalists for the POSSE Scholarship. Also noteworthy is that 14 students in grades 9 through 11 are members of the BHS Leadership Team.

Ms. Wiltshire indicated that several 11th grade students are mentoring middle school students who attend the extended day program, and the middle school students have periodic lunch meetings with the Chenery guidance counselors. The first elementary "stay and play" is scheduled for next week, set to occur at all four schools on the same day so as to minimize the additional transportation cost. Belmont High Principal Dan Richards will attend the Boston Belmont Parents Group's meeting on November 20th to present information to and answer questions of the group.

Ms. McGuire noted that some School Committee's in Massachusetts include a non-voting METCO member as a means of improving communication between the METCO families and the district.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Slap informed the group that this would be Mr. Cunningham's last Boston meeting, as he is leaving the School Committee effective November 15th. She thanked Mr. Cunningham for his many contributions as a colleague of the committee, and explained that a successor will be appointed by the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen on November 17th.

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

A period of questions and answers ensued, beginning with an explanation of why the independently-funded after school transportation program for METCO students was only just getting off the ground. The program, which is paid for almost exclusively with money fund raised by BAR, was totally expended by the end of the last academic year. It was also learned that the Thelma Burns Scholarship program was also fully depleted of funds. During August and September BAR was able to raise approximately \$10,000 for the transportation program. In addition, the school administration put the service out to bid, selected a vendor, and has only just completed the necessary driving checks and CORI inquiries on the drivers. Several parents spoke of the need for the Boston parent community to do additional fundraising for this effort. Fundraising ideas were discussed and a working group was formed to get efforts off the ground.

Regarding morning and evening transportation needs for Boston-based students, Ms. McGuire wondered if Belmont might want to resurrect its "host family" program, enabling students to stay overnight in Belmont. Many parents present indicated that they would prefer that their child come home each evening, despite the long commute.

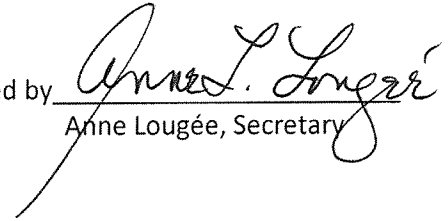
Superintendent Phelan reported on the increased student enrollment over the past few years and the overall impact the higher numbers are having on class size and the district as a whole. In particular he spoke to the increased number of English language learners and the additional services necessary to integrate and accommodate these students at all grade levels.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:45 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Lougée and seconded by Ms. Shuster, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by


Anne Lougée, Secretary