

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
MARCH 10, 2015**

Present: Ms. Laurie Slap, Chair
Ms. Anne Lougée, Secretary
Mr. Thomas Caputo
Dr. Lisa Fiore
Ms. Laurie Graham
Ms. Elyse Shuster
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Business, Finance and Operations

Student Representatives: Ms. Sarah Stewart, Mr. Daniel Vernick, Ms. Beth Young, and
Mr. Thomas Zembowicz

1. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The School Committee met in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining and litigation given that a discussion in Open Session may have a detrimental impact on the bargaining or litigation position of the School Committee.

2. **OPENING BUSINESS**

2.1 Call to order

Ms. Slap called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. She explained that the School Committee had been in Executive Session and would now conduct the business portion of their meeting.

2.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Slap led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2.3 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

2.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

2.5 Chair's Report

Ms. Slap announced that Superintendent Phelan and Principals Mike McAllister and Tricia Clifford will serve as the School Committee representatives on the Sick Leave Bank Committee. She also announced that due to the town-wide election on Tuesday, April 7, the next School Committee meeting has been rescheduled to April 14th.

Ms. Slap reported that many people attended Superintendent Phelan's budget presentations to the Burbank, Wellington, and Winn Brook PTO/PTA groups. Ms. Slap noted upcoming meetings:

- Monday, March 16 6:00 p.m. Butler Elementary School
- Wednesday, March 12 7:00 p.m. Beech Street Center (joint with Board of Selectmen)
- Thursday, March 19 7:00 p.m. Chenery Middle School
- Friday, March 20 3:15 p.m. Beech Street Center
- Monday, March 30 7:00 p.m. Beech Street Center (joint with Board of Selectmen)

Ms. Slap reported on recent and upcoming events in the Town and Schools, including the Foundation for Belmont Education's (FBE) dinner/auction event on March 23rd. She noted that the FBE has announced a new, honorary award program this year: an outstanding teacher of the year award for an educator at each of the six schools – winners will be announced on April 17 and an award ceremony is scheduled for April 30.

2.6 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan noted the high turnout at the various budget presentation sessions. He also congratulated the Belmont winter athletes on their successes.

Superintendent Phelan updated the School Committee on the results of the Green Cup Challenge which is sponsored by the PTO/PTA Green Alliance Team. Students learned how much energy schools used compared to last year. Superintendent Phelan thanked Ms. Amanda Mujica, Chenery Middle School parent, for her work with the Green Cup Challenge.

Superintendent Phelan noted that the first episode of *Belmont Schools Now* – a joint collaboration with the Belmont Media Center (BMC) – was recently completed. In it he presents overview of the FY16 budget and is then joined by Ms. Jamie Shea, President of the FBE, to discuss the work of the FBE on behalf of our faculty and students. Superintendent Phelan thanked BMC Director Jeff Hansell and his staff for creating this program to showcase the Belmont Public Schools.

Superintendent Phelan announced the following dates for parents to attend **Kindergarten information sessions:**

- Tuesday, March 24 7:00 p.m. Butler School
- Thursday, March 26 6:30 p.m. Burbank School
- Thursday, April 2 6:30 p.m. Winn Brook School
- Thursday, April 9 5:40 p.m. Wellington School

3. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

4. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

4.1 Student Representatives

The Belmont High School Student Representatives presented information on recent and upcoming academic, athletic, cultural, and fundraising activities at the school. They reported that the Working to Help the Homeless Club raised \$1,400 at a recent coffeehouse. These funds will go to the Youth Housing Initiative, which works with homeless people aged 18 to 24. The annual Asian Night is scheduled for Saturday, April 11.

The Student Representatives also discussed the FY16 Available Revenue (AR) Budget and the upcoming vote for an operational override. They expressed their concerns that the AR budget will adversely impact the students at Belmont High School.

4.2 2015-2016 School Calendar – Exhibit A

Ms. Darias presented a draft of the 2015-2016 school calendar and noted that School Committee policy states that the first day of school is the first Wednesday in September. For the coming academic year, the first Wednesday will be before Labor Day. Ms. Darias also explained how early release days are determined as well as the dates for PARCC and MCAS testing. The calendar has been reviewed by the members of the Leadership Council and has been shared with the Belmont Education Association as per the Unit A contract.

School Committee member Shuster questioned the School Committee's policy of not recognizing religious holidays and whether assigning an early release to Good Friday was consistent with this policy. School Committee members discussed the pros and cons of either adding additional religious holidays or not having any at all. Superintendent Phelan stated that he will discuss the issue with members of the Belmont Education Association in an effort reflect the needs of the district.

4.3 Superintendent's Preliminary Findings Report – Exhibit B

Superintendent Phelan provided an overview of his Preliminary Findings Report which included three phases of his entry plan cycle. The first phase included the review of several different documents that were provided to him by the previous Superintendent, Dr. Thomas Kingston. He reviewed these documents prior to starting his position in Belmont. In addition to reviewing documents, Superintendent Phelan had many conversations with different groups in town such as parents, faculty and staff, union representatives, town officials and others. The information gathered from these meetings and from the review of all the documents was used to identify themes and trends which will then be used to set the preliminary goals and strategies for the school system. Superintendent Phelan discussed the strengths as well as the pressure points on the school district.

4.4 Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) update

Superintendent Phelan explained that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is the state body that provides funding for the construction and renovation of public schools. School districts that are interested in applying for funding submit a Statement of Interest (SOE) to the MSBA. The MSBA then chooses which schools receive funding based on their need.

Belmont has submitted an SOI over the past 8 to 10 years. Last year the MSBA conducted a Senior Study at Belmont High School which involved members of the MSBA coming to the school to look at the building infrastructure and speak to members of the staff. Belmont was not chosen to receive any funding this year. Superintendent Phelan, Mr. DiCologero, and other members of the school administration have been meeting to re-write the SOI with an updated focus on increasing enrollment, and will submit it by the April 10 deadline.

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

5.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met earlier today to discuss the available revenue (AR) budget. They are proactively looking at revenue sources, such as the fees for building rentals. Committee member Caputo expressed his concern overall for the planned reductions in the AR budget, but in particular to the science programs. The Committee is scheduled to meet every Tuesday at 7:30 a.m. in March.

5.2 Policy Subcommittee

Ms. Graham and Ms. Pederson, Human Resources Director, will be meeting to review the Policy Manual to ensure that procedures are attached to certain policies. The Policy Subcommittee will meet next week to address the issue of naming rights, advertising and sponsorship.

5.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

The Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee met yesterday to discuss the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) system which supports school districts by using a new formative assessment tool to measure growth and learning during Kindergarten. Belmont Kindergarten teachers who attended the meeting expressed the view that Belmont's new report card provides better information than the new assessment tool.

5.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee met on February 26 and will meet again on March 11. They have received the list of capital budget requests and will be meeting with each town department.

5.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet on March 25.

5.6 Wellington Building Committee

The Wellington Building Committee met last week. The group is working on reconciling finances with the MSBA. There are still some internal noise and HVAC issues to be addressed.

5.7 Financial Task Force

The Financial Task Force has not met.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

6.1 Consent Agenda - none

6.2 Personnel Items - none

6.3 Business Items – None

6.4 Approval of Minutes
February 24, 2015

On a motion offered by Ms. Shuster and seconded by Dr. Fiore, it was

VOTED unanimously to approve the minutes of February 24, 2015 as amended.

7. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

March 12, 2015
Precinct Meeting
Beech Street Center – 7:00 pm

March 17, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 am

March 19, 2015
Chenery PTO Budget Presentation
CMS Large Community Room – 7:00 pm

March 20, 2015
Budget Presentation
Beech Street Center – 3:15 pm

March 24, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 am

March 24, 2015
School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:00 pm

8. **ENCLOSURES**

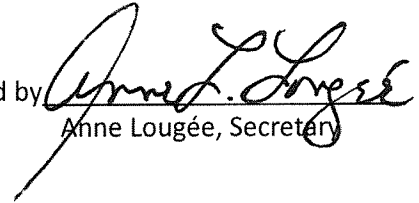
None

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:07 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Caputo and seconded by Ms. Lougée, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by



Anne Lougée, Secretary