

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
JANUARY 6, 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

Also Present: Daniel Vernick, Student Representative

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

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

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Slap led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

Ms. Christine Connolly, Ms. Robin Antonellis, Ms. Tina Mulhern , and many parents of high school cheering students presented a proposal for a winter cheering squad. They explained that not all students are interested in the winter sports currently offered at the high school and this would be an alternative way to receive their gym credit. The group suggested that the cost of hiring a coach might be covered by the activity fee. They noted that Athletic Director Jim Davis and Principal Dan Richards have been very helpful with their proposal.

Ms. Hillary Donovan, parent of a 9th grade student, expressed her concern regarding the number of free periods her daughter often has on a given day. Her hope is that the administration will seek to find opportunities for students to be engaged when unscheduled free periods occur.

Mr. Bill Skelley presented a proposal to the School Committee that would create a Community Friends Project. The project would pair middle school and/or high school students with special needs children in town. The students would visit and spend time with the children at their home twice a month. Mr. Skelley explained that he believes this program would help students to develop confidence and friendships and also help them to learn from disabled people. Mr. Skelley stated that he has spoken

to Ms. Alice Melnikoff, Community Service Director at Belmont High School who expressed her support for the program. The School Committee also expressed support and offered to help put him in touch with the Belmont Special Education Advisory Council members who may be able to provide some help in getting the program started.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chair's Report

Ms. Slap wished everyone a Happy New Year and explained that the School Department has been working closely with the Town of Belmont Financial Task Force to examine Belmont's financial outlook over the next several years. The Task Force Subcommittee will present its recommendations soon.

Ms. Slap updated the School Committee on recent and upcoming events in the town and Schools.

1.6 Student Representative Report

Mr. Daniel Vernick stated that the Belmont High School (BHS) Boys' Basketball team will be playing at TD Garden on Saturday. The following Thursday *Belmont Idol* will be held at BHS in the evening. Mr. Vernick explained that the *Belmont Idol* competition is one of the most attended events at BHS. The proceeds go to funding diversity programming at the high school.

Mr. Vernick also reported that two groups of students will be travelling to New York over the Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. One group will attend a Model UN competition and the other will attend a play on Broadway and participate in a theatre workshop.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan reported that two task forces have been assigned to expand on the work of the Enrollment and Student Life (Social and Emotional Learning – SEL) modeling groups. He explained that the ever increasing class sizes and the SEL of students are two areas of great concern to parents and staff.

Superintendent Phelan reminded the public that students need to be careful crossing the streets especially as the weather begins to be an issue.

2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Changes to the BHS Program of Studies 2015-2016 – Exhibit A-1

BHS Program of Studies 2015-2016 – Exhibit A-2

Principal Dan Richards explained that each year the School Committee is presented with updates to the Belmont High School Program of Studies which they are required to approve at a future meeting. Assistant Principal John Muldoon presented an overview of how the process of updating the Program of Studies takes place each year. Information is collected during the first part of the year from the staff and students regarding what courses are of interest and what courses might be added to help students prepare for society and college.

Mr. Arto Asadoorian, Director of Fine and Performing Arts explained the changes to the Fine Arts Program and why he is proposing those changes. They include adding the following classes: Ceramics 4 (Honors), Grade 9 Concert Band (College Prep or Honors); Music Appreciation I, II, III, IV (College Prep) for one semester. He also recommends reducing Music Technology from full year to one semester as our technology is not adequate to support the full year.

Ms. Colleen Foley, Director of Foreign Languages presented a proposal to add a Chinese 5 (College Prep) course. She explained that the course would follow the completion of Chinese 4 College Prep or Chinese 4 Honors and will offer students a chance to continue studying Chinese in depth.

Assistant Principal Muldoon presented a proposal to add a English Language Education section to the Program of Studies to list the English Language Development courses for English Language Learners. He also proposes changing the level of the Global Leadership certificate program from College Prep to Honors to accurately reflect the level of work being done by students.

3.2 Instrumental Music Update – Exhibit B

Mr. Asadoorian explained some changes to the Instrumental Music Program. He stated that research has shown that students who participate in sustained study of music perform better in academics. They also demonstrate higher levels of executive functioning and social/emotional health.

Mr. Asadoorian explained that in 2008, due to budget constraints, General Music instruction for grades 3 & 4 was reduced by half. Currently students in grades 3-4 receive General Music once each week for 40 minutes. The Instrumental Music students receive one lesson each week for 40 minutes, in groups that include a mixture of instruments. The Non-Instrumental students are placed in an Ensemble Class that meets at the same time as Instrumental Music for that grade. The Ensemble Classes often exceed 60 students and require two music teachers to supervise.

Mr. Asadoorian stated that the new model will essentially return to the model that was in place prior to the 2008 changes, with some modifications. It will allow students to receive General Music twice each week for 30 minutes. The Instrumental Music students will receive one 30-minute lesson each week in small, like-instrument groups. These changes will allow all students in grades 3-4 to have access to the full General Music curriculum.

3.3 Preliminary Budget Assumptions – Exhibit C

Superintendent Phelan presented the FY16 budget assumptions explaining that the expected deficit is due to the increased cost in the following areas:

1. Increase in support for student services (contracted services)
2. Increase in students in need of English Language Learner supports
3. Increase in enrollment of Out of District Special Education Placements

Superintendent Phelan explained that with the FY16 budget assumptions, he and the other members of the administration are beginning the process to prepare the budget to present to the Warrant Committee. Superintendent Phelan stated that there is a need to appropriately fund the FY15 deficit driver budget line items which are mandated services. There is also a need to hire 2.0 ELL teachers as mandated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in addition to hiring a 1.0 teacher for the 4th grade at the Wellington School to carry the current grade 3 class forward.

Superintendent Phelan explained that as the process to build the FY16 budget begins, we need to look at our needs as they are impacted by increases in both enrollment and mandated services. He stated that the school administration continues to monitor the current budget expenditures to ensure there is an accurate view of the FY16 needs. They are also working with the Finance Subcommittee to explore budget saving measures and additional revenue opportunities such as revising our rental fee structure.

Superintendent Phelan explained the FY16 budget process and timeline. The School Committee Finance Subcommittee has added an extra meeting in January to prepare the budget. The School Committee will meet on January 20th and February 3rd to further outline the FY16 budget. The School Committee will submit a budget to the Warrant Committee during the first week of February. The School Department will continue to work with the Financial Task Force during January and February.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The committee met this morning to discuss the FY16 budget, the upcoming presentation to the Financial Task Force this Friday, and to review fees and other revenue opportunities.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee

No report

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

No report

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

The Capital Budget Committee will meet at the end of the month.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee will meet tomorrow evening to offer training to new committee members. This is not a full Warrant Committee meeting.

4.6 Wellington Building Committee

No report

4.7 Financial Task Force

The Financial Task Force will meet on Friday morning at 8:00 a.m.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Personnel Items - none

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes
December 16, 2014

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

VOTED unanimously to approve the minutes of December 16, 2014.

7. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

Upcoming Meetings:

January 15, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 a.m.

January 20, 2015
Finance Subcommittee Meeting
SAB Conference Room – 7:30 a.m.

January 20, 2015
School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:00 p.m.

8. **ENCLOSURES**

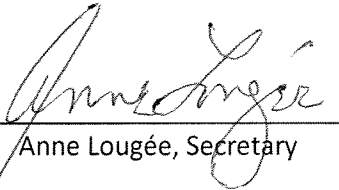
Professional Learning Teams

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:30 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Lougée and seconded by Mr. Caputo, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by



Anne Lougée, Secretary