

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
JUNE 9, 2020

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Kate Bowen, Secretary
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations

Recognition of 2019-2020 Belmont Retirees

The School Committee recognized the following three Belmont Public Schools staff members who are retiring at the end of this school year.

- Janet Carey – Winn Brook Principal
- Joanne DiBona – Chenery Middle School Secretary
- Julia Huestis – Chenery Middle School Math Teacher

School Committee Chair Andrea Prestwich read a resolution for each retiree. School Committee members and Belmont Administrators thanked them all for their years of dedication to the students and staff of the Belmont Public Schools.

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

In the interest of time, Chair Prestwich waived her report.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan thanked the Belmont High School 2020 Senior Class and their families for taking on this year's graduation in a different way. Many people put in effort to provide a wonderful graduation ceremony during this time of social distancing.

Superintendent Phelan thanked Belmont students for their rally on racism. It was an important event during these times.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 COVID-19 Planning for September – Community Forum

Superintendent Phelan thanked the Belmont Public Schools staff for their work over the last month planning for the 2020-21 school year. Many meetings were held with staff members, PTO/PTA Presidents, Fire Department officials and Police Department officials. The next school year may require a hybrid model, remote learning, or it may be possible to open school in the normal way. Thanks to Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias for spearheading the research into this planning.

Assistant Superintendent Darias presented an outline of the plans her working groups have designed over the last month.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has announced there will be state guidelines available in late June. The plans being made now are in preparation for whatever health conditions exist in September.

There are three possible plans for opening school in September. The top priority in determining which plan will be implemented is the health and safety of all students and staff. Belmont Public Schools will follow all state and local requirements, including protocols for face coverings and physical distancing.

1. Traditional opening: all students and staff attend school in person.

If this plan is chosen, there will be protocols in place for monitoring student and staff health and responding to a COVID-19 case.

Curriculum standards from the previous year which are integral to the continuity of learning will be taught. Students in need of social emotional or academic support will be monitored.

2. Hybrid opening: half* of the students attend in person while the other half learn remotely; groups would alternate in some form as yet to be determined (variations under consideration include alternating by weeks, by days, by mornings/afternoons) *depending on the number of students allowed in a classroom

Belmont Public Schools will increase device and technology capacity to improve remote learning. Schedules will be designed to alternate students between in-person learning and remote learning.

3. Remote opening: all students learn remotely

If it is deemed to be unsafe to open schools to everyone, Belmont Public Schools will utilize increased device and technology capacity to improve remote learning. Schedules will be developed with online learning sessions and asynchronous learning not on a device. There will be opportunities for students to meet teachers in person, outside and in small groups; if health conditions permit. Devices will be provided to all students in the district to use at home. All students will have a Google account to improve instruction by using Google Classroom as the platform for students to submit work.

A survey will be sent to all parents and guardians requesting feedback on the initial draft plans.

3.2 Draft Resolution for Increased Federal Support for Public K-12 Funding

School Committee member Kate Bowen explained several communities have developed resolutions requesting increased federal support for their school districts. She suggested Belmont do the same. Ms. Bowen drafted a resolution for Belmont using the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School, Boston and Framingham district's resolutions as guidelines. After reading the draft to School Committee members, she suggested the draft be shared with the whole committee to review and a vote would be taken on the adoption of the draft at the June 16 Finance Subcommittee meeting.

3.3 FY21 Budget (Vote)

Tony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations presented the Belmont Public Schools budget for FY21 – draft 2.

The total for the original draft budget was \$62,506,441. When the COVID-19 pandemic caused shutdowns, the budget was adjusted to help the Town deal with the 25 percent shortfall.

The FY21 budget includes \$1,020,000 in reductions. These reductions included district-wide supplies, custodial overtime and substitutes. It also eliminates 5.80 FTE teaching positions along with the health insurance that would have been part of those positions. The health insurance rate is indexed by 3% instead of 4%.

The total for the draft 2 FY21 budget is now \$61,485,641.

The School Committee discussed an amendment regarding the transfer of vocational funds as a line item from the Town budget to the schools budget. They agreed to hold off on a vote until the Finance Subcommittee meeting on June 16.

The School Committee discussed the FY21 budget and their concerns about the amount of funding leaving the schools ill equipped to handle the growing enrollment. They also voiced concerns over not knowing what will be needed in the fall related to the COVID-19 situation. The School Committee recognized that there will be adjustments made within the budget over the summer to meet the changing needs and anticipates that collaborative work.

The School Committee agreed to vote at the June 16 Finance Subcommittee meeting on a resolution raising concerns about funding.

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to provisionally approve the Belmont Public Schools FY21 budget.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

There was no report from the Finance Subcommittee.

4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee.

There was no report from the Policy and Procedure Subcommittee.

4.3 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

There was no report from the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

An email was received from former School Committee Chair, Susan Burgess-Cox regarding a change in the capital budget that did not necessarily relate to schools.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee met on June 3 for a presentation on the capital budget. They also voted many of the warrant articles for Town Meeting, which is scheduled for June 17. They will meet again on June 12 to vote on the remainder of the articles.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee will meet on June 12 at 8:00 a.m.

4.7 Community Path Committee

The Community Path Committee met on June 1 and will meet again in two weeks. They are waiting for Nitsch to complete borings for the Alexander Avenue tunnel, before the CPC will be able to hold the 25% design meeting, and subsequently the 25% design MAAssDOT public hearing.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II Committee met on June 5 to review a presentation for Town Meeting and also discussed the five year plan for schools based on the Financial Task Force I recommendation.

4.9 Rink Working Group

The Rink Working Group met last week regarding the proposal that was submitted for the rink. They will meet again tomorrow.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda – Acceptance of Donations

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was **VOTED** unanimously to accept the following donations:

- Rita Alepakis – Nick's Place II (Make at Home Pizza Kits)
- Tildy Banker-Johnson – Belmont Books (370 grade specific books donated through Read It Forward)

- Steve Duran – Star Market (grocery bags)
- Amy Kirsch & Elisa Bello – Belmont Helps (\$1,500 in local restaurant gift cards)
- Terrance Skelton & Armen Zildjian Master – Simon W. Masonic Lodge (\$2,000 used to purchase gift cards for families in need)
- Xinxin Guo – Belmont Chinese American Association (3700 Face Masks)

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

May 28, 2020 Finance Subcommittee Minutes

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of May 26, 2020.

6. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Catherine Bowen and seconded by Tara Donner, it was voted unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary