

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM
NOVEMBER 26, 2019**

Present: Ms. Susan Burgess-Cox, Chair
Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Secretary
Ms. Kate Bowen
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

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

Susan Burgess-Cox called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Susan Burgess-Cox led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizen's Concerns

Susan Burgess-Cox asked those expecting to comment on the Chenery Middle School Math Update to present comments on that agenda item after the presentation.

Ms. Burgess-Cox asked if there were other citizen's concerns. There were no other citizen's concerns.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

Susan Burgess-Cox announced agenda item 3.2 (Chenery Middle School Math Update) would be moved to the first item on the agenda and 3.1 (Presentation on Identity Project) would be moved to the second item.

1.5 Chair's Report

In the interest of time, the Chair did not provide a report.

1.6 Student Representative Report

Student Representatives Alexander Fick, Divya Natarajan and Laura Jansen updated the School Committee on the recent Pep Rally which is one of the biggest events. They discussed teacher shadowing where teachers shadow a student for the day. It helps teachers learn what a typical day is like for the students and also helps students and teachers to bond.

The students stated some concerns related to the high school construction project such as traffic in and around the high school. They also mentioned the dangers of bicyclists passing walkers on the way to school.

1.7 Superintendent's Report

In the interest of time, the Superintendent did not provide a report.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Chenery Middle School Math Update – Exhibit B

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias presented an overview of the Middle School math placement process and what the administration has decided to change.

Students in grade 6 take grade 6 math. Students in grade 7 take grade 7 math or grade 7 compacted math which includes grade 7 standards and half of grade 8 standards. In grade 8 students can take grade 8 math or algebra 1 which is half of grade 8 standards and algebra 1 standards. Some students elected to take a placement test allowing them to skip grade 7 compacted math and take grade 8 algebra1 in grade 7. Some also took a second test allowing them to skip two years of math. This practice was started in 2010 for students whose math skills were above grade level and wanted to skip forward to a higher math class. Approximately 5-10 students passed the test allowing them to skip a year a math and they were integrated into existing math sections.

Eventually, the test was offered to any student who wanted to take the exam. A grade 8 math section was added for a geometry section while students with more than one advancement took morning classes at Belmont High School. Over one hundred students take it annually. With overall enrollment increasing, algebra 1 classes can no longer accommodate students who have tested into a higher math class. The placement test has also increased stress for students and disappointment in those who do not pass the test. Due to results from the recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey, teachers and administrators are concerned about middle school students' mental health and well-being. After taking all of this into account, the administration has recommended discontinuing the practice of allowing middle school students to test out of a year of middle school math.

Susan Burgess-Cox invited School Committee members to discuss the topic before she invited members of the audience to provide comments. Members discussed the decision to eliminate the math test. Susan Burgess-Cox then invited members of the audience to come to the microphone to voice their concerns. Several members of the audience expressed disappointment over the elimination of the math test due to the positive impact skipping ahead had on their child, while others expressed support of the elimination of the practice because it is not in line with

national math organizations' recommendations to focus on enrichment rather than acceleration as a means of challenging students."

3.2 Presentation on Identity Project – Exhibit A

Superintendent Phelan and Assistant Superintendent Darias welcomed Adriana Umana-Taylor who provided an overview of the Identity Project.

Ms. Umana-Taylor explained how issues of race and ethnicity are important to helping students to learn how to engage in society. Social media allows students to witness social and ethnic conflict and students are forming an understanding of who they are within this context. The Identity Project is focused on the question of "how a student's identity with respect to their ethnic and racial identity is associated with student learner adjustment.

Adolescents who have a clear sense of their identity demonstrate better mental health, greater overall general well-being, grade point average and sense of school belonging. They tend to have a greater sense of self-assuredness and coping skills when they have engaged in exploring their race and background. It also contributes to students' greater sense of global identity.

The Identity Project is evidence based curriculum which focuses specifically on adolescents. It is an eight week program that meets one session per week for fifty five minutes delivered by one instructor as active learning design. Students learn to explore their own background as well as their peers' backgrounds. The Identity Project curriculum will be implemented in the spring of 2020 with 4th graders. There will be eight sessions taught through the English Language Arts curriculum. Jill MacKinnon has been trained to teach this.

Superintendent Phelan thanked Ms. Umana-Taylor for her presentation noting how helping students explore who they are puts them at ease and helps them contribute as global citizens. This curriculum also fits into what the district is doing with social emotional learning.

3.3 Tennis/Rink Update

Superintendent Phelan explained he is meeting with Town Administrator Patrice Garvin and Assistant Town Administrator Jon Marshall on Wednesday to discuss the options available if it is decided to add tennis courts to the high school site. The timeline for the Rink RFP was slowed down a bit to allow for more input on whether or not changes can be made for the inclusion of tennis courts.

3.4 Superintendent's Goals – Exhibit C

Superintendent Phelan provided an overview of his goals for the 2019-20 school year along with the rubric and Belmont Public Schools Strategic Plan each goal is attached to. He learned at a recent Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)/Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) conference that the state is considering updating the

Superintendent's evaluation process. It was suggested by a presenter that the Superintendent's goals should be attached to the district strategic plan as well as the School Committee goals.

Goal 1: Effective Strategic Planning

Topic: Strategic Long Term Planning on District Reconfiguration Education Plan

Superintendent Rubric:

- Standard IV Professional Culture: (A) Mission Core Values and Meetings (C) Communication, (D) Continuous Learning Staff and Administrator (E): Shared Vision Indicator

Belmont Public Schools 2019-20 Strategic Plan:

- A2. Utilization of District Configuration Education Plan (DCEP) committee work to frame and organize the districts vision for teaching and learning, culture, and new school groupings.

Belmont School Committee 2019-20 School Year Goals and Priorities:

- 3. Belmont Middle and High School and Related Issues
 - District Configuration Planning

Goal

To lead the district through the strategic planning of the grade configuration work. This work will be conducted through the actions of the Superintendent's Cabinet Team, the Leadership Council and direct work with teachers via committee and professional development opportunities.

Goal 2: Effective Strategic Financial Planning

Topic: Strategic Long Term Fiscal Planning to support the District's Financial and Educational Needs

Superintendent Rubric:

- Standard II Management and Operations (E) Fiscal Systems
- Standard III Family and community Engagement (A) Engagement Community and Stakeholders
- Standard IV Professional Culture (C) Communication

Belmont Public Schools 2019-20 Strategic Plan:

- B. 2. Work collaboratively to identify the ongoing and future fiscal needs of the district to support the advocacy of an override for the FY21 budget process.
- B. 3. Continue to work with Town officials to develop short and long term plans to support the fiscal needs of all Town departments including schools.

Belmont School Committee 2019-20 School Year Goals and Priorities:

- FY21 Budget

Goal

To lead the district through the strategic fiscal planning of the next five years. This work will be conducted through the actions of the Superintendent's Cabinet Team, the Leadership Council and the direct work with Town leaders and participation on the Financial Task Force 2 Committee.

Goal 3: Student Learning Goal

Topic: Provide Vocational and Technical education options to Belmont students

Superintendent Rubric:

- Standard I: Instructional Leadership (B): Instructional - Meeting Diverse Needs
- Standard III: Shared Responsibility – Student and Family Support

Belmont Public Schools 2019-2020 Strategic Plan:

- A: To prepare all students for college, career, and life-long learning.

Belmont School Committee 2019-2020 School Year Goals and Priorities:

- Decisions related to career and vocational and technical education

Goal

To advocate for and provide career, vocational and technical education (CVTE) options for students in Belmont.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

There was no report from the Finance Subcommittee.

4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

The Policy and Procedure Subcommittee will meet on December 2nd.

4.3 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

There was no report from the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

4.4 Capital Budget Committee

There was no report from the Capital Budget Committee.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee met before Town Meeting to consider a re-vote on certain articles but it was decided not to re-vote.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee has been working on a budget.

4.7 Community Path Committee

The Community Path Committee design consultant niche has held several stakeholder meetings and met on Monday for an overview of the stakeholder meetings to date. School Committee Liaison

Kate Bowen had a productive meeting with Belmont High School Principal Isaac Taylor and niche consultants to discuss the community path. They will form a student focus group to allow students to provide ideas about the path.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

There was no report from the Financial Task Force II Committee.

4.9 High School Traffic Working Group

There was no report from the High School Traffic Working Group.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda

Vote on acceptance of \$1,000 donation to the Wellington Elementary School – Exhibit D

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously to approve the \$1,000 donation to the Wellington Elementary School – Exhibit D

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

November 5, 2019

November 12, 2019

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was **VOTED** unanimously to approve the minutes of November 5, 2019. And November 12, 2019 as amended.

6. FUTURE BUSINESS

7. ENCLOSURES

Strategic Plan

School Committee Goals

November 1, 2019 Enrollment

Upcoming School Committee Meetings

8. ADJOURN

At 9:30 p.m. on a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Andrea Prestwich, it was **VOTED** unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted by Andrea H Prestwich
Andrea Prestwich, Secretary