

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
AUGUST 6, 2020**

Present: Ms. Andrea Prestwich, Chair
Ms. Kate Bowen, Secretary
Ms. Amy Checkoway
Mr. Michael Crowley
Ms. Tara Donner
Ms. Evelyn Gomez
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

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 6:32 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, the Chair did not present a report.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

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

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Opening Schools – Fall 2020

School Administrators John Phelan, Janice Darias and Michael McAllister presented an update on the feedback from the community regarding the return to school options which were presented at the August 4 School Committee meeting.

Over 680 questions and comments were received over the last 48 hours. The questions and comments were all read by administrators and organized into categories, which are listed below.

- Safety
- Building concerns
- Hybrid model
- Personal safety
- Teaching and learning
- Technology
- Full Remote
- Liability
- Transition
- Student schedule / support
- METCO
- Need for home schooling
- Kindergarten
- Aftercare / learning
- Special Education and EL services
- Food service

Assistant Superintendent Darias provided a sampling of questions from the community and she, Superintendent Phelan, and Mr. McAllister shared the answers that had been provided. The questions were related to how issues such as quarantining in the event a student or teacher test positive for the virus, student assessment due to the shutdown, and how the student cohorts might be organized. There were also questions related to fall sports and whether they could take place, as well as aftercare programs.

Superintendent Phelan explained the decision on re-opening schools is based on health and safety, social emotional well-being, and academic engagement and return to learning. School administrators must take into account the general health metrics in the state as well and local testing capacity, and facilities health status and capacity, among other items.

There is also concern about the social emotional status of students and their need to interact with their teachers and other students in person. The district is collaborating with McLean Hospital on Professional Development opportunities for educators.

Based on everything that is known now regarding the current health metrics, Superintendent Phelan presented a proposed phased plan for reopening of the Belmont Public Schools.

Phase 1: K-12 Remote Learning (in-person for “high needs and complex profile” students, per DESE guidelines)

Phase 2: Continued Remote Learning for majority of students (in-person learning for next level of vulnerable students, such as: Grade K and / or Grade 1; economically disadvantaged / SEL / academic students in need)

Phase 3: Full Hybrid Learning for all students (In-person and remote learning via hybrid schedule) This option would include full remote learning for those students who are unable to attend in person.

Phase 4: Full in-Person learning (full student return with some restrictions within DESE guidelines).

The district will assess health conditions prior to moving forward into each phase. This approach puts safety as a top priority. Fully remote learning will include synchronous teaching and learning using a regular school day schedule. Attendance will be taken and regular letter grades will be given. There will be opportunities for in-person meetings of staff and small groups of children.

The School Committee will receive the survey data on August 10. They will vote on their choice of return to school option on August 11 at 6:30 p.m.

School Committee members discussed the district's suggestion that students return to school using a phased opening, which would begin with remote learning only.

The School Committee invited community participants taking part in this Zoom School Committee meeting to offer comments. Several community members expressed their satisfaction with the four-phased plan, while others had some concerns about students not going back to school initially.

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

There was no report from the Capital Budget Committee.

4.5 Warrant Committee

There was no report from the Warrant Committee.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

There was no report from the Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee.

4.7 Community Path Committee

There was no report from the Community Path Committee.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

There was no report from the Financial Task Force II

4.9 Rink Working Group

There was no report from the Rink Working Group.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda – Vote on 2020-21 School Calendar

Superintendent Phelan explained the School Committee votes each year of the district calendar for the upcoming school year. For the 2020-21 school year, the calendar had to be revised due to the impact of COVID-19. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education proposed changing the number of school days from 180 to 170 for the upcoming school year. This allows teachers extra days to prepare for whatever type of learning will take place in each district. The first day of school for students in 2020 will be September 16. The staff will start on September 1 and will have training until September 15. Information on the start dates for Kindergarten will be sent out in the upcoming weeks.

On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** 5-0-1 on a roll call vote to approve the draft II of the 2020-21 school calendar reducing the number of school days from 180 to 170 per the agreement with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

Chair Andrea Prestwich briefly left the meeting.

5.4 Approval of Minutes

- July 2, 2020 Finance Subcommittee
- July 9, 2020 SC/Joint Meeting with FTFII and Capital Budget Committee
- July 16, 2020 Finance Subcommittee
- July 16, 2020 School Committee

Due to the late hour, the School Committee agreed to vote on the minutes at the next meeting.

6. **ADJOURN**

*On a motion offered by Evelyn Gomez and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary