

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
DECEMBER 8, 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 Return to Open Session

The School Committee returned from Executive Session at 6:30 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

None

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

Major Business item 3.1 will move to the end of major business.

1.4 Chair's Report

Beth Rumley, Director of Nursing will be leading any testing program that takes place in the district. The district will also be looking into hiring an additional nurse to help with testing as well and other nursing tasks related to the pandemic.

The first steps regarding a pilot testing program are feasibility of testing teachers and high school students. Beth Rumley and Andrea Prestwich met with representatives from two companies to work through the logistics.

Andrea Prestwich shared some questions and comments from the School Committee Public Questions and Feedback Google form.

1. *Why are elementary students following a hybrid schedule this week when everyone is learning remotely for the week?* The district will do their best in the future to pivot to a remote schedule if necessary.

2. *The district should be prudent when allowing students to return to school during a COVID surge. They should not be forced into a dangerous decision.*
3. *Has the School Committee or Superintendent asked the Financial Task Force to run a model with all the positions outlined in the Superintendent's presentation? It is a good point but it will be challenging to find the right amount for an override without overburdening taxpayers.*

1.5 Superintendent's Report

There was no report from the Superintendent.

2. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Winter Athletics (Vote)

Following guidelines from MIAA and DESE, the district successfully held a fall athletics season for high school athletes. MIAA recently announced their approval for a winter season to include boys and girl's basketball, boys and girl's ice hockey and alpine skiing. Athletic Director Jim Davis is on leave until February. Matt Ruane, guidance counselor at Belmont High School has been named Interim Athletic Director in addition to continuing his duties as guidance counselor. Matt will be sending information on the sports sign-ups to families soon. Three Physical Education teachers were appointed as Lead Teachers for the elementary and middle school levels.

Winter season practice will begin on December 14 and games will begin on January 4 and must begin no later than January 11th, per Middlesex League. All events will take place with health and safety modifications in place. All games will be on weekends with no spectators allowed. Middlesex League is having discussions on whether to revise the no spectator rule. Matt Ruane and Rosa Innis, METCO Director are working on arranging transportation for Boston students so they can take part in winter athletics. Wrestling, Indoor Track and Cheerleading will be moved to a different sports season.

The School Committee voted at their Finance Subcommittee meeting earlier in the day to keep the same athletic fee they approved for fall sports. The fee is \$325 for the first sport and \$220 for the second. Fee waivers are available and the amount will be determined using the previously set scale. The pay system will open on December 9.

Due to High School being in remote instruction, the School Committee is required to vote to approve participation in the MIAA season. The high school field house will be in use for regular instruction and extra cleaning procedures will be implemented, as well as furnishing breakdown to move between instructional and athletic activities. The district has been able to support additional student activities - jazz ensemble, math team, student government, yearbook, gay-straight alliance, african-american club, class advisors, and others - in predominantly remote participation forms. Committee members discussed the importance of extracurricular activities.

Superintendent Phelan discussed the procedures should an athlete present as symptomatic or positive with COVID-19. The School Committee mask policy was discussed, and the Nursing Department's current requirements on mask types which require 2-ply and preclude gators. Athletics participants are all subject to the district mask policy.

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Amy Checkoway , it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to approve winter sports program with the mitigations and protocols put in place by the MIAA and Middlesex League.

3.2 FY22 Budget Update

The budget will become a major discussion in the community due to the decision on an override. The School Department was asked by the Town Administration to provide a contingent budget for FY22 as well as a non-contingent budget. The contingent budget will be presented to the community at a public forum on December 9. The Warrant Committee is hosting this meeting and they will lay out the context on how the override will support the schools and town. The presentation on December 9 will be enhanced over the course of December.

Belmont has seen an increase in enrollment over the last several years. Enrollment was down this year due to COVID but is expected to go back up next year. Belmont is still at the lower end of the list for per pupil expenditures and is working with a funding deficit as it relates to state averages.

The district goals pre-COVID were working towards reconfiguration to a 7-12 grade level high school. New positions will be needed to support that re-configuration and to keep class sizes down. School Committee members discussed the fact that \$400,000 for enrollment-driven positions will not really be an adequate override amount for the school district. School Committee members discussed whether a higher number should be requested.

3.3 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee Update

Superintendent Phelan welcomed Bill Lovallo, Chair of the Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee (BMHSBC). Bill provided a brief update with photos on the progress of the high school building project.

The project is on time and on budget. Workers have been coming and keeping the project safe during the pandemic crisis. Mr. Lovallo explained that with every building project things happen that are not anticipated and can delay the job. There are always contingencies for delays so the project has not been held up. The BMHSBC has been working with Daedalus, Skanska and Perkins + Will to keep the project on schedule and ready for students in September 2021. School Committee members expressed their appreciation for the work on the new building and the fact it is on time and on budget.

Meetings have been taking place to budget the furniture for the new building and PV arrays will be purchased for the building sometime in 2023. Bill Lovallo described the building as a community effort and a community building, with a high level of sustainability, achieving net zero energy and a flexible design plan supporting academic innovation.

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

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met earlier in the day to discuss the winter athletic fees and what the impact would be on students and the district. They talked about testing and what might be needed in terms of coordination and support.

4.2 Policy Subcommittee

There was no report from the Policy 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

The Warrant Committee met on December 1 to review the first quarter financials for the Town and Schools.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee will meet on December 11.

4.7 Community Path

The Community Path Committee will meet on December 10.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II took part in a joint meeting with the Select Board, School Committee and Warrant Committee to discuss the override. There will be another meeting in two weeks.

4.9 Rink Working Group

There was no report from the Rink Working Group.

4.10 EDCO

EDCO will meet on December 11.

4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee

The Long Term Capital Planning Committee will meet on December 9.

4.12 Equity Subcommittee

The Equity Subcommittee will meet on December 21.

4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee

There was no report from the Structural Change Impact Committee.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda – none

5.2 Personnel Items – none

5.3 Business Items – none

5.4 Approval of Minutes

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Evelyn Gomez, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the following minutes:

- ***October 6, 2020 Finance Subcommittee minutes***
- ***October 27, 2020 Finance Subcommittee minutes***
- ***November 5, 2020 Finance Subcommittee minutes***
- ***November 10, 2020 Finance Subcommittee minutes***
- ***November 17, 2020 Finance Subcommittee minutes***

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Evelyn Gomez, it was VOTED 5-0-1 on a roll call vote to approve the following minutes:

- ***October 6, 2020 School Committee minutes***
- ***October 27, 2020 School Committee minutes***
- ***November 10, 2020 School Committee minutes***
- ***November 17, 2020 School Committee minutes***

On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Catherine Bowen, it was VOTED 4-0-1 on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of School Committee minutes of November 6, 2020.

The School Committee agreed to meet for a retreat on December 15, 2020.

4. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Catherine Bowen and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary