

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
JULY 16, 2020

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

Absent: Ms. Tara Donner

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to Order

Andrea Prestwich called the meeting to order at 3:00 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

There was no report from the School Committee Chair.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan deferred his Superintendent's Update explaining most of the work being done at this time is related to the opening of schools, which will be discussed under the second item of major business.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 School Committee Subcommittee Assignments

Andrea Prestwich presented each subcommittee and asked School Committee members to volunteer to serve on the committees. The School Committee discussed the possibility of forming a Diversity Subcommittee, based on the recent resolution focus and Transportation Subcommittee, based on the interest in multimodal supports. They agreed to schedule a Policy Subcommittee meeting for further discussion on those topics.

Subcommittee Assignments

Finance	Policy	Curriculum	BMHS-BC	Warrant	Capital	EDCO	Community Path	FTF II	SC IT
Evelyn	Tara	Tara	Kate	Mike	Amy	Amy	Kate	Kate (1/2019)	Tara
Amy	Andrea	Andrea	John					John	Andrea
Mike	Mike C	Evelyn						Tony	
Andrea	Evelyn	Kate							
John	John	Janice							
Tony									

3.2 Update on School Opening – September 2020

Superintendent Phelan and Assistant Superintendent Darias shared a PowerPoint presentation explaining the draft plans for opening schools in September 2020.

The plans have been created using guidance from the State issued on June 25th. Feedback from the recent community survey is also being taken into account. The district administrators have been meeting with different groups from the Town (Fire, Police, Health, Facilities) along with staff members, the Belmont Education Association, and Parent-Teacher organization presidents. Discussions have taken place on remote learning as well as how to implement in person education. The district is required to submit feasibility reports for July 31 based on the State Guidelines, and a hybrid and remote plan for August 10. All three options are anticipated to be available to implement at any time during the 2020-21 school year.

The plan continues to prioritize district goals, address equity in educational platforms, and recognize high needs categories may necessitate additional measures. Additional funds are anticipated from the State but criteria is not yet known. A recommended initial model will be put forward in August.

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias provided an overview of the survey June results. More than 2000 comments were included in the open response portion of the survey.

Assistant Superintendent Darias created eight categories (see table) of topics that respondents seemed most concerned about.

Health and safety protocols	Facilities and cleaning	Social & emotional well-being	Synchronous and non-screen learning
Academics and feedback on learning	Technology	Schedule	Communication

Ms. Darias explained the comments related to hybrid options. Most respondents prefer an alternating week schedule with alternating day schedule being the second choice and half day schedule the last.

School Committee members asked clarifying questions on the models and timeline for families to plan accordingly. Decisions will continue to be made based on the most current health data. Policies may need to be updated to align with, Local, State and Federal regulations. Additional modulars were not deemed feasible, differentiation on approaches by school level is one model of the 7 being considered. Some course changes are being considered to accommodate the shifting models, as well as acceleration of project-based learning. Conversations with peer districts with respect to models, such as Cambridge, Somerville, Winchester, Burlington, Arlington, Lexington, and Watertown are ongoing. Asst. Supt. Darias is leading the work on SEL, including foundational work with Rachel Polliner, as well as collaboration with Belmont Wellness Coalition. A central communication “hub” will be part of the new year; the beginnings of which are on the central administration website. The members recognized the great value in personal, face-to-face interactions for learning.

The District is waiting for additional guidelines from the State and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which will include a new option for 3-foot physical distanced full opening, as measured “chair-to-chair”. A feasibility study was completed by principals and the Leadership Council and the results are due to DESE by July 31. The District is currently creating plans for hybrid and remote options for school.

3.3 Superintendent’s Evaluation Follow-up

Superintendent Phelan presented his self-evaluation at a previous meeting. The School Committee reviewed the self-evaluation and provided evaluations to Chair Andrea Prestwich. Chair Prestwich read a compilation of evaluation remarks to the School Committee along with the grades. Comments included recognition of the superintendent’s high level of dedication and commitment to students, staff, and community. Comments on a different budget format, leadership feedback, and communications were made. Marks were proficient and exemplary, noting that proficient embodies a high standard of conduct in the evaluation system.

School Committee members noted this has been a difficult year with the pandemic, remote learning, fiscal crisis, in addition to the anticipated work of the year. As well, the nationwide

crisis around race necessitates a response in preparing the curriculum for upcoming school year. The School Committee thanked Superintendent Phelan for his leadership during this time.

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

Meeting scheduled for this yesterday, was rescheduled to August. The work around COVID challenges have been helpful to workers on site. Design Team meetings have been taking place with educators.

4.7 Community Path Committee

Community Path Project Committee will meet tonight. They will present their rough 25 percent plans and will be taking community input.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

Financial Task Force II will meet July 17. They will propose a final dollar amount recommendation and date for the override at the next Select Board meeting.

4.9 Rink Working Group

Rink Working Group will schedule a meeting later this month. They are waiting for additional information from the bidder. Once they have more information, they will provide that information to the School Committee.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda

Vote on acceptance of donations: Exhibits A-1, A-2, A-3

On a motion offered by Catherine Bowen and seconded by Evelyn Garcia, it was VOTED 5-0-1 to accept the bus fees being donated back to the School Department.

5.2 Personnel Items - None

5.3 Business Items – None

5.4 Approval of Minutes

June 29, 2020 School Committee Minutes

On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED 5-0-1 on a roll call vote to approve the minutes of June 29, 2020 and June 9,

6. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Evelyn Gomez and seconded by Amy Checkoway, it was VOTED 5-0-1 on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary