

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 29, 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 6:31 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

Lisa: Community needs to have a way to allow their voices to be heard.

Chair Prestwich acknowledged communication needs to be improved.

Idith Kisin: concerns about the decrease in curriculum with hybrid. Would like to know exactly what the decrease will be. Can students be provided work to do over the breaks? Why were there no summer math assignments?

Mariola Magovcevic: recently sent a letter to the district with signatures from families who will keep their children remote once hybrid begins. Can we have a forum on what will happen to children who stay remote?

Jeff Hansell: offered help with communications.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

Chair Prestwich acknowledged and thanked the community for the emails the Committee has received and relayed that each is read and responded to in as timely a manner as schedules permit.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Deferred to major business.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 School Opening Update

Superintendent Phelan thanked families for the emails stating remote learning has been working for most. Tonight's discussion will be about Chenery and High School Hybrid Plans.

Health:

Thanks to Beth Rumley, Director of Nursing, Wes Chin, and Director of Belmont Health Department who have been collaborating in this work over the summer. Beth is also collaborating with other districts in the area to provide best practices.

The front of the Belmont Public Schools website has a tab for health protocols. We want to be sure people understand we want to take care of mitigation strategies first. When school opens in hybrid, it will be important to practice good health and wellness principles. Everyone should receive the flu vaccine as required by the state. Personal protection equipment (PPE) has been supplied to staff, specialists, custodians, and nurses. Plans for student interaction have been created, reviewed and approved by the Belmont Health Department. Training has been shared with staff, coaches, and afterschool staff.

Families are the first line of defense and everyone should know that COVID-19 symptoms are listed on the website. School nurses will have well clinics and waiting rooms for students who get sick during the day.

The current of close contact is someone you are close to for fifteen minutes. There are mechanisms in place for communication of positive COVID-19 cases. The School Department communicated a positive case earlier in the day. There are metrics in place for school closures in the event someone tests positive.

Committee members asked clarifying questions on the health protocols. The district did not have the capacity to review daily attestations each morning prior to the start of the day, rather expects families to review daily and submit a form and take action if their student does not pass the review. Supt. Phelan found that many peer districts were similarly approaching this procedure. Member Checkoway suggested a video to remind and instruct families on the protocol. Member Bowen asked if it would be feasible to send a daily e-mail reminder of the symptom check-list. Superintendent Phelan said he would take these suggestions to the related teams. Supt. Phelan expressed the importance of social emotional wellbeing of the younger students having in-person instruction sooner than previously planned.

Special Education:

On September 16, in-person school started for preschool students, students who are high needs, and English Language Learners. Some students have stayed all day and we have provided lunch and support all day. DESE does have criteria in phase two for students with moderate special needs.

During phase two in hybrid, elementary special education services will be a combination of in person services when they are in school and remotely on their "at-home" days. During Phase Two, Phase One students will be in school all day on the days that their cohort peers are in school.

At the middle school and high school level, students in Phase Two will receive some services in-person and support with remote learning during the school day, 1–2 days each week. They will receive their other services remotely on the other days.

Food Service:

All students who receive free/reduced meal benefits as of September 24 as well as families who signed up through the survey are receiving meal deliveries.

3.2 Presentation of High School & Middle School Hybrid Model (Vote)

Principal Karla Koza provided some highlights of the Chenery Hybrid model. Chenery students will receive 115 minutes of instructional time per class per week – versus 185 minutes in the current remote model. There will be daily morning check-ins and a WIN Block. Art, PE, Health, Engineering are “on-team” and all “encore” courses are synchronous and remote. Cohorts will be split according to the alphabet. Students will stay within their cohorts to take outside breaks. Everyone will have assigned seating. Students and staff are required to wear masks, and practice physical distancing. Approximately 874 people will be in the building during each cohort day.

Principal Koza addressed questions, including maximizing instructional time, reducing safety risks, and reducing logistical costs by enabling a lunch dismissal. Cohorting will be done with transportation, equity, and student needs in mind. Increased passing time was achieved.

Committee members noted some of the district restraints, for example Wellesley with a similar sized student body has 120 more FTEs. Acknowledging that each shift was disruptive, committee members expressed appreciation for the work and development of the model. Principal Koza expressed that that much will be learned as they make their way through the plan in practice.

Principal Isaac Taylor provided an overview of the high school Hybrid Model. Students will receive 95 minutes of synchronous instructional time per class per week. Homeroom and X-Block will take place each day. Lunch will be at home. Principal Taylor provided examples of a schedule for two students. Masks will be worn and mask breaks will only take place outside. Windows will be open and there will be frequent hand washing and sanitizing. There will be one way, socially distanced traffic through the hallways, supervised study halls and no locker use. Students will be at desks with seating charts. There will be no group work.

Committee members discussed the model, asking about the ability to shift to it by October 22nd, the ability to add instructional time, to provide more resources, and ensure an iterative process while the model is underway. Member Bowen expressed support for using Green Seal or LEED certified products to add to the air quality support for students. Dir. Dorrance will review. There is a great desire to see more instructional time for students in the High School model. Supt. Phelan indicated that this basis allowed room for growth. He acknowledged that the staffing and health metrics will have to support opening on the 22nd, as per plans. Committee members acknowledged community support to return to some form of in-person learning at the upper grade levels. A close evaluation of instructional practices and a support for after-school activities is ongoing.

3.3 Testing Update

Superintendent Phelan expressed his appreciation to Dr. Jeffreys for her report on COVID-19 surveillance testing at the last School Committee meeting. Superintendent Phelan shared the

information with Health Department Director Wes Chin. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of implementing a COVID-19 testing program. The goal is to reduce infections and support in-person learning. Chair Prestwich relayed that positivity infection rates should be based on the number of people who test positive, rather than include those who test negative. In ideal circumstances, everyone would be able to be tested daily, and the infection would be completely reduced. Committee members saw the program as valuable but expressed questions about how to sustain it financially. They supported continuing to work with Dr. Jeffreys. Member Donner relayed that testing 10% of students and staff would have a 94% probability of missing a case. Chair Prestwich concurred. Fundraising, health insurance, and voluntary payments, as well as potential grant funds were discussed. Having all staff and students tested prior to going back to school in a hybrid model would provide some piece of mind. The goal of testing is to find positive cases and have the person begin quarantining immediately. Testing everyone daily is beyond the capability of the district. If occasional testing takes place, it would have to be done using parent volunteers. There are also questions regarding privacy. Equity is another issue that would need to be addressed. Several adjacent towns are engaged in testing programs - Needham, Wellesley, Somerville, Arlington, Newton, Watertown, among others.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met today, received an update on expenditures, athletic fees, and reviewed the budget calendar.

4.2 Policy and Procedure Subcommittee

The Policy and Procedure Subcommittee will have another meeting soon.

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 Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

4.5 Warrant Committee

The Warrant Committee is meeting on September 30 to discuss the development process for the FY22 budget, update on school re-opening, Kindergarten fees.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee met September 23 to review the FFE process. They will have meetings with Directors and staff to discuss furniture for the new building. The high school side will be ready for students in September 2021. The committee is working on the planning for a virtual furniture fair.

4.7 Community Path Committee

There was no report from the Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II will meet on October 2.

4.9 Rink Working Group

The Rink Working Group will meet on October 8.

4.10 EDCO

School Committee member Amy Checkoway will serve on the transition committee for the EDCO Interim Director. The committee will meet October 5 to discuss the options.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - None

5.2 Minutes

August 25, 2020 School Committee Minutes
September 2, 2020 School Committee Minutes
September 8, 2020 School Committee Minutes
September 21, 2020 Policy Subcommittee Minutes
September 22, 2020 School Committee Minutes

The School Committee agreed to vote on the minutes at the October 5 Finance Subcommittee meeting.

6. **ADJOURN**

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

Respectfully Submitted by _____
Catherine Bowen, Secretary