

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
April 13, 2021

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

1. ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

1.1 Return to Open Session

Chair Prestwich called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm and welcomed the two new School Committee members, Meghan Moriarty and Jamal Saeh.

A. REQUIRED MATTERS

1.2 Nomination/Election of Chair

Ms. Prestwich explained this portion of the meeting was the Organizational Meeting where a new Chair and Secretary are elected. The policy of electing a School Committee Chair and Secretary was read. She asked for a motion to vote on the election of School Committee Chair.

Jamal Saeh put forth a motion for Amy Checkoway to be Chair. Ms Checkoway accepted the nomination. The motion was seconded by Mike Crowley.

Catherine Bowen put herself forward for the position of Chair. Mike Crowley offered a motion for Ms. Bowen as Chair. The motion was seconded by Amy Checkoway.

A vote in favor of Amy Checkoway as Chair was taken: Crowley aye, Moriarty aye, Checkoway aye, Prestwich aye. Bowen affirmed aye.

1.3 Nomination/Election of Secretary

Ms. Checkoway asked for a motion to vote on the election of School Committee Secretary.

Kate Bowen nominated Jamal Saeh for Secretary. Mr. Saeh declined the nomination.

Mike Crowley nominated Meghan Moriarty for Secretary. Ms. Moriarty accepted the nomination.

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously to elect Meghan Moriarty as School Committee Secretary.

2. OPENING BUSINESS

2.1 Call to Order

Committee Chair Amy Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:51 p.m.

2.2 Citizen's Concerns

Elshad Kasumov – Asked if pooled testing will be expanded at different grade levels even with High School participation numbers being low. He also expressed concern with unmasked students during snack time and indoor lunch at the elementary schools.

Joanna Tzouvelis – Reminded Superintendent Phelan and Principal Taylor of the promised live event for the class of 2020. A parent committee was formed and funds are available from last year. She would like their support and approval for the event.

Parul Khemka – Inquired about the frequency and quantity of testing, as she is nervous about spring break and families returning after possible travel.

Shea Brams – Commended the district for bringing both student cohorts together at the High School. For the benefit of the new School Committee members, Miss Brams inquired when the Chenery Solar MOU would be signed.

Fiona Rodriguez Clark – Grade 7 student council member voiced support to move Chenery solar project forward.

Evelyn Gomez – Welcomed new School Committee members and ask for an update on the contract vendor for equity work

2.3 Superintendent's Report

Elementary full in-person learning began last week. On Monday, April 12 High School cohorts were collapsed and all students began in-person four mornings per week. Mr. Phelan reported that staff are excited to have students in-person and is pleased that remote students have dedicated staff and technology support. These changes act as a bridge for a good school beginning in September.

3. MAJOR BUSINESS

3.1 Discussion on Policy 8006/8007 Updates

The School Committee Policy Subcommittee reviewed the proposed edits to policy 8006 and 8007 in a previous meeting. Policy 8006 proposed adding a Vice-Chair to the Committee in an effort to help delegate responsibilities of the Chair to other School Committee members in support of SC goals for 2020-21. Members Crowley and Prestwich discussed the need for adding a Vice Chairperson position to the SC based on their experience last year. Member Crowley suggested this is a common position on School Committees in other towns. Member Bowen explained this change would bring the policy more in line with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) recommendations.

Policy 8007 update was intended to align the policy language with that from the MASC and to provide more detail about the timing of the organizational meeting. Member Crowley explained that the proposed language clarifies that the committee will revisit the committee positions annually, regardless of the timing of the Town election and suggests it is more aligned with language in the Town Bylaws. After some discussion about the clarity of the language of the proposed amendment, Member Bowen agreed with Ms. Moriarty to work on rewriting it.

School Committee members continued to discuss the reasons for change with some members in favor of the policy changes. Member Moriarty cautioned that adding the extra position may not benefit the Committee, seeing there was initially no interest in the recently voted Secretary position and that the duties of the proposed Vice Chair position were not provided and would be in conflict with the duties of the Secretary as still written in policy 8006. Member Bowen explained some of the language in the MGL regarding secretaries. She found that most committees had the duty of Vice Chair to act in lieu of the Chair as needed. The effective

start time of the proposed Vice Chair position was also questioned. In response to the discussion, the Committee agreed to continue the policy updates for a later time.

Chair Checkoway took comments and questions from the community.

Scott Strafford – Supported Ms. Moriarty’s hesitance to add the new Vice Chair position to the Committee and to adhere to first reading procedures with a vote at the next meeting.

3.2 Last Day of school

The school calendar traditionally includes five (5) snow days built in to the last day of school calculation. To date, two (2) have been used. The anticipated last day of school for the 2020-2021 school year is June 16, 2021. If school is canceled for some reason, the additional day(s) would be added on to the end of the year.

On a motion offered by Kate Bowen and seconded by Andrea Prestwich, the School Committee moved, unanimously, to have June 16, 2021 as the last day of school for the 2020-2021 school year.

3.3 Update on Return to In-Person Learning Working Group

Superintendent Phelan gave an overview of the current grade level learning modes along with district and grade 9-12 enrollment data by instruction models (*SC Public Document: Return to In Person Learning Working Group Presentation April 13, 2021*). Elementary grades K-4 are currently in full in-person learning. Beginning April 15, grade 5 will be collapsing cohorts, while still using the hybrid schedule and will move to full in-person learning on April 28, keeping consistency with teachers and teams. Grade 5 students who chose remote learning will see remote-only classes for the core curriculum and physical education, along with live streaming for other encore classes. Grades 6-8 will begin full in-person learning with lunch on April 28. The remote only learners will live stream core curriculum classes and most encore classes. Belmont High School collapsed cohorts this week while still adhering to the hybrid schedule. They will begin full-in person learning on April 29 and remote only families will be live streaming.

Superintendent Phelan also offered a review of the Return to In-Person Learning Working Group, stating they have met for eight (8) weeks and will be winding down for this school year. The group was first proposed in January 2021, and their first meeting occurred February 2021, with the goal of planning for students to return to full in-person learning by April 29. Looking ahead to a full return for 2021-2022, the working group will reconvene to discuss complex issues like seasonal strategies, and remote learning and contingency plans if conditions change. Mr. Phelan thanked moderators Drew Echelson and Michelle Rinehart for their work along with Sarah Caputo for her group communication work. Kate Bowen requested the School Department get an update from the Wes Chin about mask wearing given the increasing case numbers and questioned whether staff and students should require double masking.

Chair Checkoway took questions from the community.

Mariola Magovecivic- Asked why the group is being dismantled and if they could be used for testing.

Elshad Kasumov – Pointed out elementary children need to be protected during indoor snack.

3.4 FY22 Budget

With no town override, Superintendent Phelan presented a non-contingent budget for FY22 focused on prioritizing increased enrollment, class sizes; equity, access and social emotional learning; district configuration and visioning work; and increase in mandated services (SPED, EL) (*SC Public Document: FY22 Non-Contingent Budget Framework April 13, 2021*).

The School Department will begin the work to reduce the budget by \$2.07 million, while they await guidelines on federal funding use. Summer programming and possibly remote only services for medically cleared individuals may be DESE required items

The School Administration offered a timeline which began on April 8 with the Leadership Council team for a reduction list review of all FY21 COVID positions and will end with the June 2 Town Meeting budget presentation. By April 30, round one of reduction letters will be distributed to staff and round two reductions by May 15. The Council also met to discuss the process for reduction of co-curricular, extra-curricular, and texts, supplies and materials. The following were presented as possible staff reductions and their rationale:

Elementary: Low enrollment classes 2 (grade 1) and 2 (Kindergarten); aware of potential enrollment bumps.

Middle School: 0.6 Math specialist (Vacant); 0.4 Foreign Language (Attrition); 1.0 Music/Band (Remove Co-Teaching); 1.0 Grade 5 (Reduction). The cuts reduce support of middle school students.

High School: 1 Librarian (Reduction); 0.6 English (Reduction of tutoring class), 0.4 Spanish (Reduction of differentiation); 1.0 Community Service (Attrition).

Committee members discussed the presentation and asked questions regarding federal and state funding and requested more details and other reduction options. Kate Bowen suggested this may be an opportunity to take a look at the community service program at the HS and update it

Chair Checkoway took comments and questions from the community.

Danielle Lemack – Asked questions as to the survey and whether Federal Funding could be used for learning loss.

Geeff Lubien – Strongly discouraged one-time funds for recurring expenses (teachers).

Heather Rubeski- Asked if the district could sell Burbank modular units to pay for classroom teachers.

Tim Flood- Appreciated the presentation numbers to help inform increases/decreases.

Charlie Conroy – Felt the proposed priorities were not supported by proposed cuts.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

Chair Checkoway indicated this is the time of year when liaison and subcommittee representatives will be discussed.

4.1 Finance Subcommittee - Joint meeting with Warrant Education subcommittee on April 13 to review non-contingent budget and discussed MOU on Solar Panels

4.2 Policy Subcommittee - Met to discuss policy changes March 30.

4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee - No report

4.4 Capital Budget Committee meeting – Upcoming meeting to discuss capital needs at Town

Meeting.

4.5 Warrant Committee – Met April 7 to discuss additional tennis court at Winn Brook to support BHS tennis team.

4.6 Belmont High School Building Committee- Voted second FFE and will meet tomorrow morning

4.7 Community Path- Reviewed letters of concern and support for the project/

4.8 Financial Task Force II- Met April 12 to review recommendations to all Town departments.

4.9 Rink Working Group – Perkins and Will gave outline of the site plan/

4.10 EDCO- Board meeting April 15

4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee- Discussed enlarging the committee to encompass a longer term and increase membership.

4.12 Equity Subcommittee - No report

4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee- Conducted compensation review

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Consent Agenda

5.2 Personnel Items

5.3 Business Items

5.4 Approval of Minutes

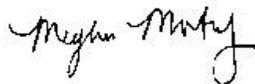
- School Committee minutes of February 23, 2021
- School Committee minutes of March 9, 2021
- Finance Subcommittee Minutes of February 23, 2021
- Finance Subcommittee Minutes of March 23 2021

On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Andrea Prestwich the School Committee approve the School Committee minutes of February 23, 2021 and March 9, 2021 and the Finance Subcommittee Minutes of February 23, 2021 and March 23 2021 (4-0-2). (Moriarty and Saeh abstaining)

4. ADJOURNED

On a motion offered by Andrea Prestwich and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Meghan Moriarty