

# BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA

DATE: October 20, 2021  
TIME: 10:40 AM

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair  
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary  
Ms. Kate Bowen  
Mr. Michael Crowley  
Ms. Andrea Prestwich  
Mr. Jamal Saeh  
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

Committee Chair Amy Checkoway called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm

### 1.2 Citizens' Concerns

*These meeting minutes may include statements by members of the public. Although the School Committee tries to reproduce these statements faithfully, the School Committee does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed in these statements and cannot guarantee that the information contained in these statements is accurate.*

*Danielle Lamack - Referred to the latest MCAS scores. Requested to see a plan for how the district will address academic loss especially among older students.*

### 1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

The conversation with State Delegates –Senator Brownsberger, Representative Rogers will take place from 8:30- 9 pm. Chair Checkoway will pause any discussion at that time in order to host the discussion.

### 1.4 Chair's Report

Chairperson Checkoway encouraged others to register for the FBE Apple Run on October 3, reminded families to register students for routine COVID safety checks/test and stay programs, and encouraged vaccination for all eligible students.

Chair Checkoway read questions/comments from the community from the Google form:

*Helen Golding commented that additional bike racks are needed at the high school.*

*Chi-Ting Huang requested that the lights on the high school grounds be turned down or off during the evening/nighttime.*

*Joseph Miletich commented on the extracurricular vaccine mandate that is on the agenda.*

Amy presented key takeaways from the recent School Committee retreat before turning to the agenda for the evening.

## 1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan spoke about the new high school building opening and Back to School Nights at the elementary schools. He updated the community on student vaccination rates, which range from 72% to 83% in grades 7 through 12. All adults working in the schools, members of the BEA, and volunteers are required to be vaccinated or have a medical/religious exemption.

Update on the testing program: The district is prioritizing the test and stay program then routine pool testing at the elementary schools where students are not eligible for vaccinations before the secondary level. Consent forms are required beforehand for students to take part in these testing programs.

MCAS scores: Superintendent Phelan presented the recent MCAS scores for the district along with scores from the state and from the previous year, 2019. He will be meeting with building-based and district teams to determine how to utilize ESSER funds to help support students. For example, math coaches at the elementary and high schools.

Member Saeh requested demographic data for both the Challenger math program and MCAS, asked for possible reasoning why greater numbers of elementary students have consent forms for testing compared with high school students, and whether the SC can do anything to help move the CIC work forward faster.

## **2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### 2.1 No unfinished business

## **3. MAJOR BUSINESS**

### 3.1 Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Introduction

Superintendent Phelan introduced the new DEI Director, Chon'tel Washington who will be a member of the district leadership cabinet.

### 3.2 Library Partnership 2021-2022 School Year

Corinne McCue Olmstead, a Library Trustee and Peter Struzziero, Library Director reported on the collaborations with the schools/district including librarians visits to elementary school classrooms, institutional cards for teachers and their classes, early release day activities for Chenery students, apps for easy access to e-books for all students in the district, and supplemental materials for classes. Goals for the coming year include increased outreach to the district, a 5th grade library card initiative, and being present at back to school nights.

### 3.3 Face Covering Policy (vote)

Kate Bowen, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee provided an overview of the process for drafting the current proposal and changes to the existing policy including a substantial change to the outdoor mask policy, making masks unnecessary outdoors.

**On a motion by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to approve the amended face covering policy #5005-A.**

#### 3.4 BHS Handbook/Attendance Policy (vote)

Principal Isaac Taylor provided a brief overview of the proposed changes to the high school attendance policy and reasoning behind the changes including the ability to quickly address absences taking a team approach, and the removal of repetitive language and complicated policy such as the N policy. A guiding statement was added to stay in line with other districts along with details about communication, daily attendance emails, and other ways of following up about attendance. The goal is to balance student accountability with State attendance requirements because “we want kids in school.”

No comments were made by the public.

**On a motion by Kate Bowen and seconded by Meg Moriarty the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to approve the policy changes to the attendance policy in the high school handbook.**

#### 3.5 Extracurricular Vaccine Mandate (vote)

Amy Checkoway notes that the language of the proposed mandate has been reviewed by legal counsel and the suggested revisions are being presented in tonight’s draft, which was also taken up in a joint Policy/SC meeting.

8:30 pm Chair Checkoway breaks to welcome State Delegates –Senator Brownsberger and Representative Rogers for a public discussion about (1) state aid; (2) state role re: student vaccination mandate; and (3) state legislation related to an integrated cultural studies curriculum in schools..

9:00 pm The SC resumes the Extracurricular Vaccine Mandate discussion. With this mandate they hope to incentivize vaccinations for more students to help ensure the health and safety of all students and staff.

Public Comments:

*J.F.Kelley, Jin Xu, and Marie McCue - voice dissent against the vaccine mandate*

*Jeff Liberty, Heather Rubeski - voice support for the proposed mandate*

The SC and Superintendent clarify that ‘rostered activities’ refer to all activities that collect fees, not after school care programs at this point. Fully vaccinated refers to students who are two weeks out from the second shot. For all age eligible students, this means 8 weeks after the mandate takes effect. All students who participate in rostered activities and are not age eligible will be required to participate in the pool testing program.

The SC agrees to put this policy in front of the Policy Subcommittee and legal counsel once more before taking a vote.

#### 3.6 SC Assignments for Town Committees and EDCO (vote)

Chair Checkoway designated Jamal Saeh to the Warrant Committee and Meg Moriarty to the Capital Budget Committee.

**On a motion by Mike Crowley and seconded by Andrea Prestwich the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Kate Bowen to the Belmont Middle/High School Building Committee.**

**On a motion by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Meg Moriarty to the Structural Change Impact Group.**

**On a motion by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Andrea Prestwich, the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Kate Bowen to the Community Path Project.**

**On a motion by Meg Moriarty and seconded by Amy Checkoway, the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Kate Bowen to the High School Traffic Committee.**

**On a motion by Kate Bowen and seconded by Mike Crowley, the SC voted unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Meg Moriarty to the Rink Finance working group.**

Checkoway offers to continue to serve on the EDCO Board.

On a motion by Mike Crowley, and seconded by Kate Bowen the SC votes unanimously (6-0-0) to appoint Amy Checkoway to serve on the EDCO Board.

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

- 4.1 Finance Subcommittee
- 4.2 Policy Subcommittee
- 4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee
- 4.4 Capital Budget Committee
- 4.5 Warrant Committee
- 4.6 Belmont High School Building Committee
- 4.7 Community Path
- 4.8 Financial Task Force II
- 4.9 Rink Working Group
- 4.10 EDCO
- 4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee
- 4.12 Equity Subcommittee
- 4.13 Structural Change Impact Committee

#### **5. OTHER BUSINESS**

Approval of Minutes

**On a motion by Amy Checkoway, and seconded by Jamal Saeh, the SC voted (5-0-1) to approve the School Committee Minutes of August 10, 2021.**

Member Bowen abstained.

#### **6. ADJOURN**

**On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

  
Meghan Moriarty, Secretary