

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**REMOTE MEETING**  
**FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

**RECEIVED**  
**TOWN CLERK**  
**BELMONT, MA**

DATE: March 9, 2022  
TIME: 3:01 PM

Present: Ms. Amy Checkoway, Chair - Joined at 8:34 pm  
Ms. Meghan Moriarty, Secretary  
Ms. Kate Bowen - Joined at 7:04 pm  
Mr. Mike Crowley  
Mr. Ralph Jones  
Mr. Jamal Saeh  
Mr. John Phelan, Superintendent  
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Finance, Business and Operations  
  
Ms. Kendall Higgins, Student Advisor

**1. OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to Order

Acting Committee Chair Meghan Moriarty called the meeting to order at 6:30 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.*

*Patrick Whittemore – Encouraged SC to give parents choice to mask or not and asked SC and BoH, to have an emergency meeting to vote on masking mandate.*

*Antonio Molle – Asked SC to unmask students and staff, re-negotiate MOA for school opening 2021-2022 and repeal extracurricular vaccine mandate.*

*David Cain – Asked to drop mask mandates for businesses as was done in Washington DC.*

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

1.4 Chair's Report

Acting Chair Moriarty called attention to Belmont students and youth and asked all to emulate their ability to work together and attain their goals as shown in the cheerleading and hockey teams, Belmont Trivia team, and middle school band.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan offered accolades to the various PTOs, boosters, and staff for bringing programming to the schools to the benefit of Belmont students including: Wellington Elementary, grade 2 had in-school enrichment with Acton Discover Museum: Physical Changes of Matter while Kindergarteners learned about Force and Motion; Butler Elementary literacy week occurred January 31 – February 4; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students received donations of dictionaries from Lexington Elks; High School Marauders of the Week in January

included Meghan Kornber, Sami Awad, Sofia and Lisa Bili Rossi; Middle School Community Service Club held annual food drive and collected 3000 items for the Belmont Food Pantry.

**2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- School Committee minutes of January 18, 2022
- School Committee joint with Select Board minutes of December 6, 2021

**On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Ralph Jones, it was VOTED unanimously, on a roll call vote (4-0-0) to accept the School Committee minutes of January 18, 2022 with edits.**

**On a motion offered by Mike Crowley and seconded by Ralph Jones, it was VOTED unanimously, on a roll call vote (4-0-0) to accept the School Committee joint with Select Board minutes of December 6, 2021.**

**4. MAJOR BUSINESS**

**4.1 Long-Term Capital Planning Committee Bylaw Discussion**

Chris Doyle of the Long-Term Capital Planning Committee, Jenny Fallon and Ann Marie Mahoney of the Capital Building Committee offered a review of the proposed amendment to Town Bylaws that would replace the Capital Budget Committee with the "Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee". The change was put forth to provide longer term visibility on capital needs and funding requirements for the Town as a whole. Ms. Doyle gave a comparison of committee composition along with the review process. The draft bylaws of the committee description was presented. The LTCPC is looking to increase participation from various departments across town with the committee.

Member Jones inquired if the Library Board of Trustees would be represented. Ms. Doyle indicated they would be represented by the Select Board. The committee is trying to strike a balance between the size of the group and its representation. Member Bowen suggested changing the word "cost" in Bylaw section C to "analyses" and asked if the committee would fall under Town master plan.

*Aaron Pikilingis- Visioning 21 Implementation Committee member asked LTCPC to present to their group as they are working on a master plan refresh as well.*

Superintendent Phelan thanked committee members Fallon and Mahoney for their work on the committee and for their school perspective planning.

Acting Chair Moriarty indicated the SC would wait to vote when the entire SC would be present per Ms. Doyle's suggestion.

**4.2 Health Update**

Superintendent Phelan offered a health update, which incorporated recent state-wide changes. (SC Document: Health%20Update\_SC\_Meeting2\_15\_22\_3) The mask mandate topic will be discussed at the Board of Health meeting March 7, and the SC will revisit/vote the topic at their March 8 meeting. DESE reported the lifting of state-wide mask mandate will be effective Monday, February 28, 2022. SC and administration will meet with Belmont Education Association to discuss the MOA that includes mask wearing. A policy subcommittee meeting is being planned. Mr. Phelan indicated the district is preparing for the February break return to school with proactive testing measures. Antigen test kits will be distributed this week for use ideally on February 27 for the return to school and the following weeks.

Acting Chair Moriarty took questions and comments from the community.

*Brian Brady – Asked what would occur if students come to school on February 28 without masks and if getting approval from BEA on the MOA is a condition of mask removal?*

*Jane MacKinnon- Indicated Belmont has high vaccination and booster rates, and she would like mask mandate to be lifted. Ms. MacKinnon felt the masks do not help the kids on IEPs.*

*Patrick Whittemore - Asked what specific actions the SD will take if kids show up without masks. Superintendent Phelan indicated no one is looking for conflicts and offered to speak one on one with Mr. Whittemore. Mr. Saeh informed the community the SC is contractually obligated to negotiate with BEA and is a process that is being honored as a SC responsibility.*

*Lisa Pargoli - Asked whether anyone has considered the correlation of kids' mental health needs (YRBS) and masks causing trouble with oxygen to the brain.*

#### 4.3 FY23 Budget Planning (Community Forum)

Superintendent Phelan indicated there would be two documents presented for the FY23 Budget Planning agenda item. The first document will review the process of creating the FY23 Budget Book (*SC Document: FY23\_Budget\_Process\_slides\_2\_15\_22*) and the second is the FY23 Draft 1 Budget Presentation (*SC Document: FY23\_Budget\_Book\_Slides\_02\_15\_22*). Mr. Phelan thanked Director of Finance DiCologero and his Assistant Gioia Rizzo for their work in with the budget books.

The presentation for the budget process covered budget book highlights (executive summary, budgets by program and charts and updated power point slides) and traditional content of the budget book (budget pages by program, general fund, federal grants, state grants, revolving and other, previous years comparisons, line item details, and updated SPED OOD plan). Additional content will include charts with one-time COVID grants, expenses by DESE and district category views, OOD tuition expense history, and OOD enrollment. A later release in the budget cycle will focus on a school-based view. Superintendent Phelan informed the SC and community that the Budget Book will be available tomorrow. The process will continue with adjustments to the budget, resulting in Draft 2. This second draft will be presented to Town Meeting.

Next, Superintendent Phelan reviewed the same Budget Draft 1 presentation as last week. He recapped the General Fund, roll forward amount of \$68,930,222, and the working assumptions of the budget in the following categories:

- Positions
- Salaries and Wages
- Restoration of FY22 Reductions-non-salary
- Texts, Materials, supplies & Equipment
- Special Education and Fringe

Per School Committee recommendation, Superintendent Phelan included a student-based context review. Drivers for this review are overall enrollment and that of increasing Special Education and English Language Learner subgroups. The presentation continued with a review of the budget cost, and overview of FTEs. The FY23 General Fund FTE count is 549.75, down from the FY22 General Fund FTE count. In summary, the district is planning to hire/retain approximately 13 added positions. 6.85 FTE fractional positions are due to student needs and 6.20 FTE are added to address enrollment/class sizes, academic and SEL recovery. Chapter 70 funds are a possible funding source, along with FY22 Medicaid reimbursements. Mr. Phelan reported that Town Administrator Garvin supports using the Chapter 70 funding. The total FY23 School Department General Fund Budget is **\$69,437,622** and will be brought forward to the joint SB, WC SC meeting.

Member Crowley indicated he is still concerned about social worker/guidance positions going away in two years.

Member Moriarty commented on the stories behind the numbers and having information on how numbers impact students and learning would be helpful for future budget decisions.

Acting Chair Moriarty took questions and comments from the community.

*Bill Anderson - Asked if the budget book is available to everyone and whether increased enrollment at the high school is just migration within system. Mr. Anderson also commented on the increase in overall budget amount and the staff exchange number.*

The meeting was turned back to Chair Checkoway at 8:34 pm.

#### 4.4 Transportation Policy Update

Policy Subcommittee chair Kate Bowen presented the full SC with draft edits to Policy 7006 Student Transportation Services. Updates include aligning the transportation policy with student health and wellness policy and changing the name to include “and other transportation”.

Chair Checkoway took comments from SC members.

Member Jones suggested shortening the paragraph unless the language is directed by MASS DOT. Member Bowen indicated some wording is to recognize partner programs for collaboration and funding.

### 5. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES – as needed

Chair Checkoway encouraged community to attend the Joint Select Board, School Committee, and Warrant Committee meeting tomorrow.

Rink Design Group - OPM was approved by the Select Board last week. Three architects submitted proposals.

BMHSBC- Meeting February 16. Town Administrator, Superintendent Phelan and SB met to discuss ARPA funding to meet some COVID expenses. ARPA will not cover costs for West of Harris Field. The School Department offered to use some federal funds to support building committee project. Community input forum scheduled for March 7.

Policy Subcommittee met to consider transportation and homework policies. They are meeting with a MASC rep to learn more about hosting the policies with MASC on February 28.

### 6. OTHER BUSINESS

#### 6.1 Consent Agenda

- Vote on Acceptance of Surplus Items CMS copier and SAB desk

**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 accept the items listed as surplus.**

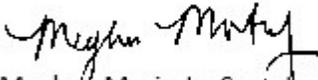
#### 6.2 Personnel Items - None

#### 6.3 Business Items - None

### 7. ADJOURN

On a motion offered by Ralph Jones and seconded by Kate Bowen, it was VOTED unanimously (6-0-0) on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

  
Meghan Moriarty, Secretary