

BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 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 6:47 p.m.

1.2 Citizens' Concerns

Andrea Prestwich invited members of the public to offer comments and ask questions under Citizen's Concerns.

Elshad, Wellington parent: When will there be a forum for remote families? Is the fact that Waltham was recently moved into the COVID red zone being monitored? Superintendent Phelan responded he and Wesley Chin, Belmont Health Director speak each day and he is monitoring the situation in Waltham. Superintendent Phelan will work with PTA/PTO Presidents to organize a forum for remote parents.

Casey: One of the elementary schools is getting ten minutes less time than the other three – would like this to be addressed.

1.3 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.4 Chair's Report

In the interest of time, the School Committee Chair did not provide a report.

1.5 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Phelan's report will be included as part of Major Business.

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

2.1 Creation of School Committee Equity Subcommittee (Vote)

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias read the charge of the new School Committee Equity Subcommittee below.

Monitor and evaluate the extent to which the Belmont Public Schools are ensuring equity for all students, staff, and community members. Recommend changes in policy and procedures to the School Committee and charge the Superintendent with strategically building upon the ongoing equity work underway in the district to further equity for all students.

School Committee members stated the importance of this subcommittee. Superintendent Phelan expressed his appreciation for establishing this subcommittee in a formal manner. The School district has been working on equity with Social Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive Teaching for several years.

*On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Evelyn Gomez, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the establishment of the School Committee Equity Subcommittee with the aforementioned charge.*

2.2 Update in transition to hybrid

Superintendent Phelan explained the move towards a hybrid model is a bridge from health and safety to social emotional learning. Phase 2 began October 8 for grades K – 4. Preschool and students with high needs and moderate needs have been in session since September 16th. Classrooms are set up and are socially distanced. Personal protection equipment (PPE) was distributed, hand sanitizer and cleaning products are available and in use. Thanks to custodians and educators for this work.

The elementary hybrid schedule has time where all students who are in-person in both cohorts and remote only students are together virtually each day. Remote only students will virtually participate in classroom discussion during morning academic block. The School Committee reviewed the elementary hybrid model schedule.

Asst. Supt. Darias shared that families who chose hybrid and would like to switch to remote should let their principal know, and likewise if they would opt to reverse their preference. All requests received by the second Monday of the month will be implemented the first Monday of the next month.

She relayed that the District Technology Integration Specialists and Director of Technology are continuing to work on any issues related to technology and remote learning, both on “back of the house” and “front of the house” issues. They are working to address content management with YouTube, based on parent feedback. They are working to get equipment for remote only students for virtual participation, such as webcams and audio equipment.

Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias shared the new calendar for parent conferences. The information will be posted to the district website and sign-ups will be the same as past years. She shared the protocols for families to self-assess. If a student does not feel well, the student/family would complete the symptom checker Google Form and submit it to the school nurse. If there is a positive COVID case in the schools, the Board of Health would notify the Director of Nursing, who would then notify the Superintendent. The Superintendent would notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, school community and staff via email.

Superintendent Phelan updated the School Committee on the facilities status and previous BALA report. BALA engineers provided the Air Exchange Assessment data on October 2. The district

administrators and Health and Safety Committee members reviewed it. The classroom data was then shared with educators. The goal of the testing was to confirm each room reached the air exchange guideline published by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The benchmark they use is 4 to 6 ACH (air changes per hour), with a goal of 5 ACH per room. Air purifiers have been placed in the rooms identified in the BALA report. Additional air purifiers were purchased and placed in classrooms. School Committee members expressed an interest in having the BALA report be clearer and to be informed of the recommendations for facilities improvements. Supt. Phelan suggested having BALA come to a Committee meeting to clarify the reports and their calculations of outdoor exchange. Supt. Phelan indicated that there may need to be discussion later about what will happen once the weather becomes very cold and windows need to be open.

3.3 High School Hybrid Model (Vote)

Belmont High School Principal Isaac Taylor updated the School Committee on the hybrid schedule. When organizing the model, the high school educators prioritized the complete Program of Studies and the integrity of the curriculum. Like all hybrid models, there is a decrease in instructional time. There are pros and cons with both hybrid and remote models. In hybrid students are able to interact with peers and teachers despite the decrease in instructional time. School Committee members voiced their concerns over the hybrid model but most agreed it was the best course of action given the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) expects in-person learning to begin. Alex Fick, member of the Belmont High School Student Council shared results from a survey he prepared for other high school students. The majority of students who responded want to prioritize more synchronous learning. Some School Committee members expressed concerns about the hybrid model due to the decrease in instructional time. Member Gomez expressed a desire to see a different approach to in-person learning time, having core classes meet remotely. Members of the community also expressed concern about the decrease in instructional time. Supt. Phelan relayed that an outside group is helping with complex tables to address new hires, cohorting, and remote only course scheduling; terms 3 and 4 could function differently. School Committee members agreed to vote on the hybrid model.

*On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Andrea Prestwich , it was **VOTED 5-1-0** on a roll call vote to approve the current plan to move the high school to hybrid by October 22, 2020, provided that efforts are made to improve the model, especially with regards to instructional time, going forward.*

3.4 Policy Revisions

Face Masks Policy #5005A

The School Committee Policy on facemasks will be added to the list of policies on the Belmont Public Schools website.

Catherine Bowen read Policy #5005A – Face Masks. The School Committee discussed the policy. The Nursing Department is in the process of updating procedures for mask breaks on their website. Families would refer to the website for detailed procedures.

*On a motion offered by Amy Checkoway and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED unanimously** to approve the Mask Policy #5005A as amended.*

Harassment Policy #0002

There have been changes to the Title IX laws. Assistant Superintendent Darias worked with the Belmont Public Schools counsel to create the new Title IX procedures. The new Harassment policy will replace Policy 0002 and the Title IX Procedure Policy will be listed as 0002P/Title IX.

*On a motion offered by Tara Donner and seconded by Michael Crowley, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to approve the Harassment Policy #0002.*

4. SUBCOMMITTEE/LIAISON UPDATES (as needed)

4.1 Finance Subcommittee

The Finance Subcommittee met earlier to discuss moving the budget forward for FY22. They were also joined for an hour by Warrant Committee Education Subcommittee members to discuss the FY20 closeout and FY21 budget.

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

The Warrant Committee will meet on October 14 to review the Town and Schools FY20 closeout reports.

4.6 Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee

The Belmont Middle and High School Building Committee plan to move their meetings to Fridays.

4.7 Community Path Committee

There was no report from the Community Path Committee.

4.8 Financial Task Force II

The Financial Task Force II plans a community forum on October 29 related to the creation of two budgets. One budget will be contingent on an override and the other without. The Collins Center will be used as an outside party facilitator. The Town Administrator and Select Board are organizing the event.

4.9 Rink Working Group

The Rink Working Group met October 8. They will meet again on October 15. The School Committee will add this issue to a future meeting.

4.10 EDCO

There was no report from EDCO.

4.11 Long Term Capital Planning Committee

The Long Term Capital Planning Committee had their first organizational meeting and discussed how the committee will proceed.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 Consent Agenda - none

5.2 Minutes - none

6. **ADJOURN**

*On a motion offered by Michael Crowley and seconded by Tara Donner, it was **VOTED** unanimously on a roll call vote to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 p.m.*

Respectfully Submitted by



Catherine Bowen, Secretary