

Chenery PTO Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

6:30pm

Attendance: Approx. 15

Minutes taken by Sunyoung Hong-Osborn

1) PTO BUSINESS

- **Welcome:** Ms. Bulfoni and Ms. Ganguly, co-presidents
- **Budget:** Ms. Bulfoni (co-president) went through P&L Budget items on behalf of Mr. Garg (Treasurer) who was absent.
 - Annual Appeal: We are near reaching our goal (about 94%) thanks to all parents contributed to Annual Appeal. Some donations have not yet been included so only 78% of the budgeted income is shown in the attached P&L Sheet. It will enable us to do what is promised to school despite increased cost of things this year. Special thanks to all volunteers for their hard work and support.
 - 5th Grade Pasta Dinner: Very successful generating 100% of budgeted income although not all expenses are accounted for.
 - After School Clubs: Also doing well. With only one session, we are already at about 35% of the budgeted income.
 - Expenses for Lower and Upper School Enrichments and Author Series
- **PT Conference Snack:** Ms. Bulfoni stated that snack was provided for teachers during this year's P-T conference and it was very much appreciated.
- **Parents Nights Out:** Ms. Bulfoni and Ms. Ganguly, our co-presidents, are planning a fun, parent-only event for January 2019. It will be held at Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Cushing Square of Belmont, MA, for January. Venue was kindly provided by the owner. More details will follow soon.
- **Last Meeting Minute Approval:** Last meeting minute dated October 11th, 2018 approved

2) SOLAR PANELS AT CHENERY - UPDATE: Phillip Thayer

Mr. Thayer (a 25-year Belmont Resident and a Town Meeting Member) presented a "Proposal for Free Solar on Chenery". It is the same presentation given to Planning Board and provides update and current status of this project to date. Highlights of update are as follows:

- **Background:** After a huge success of *Belmont Goes Solar* program, the solar installer (Direct Energy Solar) offered to install a free array on any public building in Town of Belmont. Committee comprised of various parties evaluated all available buildings around the town of Belmont. Chenery's south-facing metal roof over gym rose to the leading contender in terms visibility, production value, educational value, viability, and etc. as follows:
 - It has a remaining service life of 50 years
 - It is a good size for the proposed array size and cost (generating about 13KW)
 - Metal has low reflectance rate than other materials. Solar panels are designed to absorb glare.
 - Trees surrounding the roof are ideally situated to block the abutter's view of the panels, yet students can easily see the panels as they come into the school.
 - This will provide a great opportunity for kids to learn about the science and environmental benefits of solar energy. Any students in Belmont can download data of solar energy coming from these panels. Teachers can plan a curriculum using these data. There might be a information kiosk.
 - Positive supports (no objections) from the abutting properties

- **Proposed Design:** The proposed array might be a little bigger (one more row of panels) than initially proposed due to State Incentive Program if eligible. Support for array will be designed to avoid penetration through roof. Conduits and cables will be placed on ballast. The installer will provide 20-year warranty. Panels come with the production guarantee.

- **Benefits:** Installer will bear all cost of installation (no cost for Chenery or the town). All electricity produced will be consumed on the premises, reducing the operational cost of Chenery and the town and further saving taxpayer's money. This will not cause increase in the existing insurance policy. Panels will protect the roof underneath, prolonging the life of the metal roof.

- **Current Status:** We still need to go through approval from various parties, a full site review with Planning Board, and then a final approval from School Committee. Once all complete, construction will be very quick (over long weekend). Mr. Thayer will continue to work hard to make this happen (and he is cautiously optimistic!) as it is free and a revenue generating equipment for the town.

- **Q&A:**
 - How can we help? Mr. Thayer would like a sense of support and come back for a formal VOTE. Principal thanked Mr. Thayer for his enthusiasm and persistency that he showed for this project. He noted that he is happy about educational benefit from it and that 8th grade science teachers are all excited about this project. He also believes that the south-facing metal roof is a perfect location as it can be easily seen from the playground and sidewalk, but no view to the abutters. Mr. Thayer agreed of its educational value

and said that they will include “educational package” in RFP (i.e. kiosks, PC connection, etc.).

Ms. Bulfoni asked Mr. Thayer to send us relevant information by mid-January, if possible, so Chenery PTO can inform the Chenery community of valuable information on the subject before our next meeting in February 2019.

- What is the projected service life of panels? Mr. Thayer stated that he has seen panels installed 30-40 years ago still producing. Efficiency of the panels typically degrade 1/2 to 1% per year. Other than there are no moving parts or potential cost. Except inverters will require periodic replacement. We plan to ask for an extended warranty for the inverters.
- Please explain Green Work at BHS? Mr. Thayer said that it is a tremendous success story. Zero energy design was suggested Building Committee early on. Building Committee selected a designer with relevant experience and successfully demonstrated that it is feasible. It is expected to save the school about \$5M. The idea is that every available roof surface to be built at BHS will have solar panels and geothermal. Combination of that plus purchase of energy credit qualify us *Energy Efficiency Class D* building. Unfortunately, we do not have conditions to make to Class A, B, or C, but Class D is still a good result. Once complete, BHS will be the first zero energy building funded by MSBA in the state. It will be a great educational experience and saving for operational cost.

3) RECENTS GRAFFITI INCIDENT UPDATE: Principal Michael McAllister

Principal McAllister gave us an update on the recent graffiti incident as follows:

- **Background:** Although not the first graffiti ever, the graffiti found in November was the first blatant, racist, and homophobic one that he has ever seen in his 20-year tenure in Belmont. As soon as a student reported graffiti in a boys’ bathroom on November 19, 2018 the school closed the subject bathroom and cleaned up the graffiti immediately. An investigation was performed but it is not easy to find out how long it existed, who did it, or even how many students have been affected by it. The school leadership decided to focus on 1) addressing this incident to the whole school and 2) preventing the future incidents.
- **Measures Taken:** There was a to students in which the students watched a relevant video. Students had discussion session with their teachers in their team day groups (group smaller than their homerooms). Students wrote their thoughts on index cards. Their responses were incredibly thoughtful, thought-provoking, and sincere. Some comments were posted on the wall and mirror where the subject graffiti was found. The remaining 1,300 cards were given back to the teachers so they can use in any form they like (use it as educational purpose, post them on the doors, do some events with kids, etc.). More index cards are posted on doors, mirrors, or walls throughout the school.

School had a meeting with Gay Straight Alliance group for Social Justice. They also decided to focus on lessons and had a great discussion session for an hour. They said that they knew that it existed but did not expect it to exist here in Belmont.

- **What Now?** Some of the newspaper articles stated, “Does this fix it?” The answer is NO. We cannot just do one thing. The question now is what do we move forward to?

No other graffiti were reported (only already existing ones), but the accident made students look at graffiti with new eyes, they feel empowered and the school is trying to promote this.

We may face it again, but we take a stand and make sure for kids to know that we are not going to let that happen again.

This was one of those rare moments in which every single student was really involved in a positive way.

The plan now is to be vigilant and reinforce (with the help of trusting adults) the same message to kids.

4) IMPACT OF 7-12 YES VOTE ON CHENERY UPDATE: Principal Michael McAllister

- **Impact of 7-12 YES Vote to Chenery:** The challenge for Chenery is from now till then as the numbers in enrollment are high (the current 3rd grade has 405 students, the highest mark.) Resettlement number will likely be close to 350-360 students. Chenery was built with the max capacity of 1,100, but currently has 1,453 students. With a straight-line projection, Chenery will have about 1,600 students before the new 7-12 buildings are constructed. Then the number of students at Chenery will go down.

At the moment there are spaces that are shared (the new 5th grade team is in the 6th grade hallway, there are 8th graders using the 2nd floor lockers because there are not enough lockers on the 3rd floor and 5th and 6th graders sharing lockers.).

- **Q&A:**
 - **Does the State help out on more teachers/equipment/etc?:** No. You can always apply for it, but MSBA does not prioritize short-term, small additions like this. A big project like BHS took 12 years before selected.
There is a general positive feedback about modular classrooms. It feels like an extension of the school. Mr. McAllister agreed. He said that the hallways at first may give a clinical look but the classrooms are decorated in a way to give a warm, positive experiences. Adding modularity is one of the considerations, but nothing is decided. There are spaces available for additional modularity, if we choose to do so. The current modular is on the former tennis courts. The current modular will be kept until new 7-12 buildings are completed.
Principal McAllister feels that the real crunch right now is with cafeteria, auditorium, and gymnasium. Hence, art, PE, and music carry the real burden of over-population. We have more sections/blocks. Some sections have 4 classes and the gym has only 3

teaching stations. Auditorium is shared with the band, orchestra, and chorus. Chorus has 160 students in 7th grade and the auditorium is not built for the 160 kids. We cannot run 2 sections of 80 kids, which would be ideal as we do not have any extra periods.

5) SPECIAL GUEST: Senator William Brownsberger

Senator Brownsberger paid a visit and provided shared his experiences and thoughts on some of the legislative issues that he is working on:

- **Belmont, Politics, & Foundation Budget**

Serving for 9 years as a selectman, he constantly negotiated between the town and the schools advocating more resources for schools.

The Massachusetts Foundation Budget is a model setting an adequate spending level for a school district. It is based on numeric formula based on various factors like the number of students, teacher/staff salary, region, special needs, etc. Then the second layer of the process involves 1) how much of the Foundation Budget that the state is going to pay and 2) how is it going to be distributed between communities. Belmont is located in the golden space neighbored by other similar communities like Newton, Cambridge, Lexington, etc., but there are parts of the state much less prosperous and need help. The state wanted to make sure to bring up these communities to average.

Educational reform happened in 1993-94. They did a lot of the reform in 2006, but soon after that a recession hit. Their 5-year plan to bring every communities up to that level floundered. We have pretty much gotten there now, but the Foundation Budget system had some weaknesses. Some communities get more and others get less (like Watertown) due to the system's mathematical glitch.

Now we start recognizing that the Foundation Budget is not enough to fund the schools. The "Foundation Budget Review Commission" was then formed and made a number of recommendations to increase the budget to allow funds for special needs, healthcare cost, and etc. Implementing those recommendations are expensive and we have not found a way to accomplish that yet. Everyone was hoping that the tax bill that was going to be on the ballot (millionaire's tax) would help, but it did not make it to the ballot. Next year, they will discuss how much to to increase the Foundation Budget.

Criminal Justice Reform: Another main focus for Senator Brownsberger is Criminal Justice Reform. The bill was passed to lift people instead of locking them up and help them getting on their feet again. Very important part of this conversation is disrupting the "school to prison" pipeline. Some aspects to consider are: 1) keeping people in school system and 2) use of discipline (not over-using suspension and minimizing the use of police officers. Suspension, particularly for high school students, are a problem as it will leave the students with nothing to do and with no supervision).

- **LGTBQ:** The bill was passed in November. Sen Brownsberger believes that it sends a great message and is proud of the state of Massachusetts.

- **Q&A:**

- What legislative agenda do you see rising to the top, Climate mitigation, climate adaption, Carbon Pricing, or Green New Deal proposal?: Senator Brownsberger said that he sees the carbon fees/taxation rising to the top. The idea of Carbon fee is that we should charge people a fee if we want them to make decisions to reduce generating greenhouse gases. Economists generally agree with the idea and hope that it turns out to work. Challenge for a single state is what happens if your neighboring states have different policies and doing something else? There is lots of interest in having a Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) that applies to transportation. RGGI is constructed to impose carbon fees to electrical power sector across the U.S. Carbon fee on the largest carbon emission generators, buildings, electric power plants, and transportation. We should also be able to make more rapid progress in the transportation sector. Changes made in any sector has benefits in quality of life, reducing congestion, reducing local air pollution.
- Back to Criminal Justice, what happened with Collateral Consequences?: In the criminal justice world, a lot of what happens is entirely within the control of the judges and prosecutors. They have necessary and extremely wide range of discretion. Collateral consequences, registry consequences, and various fees and fines to people are legislators' fault. Those are something that we, the legislators, really control. I follow a bill called Act to Decriminalize poverty. People got in trouble and made small mistakes, and it follows them around for the rest of their lives. One of the best things that we did is that we can seal things in Massachusetts, but they are not sealed at all at federal finger print system. You will end up having a trouble getting a job in other states when you get fingerprinted. We are trying to protect your record at a national level.

Another thing that Senator Brownsberger is working on is cutting fees, particularly the post-jail time fees (conviction, probation, or parole fees). You have to pay \$80 for a privilege of consideration of parole. We reduced the fees, and prevented fee go back to the parole department, so there is much less incentive to collecting it.

Mr. Thayer congratulate and appreciated Senator Brownsberger's work on Bus 73 line.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.