



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
APRIL 9, 2013**

**LOCATION:** Swift River Elementary School Library  
**TIME:** 6:30 pm

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair (present); Mr. Eric Weiss, Vice Chair (present); Ms. Clare Popowich, Secretary (present); Ms. Beverly Phaneuf, Member (present); Mr. Richard Fritsch, Member (present)

**ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools (present); Mr. Brian Cameron, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning (present); Mr. Edward Dunn, Contracted School Business Manager (present); Mr. Robert Lachance, Director of Buildings and Grounds (present); Ms. Kristi Guzzo, Director of Student Support Services (present); Mr. Scott Karen, Director of Technology (present); Mr. Ben Admussen, Data Administrator (present); Mr. Robert Marchewka, Dean of Students/Athletic Director (present); Ms. Phyllis DuComb, Nurse Leader (present); Ms. Christine Vigneux, BHS Principal (present); Mr. Thomas Ruscio, JBMS Principal (present); Dr. Jose Irizarry, Interim CHCS Principal (present); Mr. Robert Kuhn, SRE Principal (present); Ms. Sandra Bremer, CSS Principal (present)

**BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:**  
(not present)

**VISITORS:**

Louise Levy, BHS Science Teacher (present); Katelyn Clark, BHS (present), and Matthew Davidsohn, JBMS (present), New England Outdoor Writers Association Youth Writing Contest Winners; Tom Fuller, New England Outdoor Writers Association (present); Ms. Brenda Aldrich, Selectmen Liaison to School Committee (present); Mr. Greg Scibelli, Sentinel Reporter (present)  
*(See attached sign-in sheet for additional visitors.)*

**MINUTES**

- I. Call to order  
Dr. Tsoumas called the Regular School Committee meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- II. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Part (4), to discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto. The Committee will return to open session. (Approximately 7:00 pm)

Dr. Tsoumas – yes  
Mr. Weiss - yes  
Ms. Popowich – yes  
Ms. Phaneuf - yes  
Mr. Fritsch – yes

The Committee entered into Executive Session at 6:31 p.m.  
The Committee returned to open session at 7:00 p.m.

## III. Special awards and presentations

Dr. Tsoumas stated that it was her honor to represent the School Committee in recognizing the winners of the New England Outdoor Writers' Association Youth Writers Contest.

## A. New England Outdoor Writers' Association Youth Writers Contest Winners: Katelyn Clark for First Place in the Senior Division, and Matthew Davidsohn for First Place in Massachusetts in the Junior Division

Mr. Fuller, who sits on the Board of Directors of NEOWA and is a renowned writer of books on outdoor life, presented an overview of the origins of this contest and its requirements. He noted that he had approached Belchertown Public Schools with the opportunity for students to participate in this contest, which is the first youth writing session that this organization has sponsored. Mr. Fuller expressed his gratitude to Ms. Levy who coordinated the submissions for the contest. Both Mr. Fuller and Ms. Levy then presented the awards to the contest winners, with the top prizes going to Ms. Clark for the Senior Division, and to Mr. Davidsohn for the Junior Division. In addition, finalists were honored in both divisions: Ruthann Sterling, Devon Gned, Casey Waskiewicz, and Gillian Follett. The following teachers were also recognized for assisting the students in their writing projects: Ms. Cheryl Cummings, Ms. Jennifer Poli, and Ms. Virginia Doucette. In conclusion, Ms. Levy was happy to announce that the Woodland Ecology class was planning to illustrate the winning writing entry of Ms. Clark.

IV. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representatives  
NoneV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda  
None

## VI. Approval of minutes

## A. March 26, 2013

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2013 Regular School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

## VII. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent

## A. Accounts payables warrant signatures

An accounts payables warrant in the amount of \$153,980.86 was presented to Dr. Tsoumas, Ms. Phaneuf, and Mr. Fritsch for their signatures.

## B. Field trip request: JBMS music department trip to New York City, May 1, 2013

Mr. Ruscio and Ms. Amanda Johnson, JBMS music teacher and Choral Director, presented their request for a music department field trip to NYC on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Johnson explained that a maximum of 45 students will be eligible to participate, and registration for this event will be open first to Chorus and Drama students, followed by Band students, and finally to the general JBMS student population depending on availability. The day's itinerary will include lunch at Rockefeller Center and attendance at the matinee performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella" at the Broadway Theater.

Dr. Houle stated that she had reviewed the field trip request and found all the paperwork to be in order according to policy, and she therefore recommends approval by the School Committee of this request.

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the JBMS music department request for a field trip to New York City on May 1, 2013, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

- C. Field trip request: BHS band trip to the University of New Hampshire, April 29, 2013  
Ms. Vigneux, on behalf of Ms. Lyndsay Boysen, BHS Band Director, presented her request for a field trip by the Symphony Band, Grades 11 and 12, to UNH on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The band will be performing, as well as attending the UNH Wind Band Invitational, with six other schools from New England. The students will meet Mr. Dan Bukvich, world renowned composer and percussionist, and attend a clinic by him. Ms. Vigneux stated that this field trip provides an opportunity for the BHS band members to share their talent with other ensembles and benefit from their feedback. Dr. Houle stated that she had reviewed the field trip request and found all the paperwork to be in order according to policy, and she therefore recommends approval by the School Committee of this request.

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the BHS band request for a field trip to the University of New Hampshire on April 29, 2013, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Mr. Weiss extended kudos to the Belchertown Band Boosters (BBB) for their continued support in raising funds for band activities.

- D. Proposal for end of the year activities for preschool and Kindergarten  
Ms. Bremer and Ms. Guzzo presented their proposal for end of the year activities at Cold Spring School. They noted that the requirements under MA regulations are different for PreK and Kindergarten, as opposed to the higher grade levels, and that the School Committee is allowed to establish a separate school year and school day schedule for kindergarten programs. In that regard, Ms. Bremer is requesting that the last day of school for kindergarten students be Friday, June 21, 2013, as all time on learning requirements will have been met by that date. The purpose of this request is to use Monday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, as a day to conduct training of kindergarten staff in the new DIAL 4 kindergarten screening assessment tool. Ms. Guzzo is proposing that the last day for 3-year-old PreK students be June 19<sup>th</sup>, so that June 20<sup>th</sup> can be held as the last day for 4-year-old PreK students with a "Step Up" graduation ceremony planned for their transition to Kindergarten.

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the school ending dates for PreK and Kindergarten for proposed end of year activities, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

- E. School choice seats for the 2013-2014 school year  
Dr. Houle referred to her memorandum, included in the meeting correspondence, which outlines, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, her proposal for available school choice seats for the 2013-2014 school year. After conferring with the Senior Leadership Team, Dr. Houle is recommending approval by the School Committee of school choice openings in Grades 7-11, with a total of 50 seats to be offered. She also requested that the School Committee allow the district to advertise these openings early in order fill them with applicants as soon as possible.

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the school choice seats for the 2013-2014 school year, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

### VIII. Unfinished business

#### A. FY 2014 budget

Dr. Houle presented a tiered budget cut proposal as directed by the School Committee at the last meeting, in order to look at ways to close the gap between the school district's level service budget and the town's recommended budget for the district in FY 2014. Dr. Houle reviewed the line items to be cut at each tier of \$100,000.00, \$200,000.00 and \$300,000.00. In the first and second tiers, personnel and maintenance would be impacted by the budget reductions, as well as in the third tier,

with the addition of the elimination of Freshmen Sports in that tier. The total of the three tiers of budget cuts would still result in a gap of \$21,943.00, with a proposal to increase fees (bus, athletic, parking) to help meet the town's recommended budget for the school district. Dr. Houle referred to an analysis of fees she had done which compared Belchertown to surrounding districts, and she stated that our district fell within those who charge the lowest fees for various items, such as athletics, bus transportation, and parking.

A discussion then ensued among the School Committee members, the Superintendent, and administrators with regard to the proposed cuts in the tiered plan. Mr. Weiss was not in favor of the elimination of Freshmen Sports, since that program is an integral part of life at the high school. He asked Mr. Marchewka for his input regarding that cut, and Mr. Marchewka stated that eliminating Freshmen Sports would limit opportunities for students and negatively impact other programs. He said that not every sport has a freshmen team, but there are currently five teams in that program (boys' soccer, girls' volleyball, boys' baseball, and boys' and girls' basketball). Mr. Weiss asked Mr. Karen how the IT Department would fare without the addition of the new tech position, and Mr. Karen replied that tech support to the schools would definitely slow down, which would be problematic. Dr. Tsoumas asked Mr. Lachance how the cuts would affect the maintenance of the schools, and Mr. Lachance said that while all state and federal requirements will be met, certain planned building projects would have to be postponed at this time. Ms. Guzzo was asked how the elimination of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Team Leader would affect the Student Support Services Department, and she replied that with only two team leaders, it is extremely difficult to remain compliant with state regulations.

Mr. Weiss stated that, at best, he would only support half of the proposed cuts, and that he was not in favor of cuts in the Maintenance Department budget, since postponing repairs and improvements to our buildings will result in higher costs in the future. He also did not support the elimination of the new technician position in the IT Department, as this would negatively impact the progress made in technology in the district and the ever-increasing need to support that technology. Mr. Fritsch expressed his strong feeling that all of the items listed to be cut in this proposal deserve to be funded since they all would involve cutting services to students, teachers and school buildings. Ms. Popowich concurred, stating that these items fall under necessary spending, and by eliminating them now, the eventual cost will be higher with the inevitable problems that will arise. Mr. Fritsch also feels that it is the responsibility of other town departments to carefully look at their budgets for more items that can be eliminated. Dr. Houle added that at this point in time, the only area for revenue is in the town's stabilization fund, and it is her hope that the town will release money from that fund so that the school district does not have to follow through with the proposed budget cuts as presented this evening.

In conclusion, Mr. Weiss stated that it is the responsibility of the School Committee to now scrutinize this tiered budget proposal, as the Superintendent and the Senior Leadership Team have done all that they can with the budget. He feels that it is up to the School Committee, and not the Superintendent, to bring this to the town, as it is the Committee's obligation to represent the school district and advocate for its needs in order to run properly and in the best interest of the students.

The next meeting of the School Committee will be a Joint Meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee to discuss the revised school district's budget proposal. This meeting will take place on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at Swift River Elementary School, C-Side Commons.

- IX. New business  
None

- X. Reports of subcommittees/representative to Collaborative for Educational Services
- A. Collaborative for Educational Services (Ms. Phaneuf)  
None
- B. Curriculum & Instruction (Ms. Phaneuf/Ms. Popowich)  
Mr. Cameron stated that he will be meeting tomorrow with teachers who are piloting the two Math series programs in order to check on the alignment with Common Core standards. He also noted that he will be meeting with Art teachers on Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, and with Physical Education teachers on Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, for the purpose of wrapping up the curriculum writing for the guidelines in those disciplines.
- C. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. Popowich/Ms. Phaneuf)  
Ms. Popowich reported that at a recent meeting of this subcommittee, the go-ahead was given for the "Pinwheels for Peace" project, which is being planned to coincide with World Peace Day and the Belchertown Town Fair. This project, which consists of students from across all grade levels constructing pinwheels to be placed in the ground in various locations, is part of the community outreach program for the anti-bullying initiative. In other business, Ms. Popowich noted that the subcommittee is continuing to look at different programs for school safety and crisis training, as the group has concerns with the strategies taught in the A.L.I.C.E. program (Alert-Lockdown-Inform-Counter-Evacuate) previously proposed.
- D. Jessica's Boundless Playground Committee (Mr. Weiss)  
A meeting of the Playground Committee is scheduled for Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- E. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Popowich/Dr. Tsoumas)  
Dr. Houle asked to schedule a meeting of this subcommittee on Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in order to discuss a proposal for the addition of a PreK 5-day program, as well as a discussion of fees proposed by Ms. Guzzo for non-SPED students. The members agreed to meet at that time at SRE (C-Side Commons).
- F. Property & Transportation (Mr. Weiss/Mr. Fritsch)  
None
- G. Technology Advisory Committee (Mr. Fritsch)  
None
- XI. Correspondence
- A. Agenda: April 9, 2013
- B. Minutes: March 26, 2013
- C. Accounts Payable warrant
- D. Out-of-State Field Trip form and backup: JBMS trip to New York City
- E. Out-of-State Field Trip form and backup: BHS band trip to the University of New Hampshire
- F. Memorandum regarding end of the year schedule for preschool and Kindergarten from Ms. Bremer and Ms. Guzzo
- G. Memorandum regarding school choice seats for the 2013-2014 school year
- H. FY 2014 budget update: cuts at the \$100,000, \$200,000, and \$296,000 levels

- XII. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Part (3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Unit A, Teachers, Unit B, Secretaries, Unit C, Custodians, Unit D, Food Service Workers, and Unit E, Paraprofessionals as conducting said business in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's negotiating position. The Committee will not return to open session.

Dr. Tsoumas – yes

Mr. Weiss - yes

Ms. Popowich – yes

Ms. Phaneuf - yes

Mr. Fritsch – yes

The Committee entered into Executive Session at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Kathryn A. Petersen  
Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee



School Committee members' signatures:

Linda Tsoumas, Linda Tsoumas, Chair

Eric Weiss, Eric Weiss, Vice Chair

Clare Popowich, Clare Popowich, Secretary

Beverly Phaneuf, Beverly Phaneuf, Member

Richard Fritsch, Richard Fritsch, Member

*The mission of the Belchertown Public Schools is to ensure that every student meets with success every day. To that end, we pledge to ensure that we have rigorous, standards-based curriculum; instruction designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in every classroom; and access to the global learning community via state-of-the-art technology in schools that are communities of respect and civility for all.*

**2011-2015 Strategic Plan Goals (adopted by the Belchertown School Committee, 3/1/11):**

- Goal #1: To have guaranteed (standards-based and implemented by all), viable (doable and accessible to every student), seamless K-12 curriculum in every content area.
- Goal #2: To have rigorous (standards-based), relevant (grounded in 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills), differentiated instructional practices with the ability to access the global learning community via technology available to every learner.
- Goal #3: To implement a plan to ensure that our students understand the importance of acceptance, tolerance, and respect supported by all adults in the community.

The Belchertown School Committee conducts its business in open session pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The public is welcome to comment only on items on the agenda for this meeting as noted above. If you wish to address the School Committee regarding an item not on the agenda for this meeting, please contact Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools, at 413.323.0423 or via email at [jhoule@belchertown.org](mailto:jhoule@belchertown.org) to determine the best way to address your concerns.

BELCHERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR SESSION  
SIGN IN SHEET

DATE: 4-9-13

PLS. PRINT NAME BELOW

Katelyn Clark

Laura Clark

Greg Clark

Casey Waskiewicz

Daniel Waskiewicz

Karen Follett

Gillian Follett

Ben Almussen

Brenda A. Alcorn

Kristi A. Guzzo

Phyllis DuComb

S. Bremer

Thomas K. Rusco

Jose H. Izizary

Scott Kuen

ROBERT LACHANCE

Ed Weggel

Matt Quicksilver

Michael Davidson

Mike Knapp

Debra Davidenko

Mona Griffin

Amanda Johnson

Cheryl Cumming

Robert Marchewka

Christina Vignone

Robert Kahn