



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
June 21, 2016**

LOCATION: Swift River Elementary School Library

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Ms. Dawn French, Chair(present); Dr. Thomas Laughner, Vice-Chair (present); Dr. Michael Knapp, Secretary (present); Ms. Myndi Bogdanovich, Member (present); Mr. Richard Fritsch, Member (present)

ADMINISTRATION: Mrs. Karol Coffin, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Brian Cameron, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Student Support Services; Shawn Fortin, Director of Teaching & Learning; Ms. Christine Vigneux, BHS Principal

BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Parker Mas

VISITORS: Senator Eric Lesser; Amanda Saklad, SEPAC President; George Archible, Select Board; Nick O'Connor, Select Board; Brenda Aldrich, Select Board; Gary Brougham, Town Manager; see sign in sheets

Minutes

Pledge of Allegiance

- I. Call to order
Ms. French called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
- II. Public comment regarding items on the agenda
Natalie Nowakowski spoke; First of all, I would like to thank Superintendent Coffin and the School Committee, and especially Mr. Knapp, for encouraging me to come and

Success for Every Student Every Day

Speak before you here today. My name is Natalie Nowakowski, and I am a seventh grade student at Jabish Brook Middle School, who had Ms. Abad as an English teacher and I am truly saddened to hear that she will not be teaching at Jabish next year. As I was informed, due to budgetary reasons, the Belchertown School District needs to let go of one English teacher. Because of seniority, another teacher will take her place. I do not completely understand the seniority process, but I wish that a teacher could be evaluated based on her or his impact on the students and not let go because they were the last one to be hired.

While I do understand the difficult decision that needs to be made, I stand here before you to heard one more time on behalf of myself and the student body at Jabish Brook Middle School. We feel strongly about Ms. Abad and are extremely grateful for all that she has done for us. Ms. Abad has truly made an impact on all of us. She really knows how to persuade us to persist and never give up on our dreams. She has contributed so much of her time to the school. She is a big part of student council and she put in so much of her time to help run the talent show. Ms. Abad also sat around for two and a half hours at every dance just to take pictures for us and our friends. Over the summer Ms. Abad is also helping to run a volleyball camp for girls my age. We are all going to be in much distress when we won't be seeing Ms. Abad's enlightening face every day at school next year. In addition to me offering these remarks, I also would like to give credit to my fellow classmates, especially Kyle Velozo, who took action and created a petition and received over 200 signature in support of Ms. Abad's job.

Ms. Abad truly is a teacher who has gone beyond her duty and she will always have a special place in our hearts.

Therefore, I once again ask you kindly to reconsider and allow Ms. Abad to continue in her current position so that next year's seventh graders will have the joy of being in her class. I kindly thank you for giving me this time to share my thoughts with you.

Scott Beaulier; he spoke at a previous meeting and notes he will continue to attend meetings and voice his concerns. He is a 10-year resident and this is the first year he has heard negative comments regarding the schools. He is concerned about the district direction, main office leadership, and how the school district is spending money. He encourages the School Committee to talk to teachers and ask questions about the schools and what is happening. He notes he is here to support the schools.

III. Special awards and presentations

There were no special awards or presentations.

IV. Approval of minutes (A.I.)

A. June 7, 2016 Regular Session

Motion: Dr. Knapp moved to accept the June 7, 2016 Regular Session minutes

Second: Ms. Bogdanovich

Vote: 4,0,1 (Mr. Fritsch abstained)

V. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent

A. SEPAC report

Ms. Saklad presented the School Committee with the SEPAC report.

Today I would like to talk about how the SEPAC has grown and changed over the course of this past school year. When I took over the post of president last June, I really didn't know what to expect. Michele Klingbeil was elected to the post of secretary and together we have tried to give information and support for the parents within the Special Education community.

We held several meetings throughout the year where members of the school community presented their specialties as they work with our children. For example, members of the following departments presented to the SEPAC: Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy. My own child received speech services for over five years. It was interesting on a personal level to find out about the evaluation process for these specialties.

In addition to these informational nights from these departments, we hosted The Federation for Children with Special needs to present their Basic Rights workshop. This mandated workshop is a general overview of the special education process and provides a good starting point for understanding Special Education and the IEP format. We also had the pleasure of having the Federation back in March to present a workshop of Communication, especially as it pertains to IEP meetings.

Over the past couple of years, there has been an ongoing conversation about inclusion in the classrooms within the Belchertown Public School system. In April, Brian Cameron introduced Deb Lanou, a grant supported consultant, that told the group about her meetings with teachers and other providers to give advice concerning inclusion for all students. We learned about the different inclusion models that are most often used in schools and how Belchertown has increased inclusion

with special education teachers and paraprofessionals.

We have seen a bit of a drop off in attendance this past year, for reasons I cannot quite place. We had increased advertisement in multiple places and a large email list that we target. I know of at least two families with children who are now placed out of district. However, for every family that leaves the district, there are probably others that are new to Special Education in Belchertown, and we are uncertain if families are receiving sufficient information to navigate the sometimes convoluted road map of Special Needs.

One of our goals for the next year will be get information out about the group and how we can help parents connect with other parents and gain access to information about the IEP process. We will engage the leadership of the PTOs, especially the Swift River, Cold Spring and Chestnut Hill Community School groups to work together in creating events. We are also going to reach out to other SEPACs in our local area to combine our resources to offer additional workshops and broaden the community for additional family interaction and learning opportunities.

Thank you for the work that you all do to create the best learning environment for all students; helping students have success every day.

B. BHS School Improvement Plan update

Ms. Vigneux presented the BHS school improvement plan update. With her she brought members of the BHS School Council, students; Hichul Chung, Airani Patel, Ben Stone; community rep Joyce O'Leary; teacher rep, Virginia Bilz, Lori Vaz

- Curriculum, planning, & assessment
 - DDM's, professional development afternoons,
 - guidance seminar DDM
 - data team meetings,
- Teaching all students
 - Preliminary MA core proposal for 2017-18, Legacy group, student surveys
 - Look at bringing up student credits requirement to 116 from 99 for graduation
 - DESE data will now have the information on what students completed the MA core credit requirement of 116 credits.
- Family & community engagement

- Crisis team meet every Thursday
- Lifeline pilot program – information sent to parents March 31, 2016
- Social emotional learning innovation fund grant – completed
- Invited DESE Safe School Program for LGBTQ students to BHS for student and staff training, September 20, 2016
- Professional Culture
 - Reviewed 2007 NEASSC report
 - Next accreditation visit 2019
 - Review of core values, and beliefs by admin, educators, students, parents, and community members

C. District Instructional Team Bridge Plan report

Shawn Fortin presented with Ms. Vigneux, Ben Admussen, and Melissa Williams-Zazzaro. Ms. Williams-Zazzaro spoke to the DDM's for foreign language department. Dr. Fortin spoke to the data, what do we have, need, and/or use. Dr. Laughner commented that getting things in a deeper way and more excited about it is a less passive way of learning.

D. Clarification on staffing

Superintendent Coffin noted she received multiple emails from multiple students advocating for Ms. Abad to be kept on staff. She clarified the position of the district is contract related. Part of that contract is seniority. A position was eliminated at the high school. Superintendent Coffin explained the process of seniority by contract. Grateful to the student that gave their voice and support to Ms. Abad. There is not currently a position for Ms. Abad in the district.

VI. Personnel update

A. Personnel update as of June 21, 2016

Superintendent Coffin noted there was one resignation, Aaron Covert, Foreign Language JBMS, and one lay-off, Kimberly Abad.

VII. Unfinished business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. New business

A. Senator Eric Lesser

Ms. French introduced Senator Lesser to the meeting. Senator Lesser congratulated Ben Stone as the BHS representative. Senator Lesser noted he is proud to represent Belchertown. He advocates on a state level for Chapter 70 money for all his towns. The Senate budget version gives a slight increase of \$13.3 million in education and he is hoping that it holds up. Would like to see local aid touched last but it the budget is still in process.

Senator Lesser spoke to skills training and connecting graduates with local jobs. He spoke to vocational education and education reforms. The July 31st charter bill may not happen before the end of the session and could potentially be a ballot question.

Senator Lesser spoke about the substance abuse and opioid crisis and is eager for feedback. This is one of the most important issues we face today and the schools are on the frontline.

Questions from School Committee;

Dr. Knapp questioned the Chapter 70 and the foundation budget. Senator Lesser noted the foundation budget is under review. He voted to align charter schools and foundation budgets. This is short term and there is a lag in revenue. This would be an incremental increase. Regional schools transfer up to 73%. Don't plan on immediate money, this is long term.

Senator Lesser also spoke to a fair share amendment, with a tiered tax rate. Income over 1 million 4% after the first million. State has to collectively decide to agree to a 2018 referendum vote.

Dr. Laughner noted that more is asked by town as less comes from the state. What advice to broaden sources of income for towns like us?

Senator Lesser noted many of his communities are facing the same problem. They are heavily dependent on property taxes. He noted to diversify tax basis, Mass development, the state school property.

Mr. Fritsch questioned if there is any legislation going to be drafted to model the federal government; you should do an impact study and fund mandates. Senator Lesser noted that unfunded mandates are out of control. They hurt smaller communities. He supports impact assessments and cost assessments. He noted, if something becomes too onerous to please contact him.

Dr. Laughner noted that funding of charter schools is only part of the issue, charter

schools can be selective and can turn away those they don't want. They can market themselves in a better light. Senator Lesser he supports charters having recording requirements, dropout counts and special education. This is not a sustainable system as you can't put everyone in a charter, better to fix public education.

Dr. Fortin noted that when looking for funding, Belchertown does not qualify for many grants. Senator Lesser noted he would set a meeting to discuss this. Dr. Knapp noted that it is a "catch 22", vocational schools can get the money college prep schools like Belchertown cannot. It would be helpful for grants available to schools that aren't vocational.

Senator Lesser also noted that special education needs much but we sometimes neglect the gifted and talented portion of the population.

Question/Comments from visitors;

Ms. Cologne noted she worked for a charter school for 7 years. They are run as a big corporation, many things are not reported and the taxpayers have no control of the funds.

Ms. Saklad asked what we could do about Dyslexia legislature that is stuck. Senator Lesser asked for contact information and the bill information and he would look into it. There are many reasons a bill could get "stuck". There are approximately 6,000 bills every year only a small portion get passed.

Mr. Beaulier commented he would like to see continued support of teachers and less testing, DDM's and charter school funding. Senator Lesser noted there should be progress on the DDM soon.

Ms. O'Leary commented she would like to see education in Belchertown stay top notch.

B. Richard Fritsch

Mr. Fritsch notified the members of his resignation from the School Committee effective immediately.

Ms. French accepted the resignation.

Ms. French replaced Mr. Fritsch in the following;

appointed Dr. Laughner to the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee

appointed Dr. Knapp to the Finance & Budget Subcommittee

Negotiations; Ms. French to Teachers Unit A, Ms. Bogdanovich to food service

It was discussed with the attending members of the Select Board on how to proceed to find a replacement for Mr. Fritsch. The position will be advertised, the Select Board and

the School Committee will select a replacement from those that submit a letter of intent.

Ms. Bogdanovich volunteered to be a signature for the June 29th warrants.

IX. Reports of subcommittees/representatives

A. Curriculum & Instruction (Dr. Knapp/Mr. Fritsch)

Dr. Knapp noted the subcommittee met earlier, data collection was discussed.

B. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Bogdanovich/Dr. Laughner)

Ms. Bogdanovich noted the subcommittee met earlier, discussed were legal changes needed to the drug policies and language changes to some other policies. These will be distributed and looked at for next meeting.

C. Property & Transportation (Ms. Bogdanovich/Ms. French)

The subcommittee has not met.

D. Finance & Budget Subcommittee (Dr. Laughner/Mr. Fritsch)

The subcommittee has not met.

E. Collaborative for Educational Services (Dr. Knapp)

The subcommittee has not met.

F. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. French)

The subcommittee has not met.

G. Technology Advisory Committee (Dr. Laughner)

The subcommittee has not met.

X. Correspondence

A. Agenda, June 21, 2016

B. June 7, 2016, Regular Session Minutes

C. BHS Improvement Plan update

D. District Instructional Team Bridge Plan report

E. Personnel update

- XI. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L. 30A, §21, Part 3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining and individual contracts or litigation as conducting said business in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining or litigation position. The committee will not return to open session.

School Committee voted to enter into executive session at pm. They will not return to open session.

Vote:

Dawn French - yes

Thomas Laughner - yes

Michael Knapp - yes

Myndi Bogdanovich - yes

Respectfully submitted by,

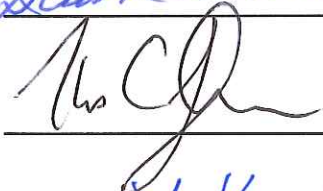
Ramona Griffin

Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signatures:



, Dawn French, Chair

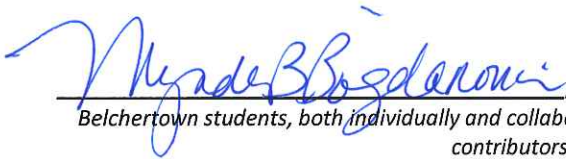


, Thomas Laughner, Vice Chair



, Michael Knapp, Secretary

_____, Richard Fritsch, Member



, Myndi Bogdanovich, Member

Belchertown students, both individually and collaboratively, will be innovative thinkers, problem solvers and unique, creative contributors to their community and the world.

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 the Superintendent of Schools at 413.323.0423 or via email at superintendent@belchertown.org to determine the best way to address your concerns (see [School Committee Policy BEDH](#)).

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