



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
November 12, 2013**

LOCATION: Swift River Elementary School Library
TIME: 7:00 pm

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair (present); Ms. Clare Popowich, Vice-Chair (present); Mr. Richard Fritsch, Secretary (present); Ms. Myndi Bogdanovich, Member (present); Dr. Michael Knapp, 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)

BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Ms. Sienna Nielsen (present)

VISITORS: Mr. Thomas Howell, BHS Teacher; Ms. Christine Holesovsky, BHS Teacher; Mr. Joseph Brozek; Mr. & Mrs. (Margaret) Paul Brozek; Mr. Jim Russell, Republican reporter

MINUTES

- I. Call to order
Dr. Tsoumas called the Regular School Committee meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
At this time, Dr. Houle read a statement regarding the untimely death of Nathan Curran, a BHS senior, who passed away over the weekend as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. She noted that grief counseling has been made available at the high school for those students in need of it. She also extended condolences to the family and a moment of silence was observed in his memory.
- II. Special awards and presentations
 - A. Joseph Brozek: All-National Concert Band participation
Dr. Houle recognized Joseph Brozek, a member of the Class of 2015, for his participation in the All-National Concert Band at the National Association for Music Education Conference, which was held in Memphis, TN in October. She noted that in order to be accepted in All-National ensembles, students' auditions are judged against their peers from across the country, and Joseph, who plays the trumpet, was one of nine participants from Massachusetts, and the first Belchertown student to have been accepted into this prestigious group. Dr. Houle presented Joseph with a certificate of excellence and he expressed his appreciation for this award, and shared some of the highlights of his "remarkable experience".
- III. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representatives
Ms. Nielsen first relayed the comments of many students with regard to how the announcement of Nathan Curran's death was handled at the high school, and she stated

that she and her fellow students were grateful that this was done on a more personal level during first period classes by the individual teachers, rather than through a general announcement.

Ms. Nielsen then reported on the recent change in the flow of traffic for arrival and dismissal at the high school, noting that according to the students, it had run smoothly during the morning, but had been a little confusing in the afternoon with regard to where the students were assembling inside to wait for the buses. However, she felt that this would soon be remedied as the new routine was learned.

- IV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda
None

- V. Approval of minutes

- A. October 22, 2013

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2013 Regular School Committee meeting, as presented. Dr. Knapp seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

- VI. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent

- A. Out-of-state and Overnight field trip requests

1. BHS Latin trip to Providence, RI: December 9, 2013

Mr. Howell presented his request for a field trip with BHS Latin students to Providence, RI on December 9th. He and Dr. Houle will be chaperones to a group of 10-12 students traveling to see the Brown University Latin Carol Celebration which will take place at First Baptist Church of America. The trip will also include dinner and a tour of Providence. This after-school event is open to students currently taking Latin and they will be chosen based on the first twelve to turn in their permission slips and payment. Mr. Howell also noted that he will keep a list of additional interested students in case there are any "drop-outs". Dr. Houle stated that she has reviewed this out-of-state field trip request and found it to be fully compliant with all safety and liability requirements as required by school policy, and she recommends approval of this trip by the School Committee.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve the BHS Latin trip to Providence, RI on December 9, 2013, as presented. Ms. Popowich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

2. BHS Spanish trip to New York City: March 20-21, 2014

Ms. Holesovsky presented her request for a field trip with BHS Spanish students to New York City on March 20-21, 2014. She stated that this overnight event will be open to both Spanish 5 classes (all seniors) and will provide them with an opportunity to engage in a variety of Hispanic cultural activities outside the classroom. Activities will include attending a play in Spanish, dinner at an authentic Spanish restaurant, a visit to the first Hispanic museum in the U.S. and the United Nations. The total cost per student is approximately \$300.00. Dr. Houle stated that she has reviewed this out-of-state field trip request and found it to be fully compliant with all safety and liability requirements as required by school policy, and she recommends approval of this trip by the School Committee.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve the BHS Spanish trip to New York City on March 20-21, 2014, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Dr. Knapp asked how many students would participate in this field trip, and Ms. Holesovsky stated that there are 30 students in the two Spanish 5 classes. The trip has been priced for 25 students, and some seniors in Spanish 4 may be offered the chance to participate in order to meet that number.

B. Updates related to evaluation goals

1. Coffee and Conversation with the Superintendent – fall meetings

Dr. Houle reported that she had held five meetings (one in each school) during the first round of “Coffee and Conversation with the Superintendent”, and she presented a summary of the gatherings and attendance at each. She also reviewed the topics of discussion, which were centered on the new curriculum, particularly mathematics, and assessments, including the PARCC pilot. Dr. Houle commented that the conversations were lively and interesting, with good questions being asked, and she thanked Mr. Cameron and the school building principals for their attendance at these gatherings. She added that the second round of these meetings will focus on school safety and the emergency response plan.

Dr. Knapp wondered why the BHS group reflected a much higher attendance, and Dr. Houle speculated that it was due to an interest in preparedness for college and career, as well as the impact of the PARCC pilot.

2. Focus on instruction: update on work with Leadership Team

Dr. Houle stated that she has been working with the Leadership Team on instructional practice in the classroom, and what has the highest impact on student learning. She referred to a handout in this evening’s correspondence which discusses targeted learning and its focus on how to make learning visible in two ways: being clear about what is to be learned from the lesson (the learning intention), and having a way of knowing that the desired learning has been achieved (the success criteria). Targeted learning involves the teacher knowing where he or she is going with the lesson and ensuring that the students know where they are going. Dr. Houle talked about posted objectives in the classroom, which is a powerful way for students to connect to what the teacher is saying, and also that the teacher is making clear to students the purpose of tasks being done in the classroom.

3. District-Determined Measures pilot

Dr. Houle discussed the information provided on a handout in this evening’s correspondence, which reviews the Student Impact Rating for the District DDM Piloting Plan of September 2013, with a chart outlining the minimum piloting requirements and criteria. This plan is mandated by the DESE under the new Educator Evaluation System, and while it is supposed to be fully implemented by September 2014, Dr. Houle stated that most districts will apply in June for a waiver, as it is extremely labor-intensive and an unrealistic expectation to meet that deadline. She also discussed creating our own assessment tool versus

purchasing a commercial product from a vendor for this purpose, and teachers will provide input on this decision. The desired outcome will be to use the data gathered to inform instruction in every subject area so that teachers can better meet the needs of students.

C. Payroll Warrants for signatures

Dr. Houle presented a payroll warrant for signature by Ms. Popowich. This warrant was for the School Resource Officer who is paid weekly.

VII. Reports of subcommittees/representative to Collaborative for Educational Services

A. Collaborative for Educational Services (Ms. Bogdanovich)

1. Report from the September 25, 2013 meeting and October meeting

Ms. Bogdanovich reported that the last meeting of the collaborative involved discussion with regard to the wording for the Executive Director search. The next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow evening, November 13th.

B. Curriculum & Instruction (Dr. Tsoumas/Dr. Knapp)

1. Report from the November 12, 2013 meeting: Virtual High School spring pilot at BHS

Dr. Tsoumas reported that at the Curriculum & Instruction meeting held earlier this evening, a Virtual High School spring pilot at BHS was discussed. During that meeting, Dr. Houle stated that as part of the Race to the Top grant, the high school is trying to increase students' access to the recommended MassCORE program of studies. There will be a maximum of 30 seats available for students to take advantage of online courses with topics and content that they would not otherwise have access to as part of the current high school offerings. Dr. Houle noted that Ms. Vigneux and Mr. Brennan Murray, BHS Library/Media Specialist and VHS Coordinator, have put together procedures for student participation. It was decided that under the first requirement for eligibility, students in ninth grade will not be eligible to join the program, limiting it to 10th, 11th and 12th grade students. Dr. Houle and the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee recommend approval of this VHS spring pilot.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve the Virtual High School spring pilot program at BHS, as amended with procedures for eligibility revised to include students in grades 10 through 12, and ninth graders being ineligible to participate. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Ms. Bogdanovich inquired as to what types of online courses would be offered in the VHS pilot, and Dr. Houle explained that course selections would be varied and numerous, and not replacements for courses being currently taught at BHS. Dr. Houle also stated that funding for this pilot program would come from the Race to the Top grant, and will include a \$2,000.00 stipend for the coordinator, and \$13,250.00 allotted for the 30 available seats.

2. Update on Professional Development in reading instruction for elementary/middle school teachers
Dr. Tsoumas reported that at the Curriculum & Instruction meeting held earlier this evening, Mr. Cameron stated that he has been working with Lesley University in Cambridge, MA to offer two professional development activities for reading instruction in December. The first program, "When Readers Struggle", will be a 2-day workshop offered to K-3 teachers on December 5th and 6th, and will be available for up to 30 participants. The second reading workshop will be offered to teachers in grades 3-8 and will take place on December 16th and 17th, and will also be open to 30 participants. On December 18th, there will be a follow-up with the same presenter for teachers who took this workshop in the spring in order to share feedback from that session.
- C. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. Popowich)
 1. Report from the October 23, 2013 meeting
Ms. Popowich reported that the meeting of October 23rd involved discussion with regard to the Bullying Prevention/Intervention program, and work will continue on this subject at future meetings.
- D. Jessica's Boundless Playground Committee (Dr. Tsoumas)
 1. Report from the October 30, 2013 meeting
Dr. Tsoumas announced that a \$40,000.00 donation had been received from The Beveridge Foundation, and this will contribute to the cost of the ongoing development of this project.
The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2013.
- E. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Popowich/Ms. Bogdanovich)

None; no recent meeting of this subcommittee has been held.
- F. Property & Transportation (Mr. Fritsch/Dr. Knapp)
 1. Report from the October 22, 2013 meeting
Dr. Knapp reported that this subcommittee met on October 22nd in order to update him on current issues, with information provided by Mr. Robert Lachance, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Dr. Houle, as follows: high school boiler failure, Tadgell renovations, five-year capital improvement plan, high school traffic flow plan, busing bid RFP, purchasing of electricity for town and schools.
No future meeting of this subcommittee has yet been scheduled.
- G. School Safety Task Force (Mr. Fritsch)
 1. Report from October 7, 2013 meeting of selected workgroups
Dr. Houle stated that this meeting involved selected workgroups finishing tasks in preparation for their next meeting on November 20th at which they will begin the process of taking the information and forming a school safety plan. She also noted that she had met with other local superintendents today to update a plan for relocation of individuals in respective towns during an emergency.

H. Technology Advisory Committee (Mr. Fritsch)

1. Report from October 2, 2013 meeting

Mr. Fritsch reported that a survey had been taken of students who participated in the pilot program for calculus using notebooks (electronic devices) vs. textbooks. He noted that some students did not like the e-textbook and outline, but did prefer to do homework assignments online. The overall impression was that the program was a success, but would need more time for students to feel comfortable with it. Mr. Fritsch also stated that this advisory committee would like to work with teachers again regarding the potential for different programs being offered, with the inclusion of parents as well.

2. Next meeting scheduled for December 4, 2013, 5:00 pm

VIII. New business

A. Sign Unit A contract

Dr. Houle stated that she had not yet received the review of this contract by the BTA, and therefore it was not available for signatures this evening. It is anticipated that the contract will be ready for signatures by the School Committee at the next regular meeting on November 26th.

B. Foley Field/Lake Wallace Committee: School Committee representative

Dr. Houle stated that she had received a request from Ms. LeeAnne Connolly, Conservation Commission Administrator, with regard to the Foley Field/Lake Wallace Committee. Ms. Connolly asked that a School Committee member serve on this committee, in light of the success that the schools have had in working with this area as a source for environmental studies. Dr. Knapp volunteered to serve on the Foley Field/Lake Wallace Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Select Board.

IX. Unfinished business

A. Update on the FY 2014 budget

Dr. Houle discussed the recent gap in the budget, which was due, in part, to errors discovered in School Choice reporting from the Pelham school district. While it was initially believed that this would result in monies owed to us, a follow-up conducted by Ms. Jill Panto, Town Accountant, revealed that further adjustments reflected additional charges to Belchertown for students attending schools in other districts. The bottom line is \$2,334.00 owed by Belchertown in School Choice Assessments, which added to the previous budget discrepancy, and the estimated budgetary deficit now totals \$88,869.00. At the last School Committee meeting, a vote of approval was taken to use the anticipated increase in Medicaid revenues to mitigate against the budget gap by nearly \$61,000.00.

Dr. Houle then referred to a memo from Mr. Gary Brougham, Town Administrator, which stated that the amount of free cash available to the town was now certified and no cuts will be made to existing budgets. There will be a special town meeting on November 25th with warrant articles asking for free cash to fill the gaps as needed to make all budgets whole, and to pay back what is owed to the stabilization fund.

- X. Correspondence
- A. Agenda: November 12, 2013
 - B. Minutes: October 22, 2013
 - C. Out-of-state and Overnight field trip requests
 - 1. BHS Latin trip to Providence, RI: December 9, 2013
 - 2. BHS Spanish trip to New York City: March 20-21, 2014
 - D. Summary of fall quarter Coffee & Conversation with the Superintendent meetings
 - E. Copy of section from John Hattie's book, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*, on Targeted Learning, Learning Intentions, and Success Criteria
 - F. Copy of District-Determined Measures Pilot Chart
 - G. Unit A Contract – to be hand-carried in
 - H. Payroll Warrants – to be hand-carried in
- XI. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Parts (2) and (3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Unit A, Teachers; as conducting said business in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's negotiating position. The Committee will return to open session.

Dr. Tsoumas – yes

Ms. Popowich – yes

Mr. Fritsch – yes

Ms. Bogdanovich – yes

Dr. Knapp - yes

The Committee entered into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 8:18 p.m.

One item was presented for a vote: A Memorandum of Agreement for Unit A: Lead Teacher Assignments and Job Description. Ms. Popowich acted as Chair Pro-tem for this vote.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve the Memorandum of Agreement regarding Lead Teacher Assignments and Job Description, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0-1 (abstention: Dr. Tsoumas)

- XII. Adjournment

Dr. Tsoumas called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to adjourn the Regular School Committee meeting at 8:21 p.m. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by,



Kathryn A. Petersen

Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signatures:

Linda Tsoumas, Linda Tsoumas, Chair

Clare Popowich, Clare Popowich, Vice Chair

Richard Fritsch, Richard Fritsch, Secretary

Myndi Bogdanovich, Myndi Bogdanovich, Member

Michael Knapp, Michael Knapp, 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 21st 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 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](#)).