



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 22, 2013**

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

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair (present); Mr. Eric Weiss, Vice Chair (arrived at 7:28 p.m.);  
Ms. Clare Popowich, Secretary (present); Ms. Beverly Phaneuf, Member (present);  
Mr. Richard Fritsch, Member (present)

**ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools (present); Christine Vigneux, BHS Principal (present); Thomas Ruscio, JBMS Principal (present); Stacy Monette, JBMS Asst. Principal (present)

**BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:**

(not present)

**VISITORS:** Greg Scibelli, Sentinel; Jim Russell, Republican; Devyn Hebert; Erin Hebert

**MINUTES**

I. Call to order

Dr. Tsoumas called the Regular School Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Special awards and presentations

A. Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Academic Excellence Award:  
Devyn Hébert, Class of 2013

Dr. Houle presented BHS student Devyn Hébert with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Certificate of Academic Excellence which is given annually to a high school student who distinguished themselves during their high school careers based on their three year cumulative average, their rank in class, as well as their contributions to the school community. Dr. Houle stated that Devyn certainly meets all those criteria and congratulated her on all her achievements.

III. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representatives  
None

IV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda  
None

V. Approval of minutes  
A. January 8, 2013

**MOTION:** Ms. Phaneuf moved to approve the Minutes of the January 8, 2013 Regular Session School Committee meeting. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion. Chairman Tsoumas asked if there were any revisions, deletions or additions to the minutes. Ms. Phaneuf asked for a revision in Section IX., D. Jessica's Boundless

Playground Committee update by Mr. Weiss. For clarification purposes, she recommended that in line 5, the word "playground" be inserted before the word committee.

VOTE: 4-0-0, approved unanimously

VI. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent  
A. Graduation date: Class of 2013

Dr. Houle stated that BHS Principal Christine Vigneux requested that the date and time of graduation for the Class of 2013 be set for Sunday, June 2, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. Dr. Houle stated that this date is in accordance with M.G.L. c71, §4.

Dr. Houle recommended approval of the date and time of graduation as recommended by Mrs. Vigneux.

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved to approve the Class of 2013 graduation date as June 2, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. as recommended. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0-0, approved unanimously

B. Proposed budget schedule for FY 2014 budget

Superintendent Houle reviewed a proposed budget schedule for the development of the FY 2014 budget.

MOTION: Mrs. Phaneuf moved to approve the proposed budget schedule as presented. Ms. Popowich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0-0, approved unanimously

After some discussion, the Committee agreed by consensus to change the March 12<sup>th</sup> date to March 5<sup>th</sup> as Dr. Tsoumas had a scheduling conflict.

C. Recommendation: Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

In accordance with M.G.L. c71, §59, Dr. Houle recommended the appointment of Mr. Brian Cameron to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. Dr. Houle stated that Mr. Cameron is highly qualified to take on these new responsibilities in our district and she looks forward to working with him in his new role.

In review, Dr. Houle noted that this position was established by the School Committee at the November 27, 2012 meeting. The position was posted and advertised on November 28, 2012 and closed on December 12, 2012.

Dr. Houle reviewed the establishment of the search committee and described the interview process that took place. Dr. Houle thanked the eight member search committee for their time, effort and insights into the selection of the finalists.

MOTION: Ms. Phaneuf moved to approve Dr. Houle's recommendation of the appointment of Mr. Brian Cameron to the position of Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning. Ms. Popowich seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Phaneuf stated that we are very fortunate to have a high quality candidate for the position.

VOTE: 4-0-0, approved unanimously

Dr. Houle said that she plans to fill Mr. Cameron's present position as CHCS principal with an interim principal while she begins the process to conduct a full search and appointment of a permanent replacement with a July 1<sup>st</sup> start date. Dr.

Houle stated that she feels we will get a better candidate pool if the start date is July 1 versus mid-year. She added that a search committee will be established which will bring forth two or three finalists for her to interview and from which a successful candidate may be chosen.

D. School safety measures review

Dr. Houle noted that last spring the School Committee approved a streamlined set of protocols for a variety of safety-emergency situations. In addition, the new medical emergency response plans for the district were approved last summer, as required by state statute. Afterwards the Leadership Team and Officer Krol, our School Resource Officer, began to have some conversations about reviewing our protocols and safety measures. Dr. Houle stated the tragic incident that happened on December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School caused the district to accelerate the review and enhancement of a variety of safety/emergency situations.

Dr. Houle read over all the school safety protocols that are under review and those that are being implemented. Dr. Houle also emphasized that the district will continue to work on and review emergency protocols to ensure that information is up-to-date, appropriate and to make any necessary changes to them as needed.

E. Community engagement

1. CSSR and Chestnut Hill Community Schools session on school safety

Dr. Houle reported that she was approached by the CSSR and CHCS PTOs to consider holding an emergency procedure informational session for parents to learn about the standard protocols in place that staff and students practice regularly. Dr. Houle stated that the session will be held on January 23, 2013 from 7-8 p.m. in the CHCS auditorium. To date, 135 parents have replied that they plan to attend the meeting.

2. Conversation with community leaders regarding services for students in need

Dr. Houle reported that the Senior Leadership Team has observed a noticeable increase in students who are struggling and/or at risk for a variety of reasons. In response to this issue, she reached out to various community members to see if there was sufficient interest in working together to meet these students' needs. She said there was an enthusiastic response to the call and as a result twenty-three people, including staff from Belchertown Public Schools, town officials, and representatives from community agencies, joined her at a luncheon to begin a discussion on how to help these students who might be at risk socially and/or emotionally.

Dr. Houle stated that the goal of this first meeting was to identify the issues they are seeing with our students and to ask members of the group to talk about services they provide to children and families. Dr. Houle said this goal was met and a follow up meeting will take place with additional people being invited to fill gaps that were identified and to help meet those needs.

VII. Unfinished business  
None

VIII. New business

- A. Mr. Fritsch reported that on January 13, 2013, he and his wife were dining out and observed a group of about ten young gentlemen in the establishment. His wife commented on what a nice group of young men they seemed to be. He later found in chatting with them that they were actually members of the Belchertown High School wrestling team. Mr. Fritsch said he promised them that he would mention that the team had just won their match that evening against Ludlow with a final score of 42-36. Mr. Fritsch congratulated the team on the win and for representing our town so well.

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

A. Collaborative for Educational Services (Ms. Phaneuf)

Ms. Phaneuf reported on the January 9, 2013 agenda items:

- 1) Review of Treasurer's Report: All is in correct order
- 2) Announced that Karen Levesque is the newly hired Marketing and Communications Director and one of her initial projects will be to make improvements to their website.
- 3) It was decided that discussion on how to resolve pay scales variances between the two counties will be a future agenda item
- 4) A search committee will be formed to search for a new CES Director

B. Curriculum & Instruction (Ms. Phaneuf/Ms. Popowich)

Dr. Houle stated that the district is moving along to get a Mathematics pilot completed and the Science curriculum pilot will not be written until the new Science frameworks are presented in the fall of 2013.

C. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. Popowich/Ms. Phaneuf)

Ms. Popowich noted that January 30, 2013 is the next scheduled meeting.

D. Jessica's Boundless Playground Committee (Mr. Weiss)

None

E. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Popowich/Dr. Tsoumas)

None

F. Property & Transportation (Mr. Weiss/Mr. Fritsch)

None

G. Technology Advisory Committee (Mr. Fritsch)

Dr. Houle reported that teams will soon be visiting three different districts using three different 1:1 models to learn about their programs. They will visit Burlington High School which uses iPads, Beverly High School which is involved in a lease-to-buy Air Book laptop program and Reading High School which is using a "bring your own device" system.

X. Correspondence

- A. Agenda: January 22, 2013

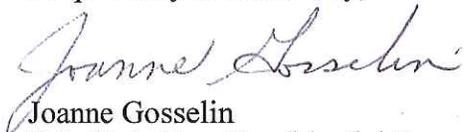
- B. Minutes: January 8, 2013
- C. Memorandum regarding graduation date: Class of 2013
- D. Proposed budget schedule for FY 2014 budget memorandum
- E. Memorandum: recommendation, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
- F. Memorandum regarding school safety measures review
- G. Letter from Lt. Thrasher regarding JBMS incident  
Dr. Houle commented on a letter received from parent Lt. Thrasher which outlined his concerns regarding the bomb threat that occurred at Jabish Brook Middle School on January 3, 2013. Among his chief concerns, he stated that he was not notified by our messaging system and for a period of time he did not know where his daughter was. Dr. Houle noted Lt. Thrasher also sent a copy of his letter to the School Committee Chair and also the Select Board.
- H. Response to Lt. Thrasher from Dr. Houle  
Dr. Houle discussed the emailed response she sent to Lt. Thrasher on January 11<sup>th</sup>, after she had further researched the incident. Dr. Houle reported that the school was ordered evacuated at approximately 2:30 p.m. that afternoon which was after school was dismissed. Lt. Thrasher's daughter, who was attending an after school program, left the school along with faculty and staff when an immediate evacuation order was given. Dr. Houle stated that his daughter happens to live only two doors down from the middle school. His daughter reportedly forgot her house key and could not get into her house. She also forgot her cell phone and so she borrowed a friend's cell phone to call her father. Dr. Houle explained that Lt. Thrasher did not recognize the cell phone number and so did not answer her call. Lt. Thrasher's daughter reportedly did not leave him a message.  
  
Dr. Houle stated that in investigating what took place that day she believes Principal Ruscio and Asst. Principal Monette did an excellent job in following emergency protocol and that people need to realize that once the Belchertown Police, the Fire Marshal and the State Police arrive on the scene, they take command of the situation and follow their own protocol.  
  
Dr. Houle stated that Lt. Thrasher subsequently called the Central Office a few days after the incident and requested that his cell phone number be entered into the ConnectEd system as the primary phone number to be called when outreach calls are placed.  
  
Mr. Weiss noted that the two adults he spoke to regarding the bomb threat incident at JBMS stated that they applauded both the Principal and Asst. Principal for the way the situation was handled.  
  
Ms. Phaneuf also noted that parents need to be responsible to make sure the school office has the correct contact information for situations such as this.
- I. Flyer: Emergency Procedure Information for Parents/Guardians of Cold Spring, Swift River, and Chestnut Hill Community Schools
- J. Summary of conversation with community leaders regarding services for students in need

XI. Adjourn

MOTION: Ms. Phaneuf moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. Ms. Popowich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by,

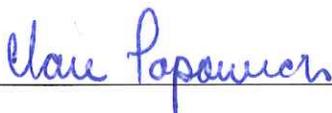


Joanne Gosselin  
Substitute Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signature:

 \_\_\_\_\_, Linda Tsoumas, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_, Eric Weiss, Vice Chair

 \_\_\_\_\_, Clare Popowich, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_, Beverly Phaneuf, Member

 \_\_\_\_\_, 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.