



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING – BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
April 05, 2016**

LOCATION: Chestnut Hill Community School Auditorium
TIME: 6:00 p.m.

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

BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

VISITORS: see attached

Minutes

Pledge of Allegiance

- I. Call to order
Ms. Bogdanovich called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm.

- II. Superintendent's Presentation of FY 2017 School Department Budget
Superintendent Coffin presented the proposed FY 17 budget.
Ms. Bogdanovich opened the discussion to School Committee members. Ms. Bogdanovich questioned the number of student in sports. Given a list of 214 fall, 106 winter, and 241 spring. Mr. Dunn noted he has not run any number for increased fees. Ms. Bogdanovich questioned if music has a participation fee, do other districts charge, and what is the total number of students that participate in the music program. Dr. Laughner questioned the school choice dollar amounts. Why is the cost per student more for students out of district? Mr. Dunn noted some of the cost difference is due to special education.
Dr. Laughner questioned what is the impact on class size on reducing teachers? Superintendent Coffin explained there would be a, 3-4 student per class, increase.
Dr. Laughner asked about the need of a school adjustment counselor at the high school. Mr. Cameron spoke to the need, there is an increase in social emotional and mental health needs and the need is increasing at the high school.
Dr. Laughner noted his concern that the cuts made would increase the number of students leaving the district in school choice. Superintendent Coffin noted that is standard any time there is a cut in personnel. There is strong educational opportunity in

the district. Last year we used school choice money to stretch the budget, it is not there this year.

Ms. Bogdanovich noted that JV sports feed the varsity program.

Dr. Knapp questioned with the proposed cuts how far away are we from the target budget. Superintendent Coffin noted the gap is still \$155,000.

Ms. Bogdanovich questioned where the proposed teacher reductions would come from. Superintendent Coffin answered those conversations will take longer than a day and should be with the staff first. Administration is looking at class sizes and programs. Superintendent Coffin noted that she cannot be specific about people or subject at this time. They are looking at schools that have smaller class sizes. These classes could be going from 15 to 20 students.

Ms. Bogdanovich opened the meeting to public comments regarding the budget.

Public comments included:

- Is STEMscopes necessary? Why not pilot next year?
 - Dr. Fortin spoke to the question; state released new standards effective in 2 years. 2019 will see MCAS updated. The BHS STEM lab, frameworks to deal with science and engineering.
- Addition of 8 lunch/recess paras when nothing has happened in the past.
 - Superintendent Coffin noted for safety reasons there should be people in each classroom during indoor recess.
- Could the para positions be part time or volunteer?
 - Superintendent Coffin noted it is hard to find part time employees for these positions.
- Regarding 5th grade band – would like to keep the program.
- This is a disappointing process. There is less education this year than last. This is the wrong direction for the state. State levels are going down. Cutting is a disservice when students suffer. We should bridge the gap with money from the town.
- Where are we in the process? Is there an still discussion about the money?
 - There is an open meeting with the Finance Committee and Select Board this Thursday.
- This is a growing community with young couples.
- Mr. O'Connor from the Select Board spoke to the budget. There is \$180,000 from free cash being returned, \$400,000 from stabilization being used for FY 17 budget. He also noted that 92% of revenue is property tax. A total of \$580,000 is being added to revenue.
- What about the municipal market? When do we go there, last?
 - There is no discussion happening for this.
- The town has a deficit to close as well.
- This gap is structural.
- Regarding band and sports, they are vital and critical in their student's development.
- Children who engage in outside activities have higher graduation rates and better attendance.

- How can the community help raise money so programs aren't cut?
 - At the high school raising fees for individual sports.
- Could they give realistic numbers so they can go out and see what could be raised?
- There are organizations that do this work.
- Charge school choice students to ride the bus. They could get to a bus stop area and ride from there.
- Are they planning to add position other than paras?
 - BHS school adjustment counselor, speech/language pathologist and R.N.
- Athletics is an inspiration to go to school and do well.
- Be more creative in raising money, willing to pay more in athletic fees.
 - Those that would be interested in forming a community organization were requested to please leave their name and email.
- JV sports contribute to having kids join in the high school culture and community.
- BOAA is a athletic organization, Christina Aponte is still president. It currently lacks members, anyone interested is welcome to see her.
- Belchertown Band Boosters supports the music programs in the district. Their current fundraiser will take place in May, Jazzed Up Auction. All are welcome to join.
- Educator at BHS noted, with \$150,000 still short that could mean 10-11 staff positions. The 3-5 student increase in classrooms may not be accurate. Many of the staff are local. 90% that work here, live here. Band and athletics cut get people out. The most important mission of the schools is to educate the student, which means teachers. More students in classrooms changes the dynamics for teachers which affects teaching.
- Belchertown needs to find a sustainable solution. What about the use of parent volunteers?
 - Superintendent Coffin noted because of liability the need is for staff. Parent volunteers are critical in schools, more adults would be beneficial. Ms. Bogdanovich noted mandated fingerprinting if you are with a child.
- Are there any other grants available to us?
 - Superintendent Coffin noted there are hundreds of grants available. We have not explored them. Individual teachers have explored some that were relevant to their class.
- Is there someone who can explore the grants?
 - Superintendent Coffin noted that some grants take months to apply and secure. This would require personnel we don't have.
- Could there be a restructure of the school day, 4 days instead of 5?
 - Superintendent Coffin noted that would be a community discussion and a long range plan.
- Explain the Nature's Classroom expense, thought everyone paid for the trip.
 - The expenses are to pay for staff. Ms. Bogdanovich noted that an increase across the board to pay the difference would not work as you cannot use student activity fund to pay for staff.
- Future students receiving less would be a tragedy.

- How do you get level service number, and is it a coincidence that it is 2.5 %?
 - Mr. Dunn noted it is a coincidence and explained the process.
- Please explain the maintenance reduction.
 - Mr. Dunn noted the reduction would be items like catch basin cleaning, toilet partition replacement, painting projects. They will be taking things needed and pushing them to the next year.
- Is there any talk of a 2 ½ override, we can only cut so long at some point you can't cut anymore.
- The community is growing because of the schools and their reputation.
- Ms. Bogdanovich noted that she would like to fully fund education but until our country does we are put in this position.
- Dr. Knapp noted it costs a certain amount of money to educate, 92% of our taxes are property taxes, there is only one place to go and it is not a popular decision. He also noted that everyone should attend town meeting, talk to selectmen and let them know how you feel.
- Brenda Aldrich noted people should attend Select Board and Finance Committee meetings as well. The meetings are posted on Thursdays.
- Nick O'Connor spoke to the need to attend town meeting. We need constituents at town meeting to vote.

III. Adjourn

Motion: Ms. French moved to adjourn at 7:44 pm.

Second: Dr. Knapp

Vote: 4,0,0

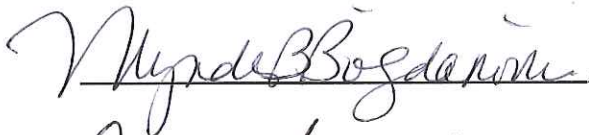
Respectfully submitted by,

Ramona Griffin


Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee


School Committee members' signatures:

_____, Richard Fritsch, Chair

 _____, Myndi Bogdanovich, Vice Chair

 _____, Dawn French, Secretary

 _____, Michael Knapp, Member

 _____, Thomas Laughner, 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](#)).