



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
April 8, 2014**

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. Thomas Ruscio, JBMS Principal (present); Ms. Stacy Monette, JBMS Assistant Principal (present); Ms. Eileen Farrington, SRE Assistant Principal (present)

BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: (not present)

VISITORS: Mr. Lawrence O'Brien, BHS Social Studies Teacher; Ms. Jordan Gamache, BHS student; Ms. Quinn Roche, JBMS student; Ms. Louise Levy, BHS Science Teacher; Ms. Jennifer Poli, JBMS Teacher; Mr. Tom Fuller, Treasurer, NEOWA; Ms. Tammy Dennehy, JBMS Teacher; Mr. Ron McClure, CHCS Teacher; Ms. Laura Anderman, CHCS Teacher; Mr. Thomas Howell, BHS Teacher; Ms. Patricia Correia, M.A.S.C. Consultant; Mr. Gary Brougham, Town Administrator
(See attached sign-in sheet for additional visitors.)

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

Lawrence O'Brien, BHS Social Studies Teacher, William Spratt Award for Excellence in Teaching Secondary Social Studies

Dr. Tsoumas stated that it was her honor to recognize Mr. Lawrence O'Brien as the recipient of the prestigious William Spratt Award for Excellence in Teaching Secondary Social Studies. This award is presented annually to one educator in the state, and the NERC's (Northeast Regional Conference for the Social Studies) awards ceremony was held last evening at the Sturbridge Host Hotel in Sturbridge, MA. Mr. O'Brien showed the plaque he was given, and Dr. Houle presented him with a certificate of recognition from the Belchertown Public Schools as well. In doing so, Dr. Houle remarked that Mr. O'Brien is an outstanding teacher who has been helpful in curriculum development, as well as in training teachers in Understanding by Design. She said that he promotes discourse in his classroom and encourages civic responsibility in his students.

New England Outdoor Writers Association Youth Writing Contest Winners' Recognition:
Jordan Gamache (gr. 10) and Quinn Roche (gr. 8)

Dr. Tsoumas stated that it was her honor to recognize two students, Ms. Gamache and Ms. Roche, who had won first places in this contest. Prior to the presentation of those awards, recognition and certificates of achievement were also given to several students from BHS and JBMS who were finalists in the competition, and these were presented by Ms. Levy and Ms. Poli. Mr. Fuller then gave a brief history of NEOWA and this two-year old contest, and explained its goal of promoting the education, appreciation and use of the outdoors. He then presented the awards to Ms. Gamache and Ms. Roche, winners in their divisions in this competition, and congratulated them, as well as their teachers, for their achievement. The students were given certificates from NEOWA and a monetary gift of \$125.00.

III. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representatives
None

IV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda
Several members of the public asked questions and offered comments with regard to the next steps in the Superintendent search. It was first clarified that there will be no additional fee to the original charge of \$12,000.00 from the M.A.S.C. to continue the search process. Debate then ensued with regard to choosing between the two remaining finalists for Superintendent, or reopening the search. Support for both options was expressed (candidates reaching the finalist status should be considered equally qualified to the first choice candidate vs. not "settling" for a candidate that wasn't a first choice for the sake of expediency), with a final comment noting that the ultimate decision was in the hands of the School Committee, as elected to do so, and not the townspeople. Dr. Tsoumas stated throughout the discussion that the Committee would not comment on these options until the members could discuss them with the consultant later in the agenda.

V. Approval of minutes

A. March 25, 2014

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2014 Regular School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

VI. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent

A. Out-of-State Field Trips

1. JBMS Students to Washington, DC

Ms. Dennehy presented a request for an out-of-state field trip by JBMS students to Washington, DC, April 30-May 3, 2014. She noted that 122 students have signed up to attend, and a list of approved chaperones was provided. She stated that the purpose of the trip is to expose the students to the functions of government and our nation's history, as well as appreciation of the arts. 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: Mr. Fritsch moved to approve the out-of-state field trip by JBMS students to Washington, DC, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Mr. Fritsch asked where the group would be staying in Washington and Ms. Dennehy stated that accommodations will be provided by the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport Hotel, as noted in the itinerary. Dr. Knapp asked why the cost per student for the trip seemed low and Ms. Dennehy explained that costs to parents were broken down into payments throughout the school year, and in addition, two fundraisers had been held.

2. CHCS Grade 6 Students to CT Science Center

Mr. McClure and Ms. Anderman presented a request for an out-of-state field trip by CHCS Grade 6 students to the CT Science Center, April 17, 2014. The group will include 211 students as well as teachers, paraprofessionals, and approved volunteer chaperones. The students will explore exhibit galleries and participate in "hands-on" science, and will also experience the *Lost Egypt* exhibit. 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 out-of-state field trip by CHCS Grade 6 students to the CT Science Center, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Mr. Fritsch asked about \$800.00 of the bus transportation cost being funded by the PTO, and Ms. Anderman confirmed that the actual amount that the CHCS PTO will donate towards the cost is \$900.00.

At this time, the Chair asked for a motion to reorder the agenda so that Ms. Correira could participate in the discussion under *Item IX. B. Unfinished Business, Superintendent Search*.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved that *Item IX. B. Unfinished Business, Superintendent Search* be moved forward as the next item of business. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

The next item was reordered in the agenda to follow *Item IX. A. Unfinished Business, FY2015 Budget*, which had also been moved forward.

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

A. Collaborative for Educational Services (Ms. Bogdanovich)

Ms. Bogdanovich has not met with the CES, but Dr. Houle is in receipt of her email which included the revised Articles of Agreement for CES, and this will be placed on the agenda for the April 22nd School Committee meeting.

- B. Curriculum & Instruction (Dr. Tsoumas/Dr. Knapp)
None; Mr. Cameron requested that a meeting be scheduled in May and it was decided that this subcommittee will meet on May 13, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.
- C. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. Popowich)
None; Ms. Popowich stated that this committee will next meet in May.
- D. Jessica's Boundless Playground Committee (Dr. Tsoumas)
Dr. Tsoumas stated that the committee met recently and worked on the timeline for the construction and potential opening of the playground, and discussion also took place around the preparation of the field, depending on the condition of the soil, etc. Dr. Tsoumas also stated that the necessary permits have been obtained, and it is now being determined what materials are needed and what the responsibilities of each of the involved parties will be.
Dr. Tsoumas then asked the School Committee to approve two bills for payment of costs associated with the production of bricks which were part of a previous fundraising project.
1. Bills for payment: Permanent Mark, Inc., \$822.00 and \$360.00
MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to approve payment of bills in the amounts of \$822.00 and \$360.00 to Permanent Mark, Inc., as presented. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion.
VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously
COMMENT: Dr. Knapp asked why these bills were due for payment now, since they were from services dating back to 2012, and Dr. Houle explained that we had not previously been sent a bill, and the bills will be paid out of a revolving account.
- E. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Popowich/Ms. Bogdanovich)
None
- F. Property & Transportation (Mr. Fritsch/Dr. Knapp)
Dr. Houle stated that she hopes to have the contract with First Student Bus Transportation ready for action by the School Committee no later than the April 22nd meeting, and she will check with our contracted business manager to confirm the status of the contract.
- G. Technology Advisory Committee (Mr. Fritsch)
1. Report from meeting: April 2, 2014
Mr. Fritsch reported that the Edcamp professional development day had been a success and was well-attended. He also stated that a .5 position for the technology department had been posted. Mr. Fritsch then provided estimated figures for future upgrades and improvement in technology throughout the district, and he said that the committee will look at other districts to obtain information as to what will most benefit our students in the long run. This group will meet once more before the end of the school year.

VIII. New business

A. Resignation of Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

Dr. Houle stated that she and the Chair had been in receipt of a letter from Ms. Kathryn Petersen, resigning her position as Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee, effective June 24, 2014. Ms. Petersen stated that she would be willing to substitute in this position as needed in the future, and that she would not vacate the position until which time a successful applicant had been hired. The Committee members graciously thanked Ms. Petersen for her service to the School Committee.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to accept the resignation letter from Ms. Petersen as Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee, with regret, as presented. Dr. Knapp seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

The following agenda items (*Item IX. A. and Item IX. B. Unfinished Business*) had been moved forward by vote of the School Committee earlier in the evening.

IX. Unfinished business

A. FY 2015 budget

Dr. Houle stated that at the request of the School Committee, she and Mr. Ed Dunn, Contracted School Business Manager, had reworked the budget and a new budget summary (FY15 Level Service Summary of Changes) dated today, had been provided. In discussing this document, Dr. Houle stated that there had been additions of a CHCS Reading Teacher and a BCBA (board-certified behavioral specialist), which Ms. Kristi Guzzo, Director of Student Support Services, had recommended instead of the original request for a fourth Team Leader. Dr. Houle then reviewed a handout which highlighted the gap between the Finance Committee's recommendation for the school district's budget vs. our proposed budget, and she noted that there was a difference of \$481,682.68 between the town's target and the school district's request. The warrant articles for capital improvements were also discussed. Another handout had been generated by Mr. Robert Lachance, Director of Buildings and Grounds, which listed the functions that the schools host for the town departments, and those in-kind services total \$78,585.75. Lastly, Dr. Houle provided a chart detailing Per Pupil Expenditure Trends, which provided the amount Belchertown Public Schools spends per student vs. the state average dating back to FY05 through FY13, and which included our current rank of 295/319.

Dr. Houle stated that she and Dr. Tsoumas were invited to attend the Finance Committee meeting on Thursday evening, and she asked what the School Committee would like her to present with regard to our budget (i.e., cuts vs. no cuts to our current proposed budget). The School Committee felt strongly that the budget should be presented "as is", with the intention of arguing its case for a fully-funded budget since it is comprised of necessities and there is no longer any room for additional cuts. Dr. Houle also noted that the stabilization account is currently at \$1.8 million, which is more than enough to be held as a "rainy day" fund. Mr. Brougham concurred, stating that he does not see the point in protecting a "rainy day" fund at the expense of the needs of the town and school district. The School Committee asked that Dr. Houle present the

current proposed budget to the Finance Committee with no cuts offered. As a final order of business with regard to the budget, Dr. Houle suggested that the School Committee meet again before the April 22nd joint meeting with the Finance Committee and Select Board to discuss the outcome of the meeting with the Finance Committee on Thursday. It was decided that the School Committee will meet next week on Tuesday, April 15th at 7:00 p.m. at SRE Library.

The next item was reordered in the agenda to follow *Item VI. A. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent, Out-of-State Field Trips.*

B. Superintendent search

Ms. Correira discussed the options now available to the School Committee since the chosen candidate for Superintendent had declined the offer of the Belchertown Public Schools. She stated that another full search could be initiated and M.A.S.C. will continue to assist with this process at no additional cost for this service. The reopened search would proceed with a shorter timeline, and readvertised on the M.A.S.C. website and in NASS for free. Much of the preliminary work of a search has already been done in our prior activity and will not need to be repeated as the community survey, focus group meetings, revised job description, BPS brochure for the position, and advertisement design are done. Ms. Correira recommended that site visits be conducted for new candidates, while stating that former candidates will be allowed to reapply. An interim superintendent can be hired during this process, and she can supply a list of retired superintendents who are willing to serve in this capacity. If the School Committee decides to appoint an interim superintendent, the length of employment can be determined by the Committee, and typically ranges from six months to one year. A lengthy discussion then ensued between Ms. Correira and the School Committee members regarding the options of either choosing a Superintendent from the remaining two finalists, or to begin the process again by reopening the search to include new applicants. The consultant's recommendation was to reopen the search with an interim Superintendent serving during that process, and she stated that M.A.S.C. recommends against choosing between remaining finalists. School Committee members presented their arguments for and against each option at great length, until a motion was made.

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved that the School Committee consider choosing one of the remaining two finalists for the position of Superintendent of Belchertown Public Schools. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

COMMENT: Ms. Popowich stated that she does not wish to make a decision based on the expedient solution, nor does she wish to spend the amount of money on a Superintendent's salary on the chance that the most qualified candidate was not chosen. Dr. Knapp stated that he feels the school district needs the best fit in a Superintendent in the interest of a successful long-term tenure, and he does not feel that either of the remaining candidates has the right set of qualities and/or skill sets for the position. Ms. Bogdanovich stated that she feels that while Dr. Provost was chosen due to his experience, Ms. Clark has many qualities needed as a Superintendent and a vested interest in our district as a Belchertown

resident. Dr. Tsoumas stated that our Senior Leadership Team has the same qualities as Ms. Clark in their areas of expertise, but conversely, she feels that Ms. Clark has no Central Office experience in her district. Mr. Fritsch stated that he feels that an interim superintendent would have no vested interest in our district.

VOTE: 2-3-0 (opposed: Dr. Tsoumas, Ms. Popowich, Dr. Knapp)

Dr. Tsoumas then asked Ms. Correira for guidance as to the next steps to be followed in reopening the Superintendent Search and hiring an interim Superintendent. It was decided that an interim Superintendent would be hired for a six-month period, serving from July 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014, in anticipation of a start date for the new Superintendent on January 1, 2015, and with an extension of the interim position only for the purposes of aiding in the transition of the new Superintendent.

Ms. Correira will provide a list of interested candidates for the position of interim Superintendent and the School Committee will review potential candidates, interview, and appoint this individual as soon as possible. Ms. Correira will also create a new timeline for the Superintendent search process, and it was decided that the existing Superintendent Screening Committee will be contacted to determine who on that committee would like to serve again in the new search, anticipating that meetings of this group will occur in mid to late August. The Superintendent Screening Committee will review the applications that are received and then identify finalist candidates. Finalist interviews are tentatively planned to take place during the first and second weeks of October, with a selection of the new Superintendent by October 20, 2014.

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved to recommend that Friday, August 15, 2014 be posted as the cut-off date for submission of applications for the position of Superintendent of Belchertown Public Schools. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: To amend the motion as presented and change the posted cut-off date for submission of Superintendent applications to Friday, August 1, 2014.
5-0-0, approved unanimously

VOTE: To vote on the motion as amended
5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Ms. Bogdanovich asked if Ms. Correira would be screening the candidates, and it was agreed that Ms. Correira should do so. Mr. Brougham suggested that discussion should take place to consider offering a higher salary in the new search for the position of Superintendent. Ms. Correira concurred, stating that a range of \$135,000 to \$150,000 was more suitable for a district of our size and she suggested that at the very least, the previous range should be changed to a flat offer of \$135,000. It was determined that this matter would first have to be discussed with the Business Manager.

The School Committee took a five minute recess.

At this time, the Chair asked for a motion to reorder the agenda so that Mr. Brougham could participate in the discussion under *Item IX. A. Unfinished Business, FY 2015 Budget.*

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved that *Item IX. A. Unfinished Business, FY 2015 Budget* be moved forward as the next item of business. Dr. Knapp seconded the motion.
VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

- X. Correspondence
- A. Agenda: April 8, 2014
 - B. Minutes: March 25, 2014
 - C. Out-of-State field trip requests
 - 1. JBMS students to Washington, DC
 - 2. CHCS 6th grade students to CT Science Center
 - D. Bills for Payment
 - 1. Permanent Mark, Inc.: \$822.00
 - 2. Permanent Mark, Inc.: \$360.00
 - E. Resignation letter: Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee
 - F. FY 2015 budget items:
 - 1. Memorandum from Paul Silva, Chair, Belchertown Finance Committee, regarding the FY 2015 budget
 - 2. Revised Income and Expense spreadsheet from Jill Panto, Town Accountant
- XI. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Parts (2) and (3), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Unit C, Custodians, 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 School Committee entered into Executive Session at 9:30 p.m.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 10:09 p.m.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the MOA for Unit C, Custodians, as amended, pending ratification by the Association. Dr. Knapp seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 pm. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathryn A. Petersen

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](#)).

BELCHERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR SESSION
SIGN IN SHEET

DATE: 4-8-14

PLS. PRINT NAME BELOW

DAVID VACCHI

Dawn French

Rebecca Bolton

Ros McCune

Lava Anderson

Linda Sterling

JOHN BENOIT

Thomas R. Russo

Rob Griffin

Mona Griffin

Stacy Monette

Liz Montgomery

Kathleen Terry

Jennifer Whitehead

Thomas J. Hawen

Josephine Cassidy-Quinn

Tom Laughner

