

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF

March 10, 2009

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Ms. O'Gara called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present were Mr. Pierce, Mr. Hafer, Ms. Seibert and Ms. Bickford.

2. Comments From the Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix announced the following:

Renee Anderson, .4 Guidance Counselor at the Middle School is returning from a leave of absence. Also, Elizabeth Reichle, Foreign Language Teacher at the High School is not returning from leave and has resigned.

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to consider approving a field trip request from Mr. Michael Griffin for 22 students to travel to Atlanta, Georgia in order to compete in the 2009 Robotics National Championship. Students will be away from April 15th through April 19th and will miss three days of school. The cost is estimated to be \$500 per student and no cost to the school department. Dr. LaCroix noted that this is the second year in a row that the Robotics Team has competed and has made it to the National level. She said she was very proud of them and thanked the community for their support of the Robotics Team.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip request by Mr. Griffin for the Robotics Team (22 high school students) to travel to Atlanta, Georgia on April 15 through April 19, 2009 in order to compete in the National Robotics competition at no cost to the School department.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. Presentation: Music Department

Diane Pritchett, K-12 Director of Music, updated the School Committee on the K-12 music program. She began the presentation by showing student projects in the High School's Music Technology class. These projects demonstrated to the School Committee, the music department's theme, "Without music, life would be a mistake." (Friedrich Nietzsche).

Ms. Pritchett stated that music education should:

- help support academic goals
- help develop higher order thinking skills through hands on, active participation
- foster a sense of belonging and responsibility to the community
- be based on national standards

Ms. Pritchett then described a few key initiatives underway at each school. For example, at Davis School, students learn about pitch and how to sing a pitch. They also enjoyed an African Drumming assembly. Ms. Pritchett reviewed the Lane School program and music options and showed an example of Mr. Moffa teaching an orchestra lesson. She also described the recent changes at the middle and high school.

Ms. Pritchett explained at the High School, Ensembles are now offered in sectionals. She said that this change was made in order to help ease scheduling stress and to open up participation to more students. She also explained that changes in the leveling of the ensembles occurred in order to address issues of GPA equity. She also noted that currently, the curriculum at the high school is being developed to fit NEASC requirements and as a result of this work, assessments and evaluation practices are being reviewed.

At the Middle School, the Music Department now offers grade level Ensembles. This change was required due to the new six day schedule. Also, the 7th and 8th grade music requirement was eliminated and replaced by semester long choices. Also, the 6th grade general music curriculum is being redesigned.

Ms. Pritchett said that this year, the Madrigal singers visited Davis and Lane. Also, the High School Chorus performed at the elementary schools. She said it was great to watch the younger children watch the older students perform.

Ms. Pritchett also noted some recent community performances that occurred this year.

- Both the Choir and Acapella groups participated in Bedford Day.
- The Madrigal Singers performed at the Taste of Bedford fundraiser, at the Bedford Women's Club, and the Bedford Rotary.
- The Orchestra played for the Hanscom Retired Officers Club.
- The Sixth Grade Chorus sang for the Council of Aging.
- Many residents enjoyed both the BHS and JGMS musicals.
- POMS lessons continue to be popular with residents.

Ms. Pritchett said that the department will move forward by continuing to focus on K-12 curriculum documents. The department will also focus on:

- Enriching the music program by drawing on METCO and Hanscom communities.
- Music sponsored trips
- Re-establishing the Marching Band (Ms. Pritchett noted that there are a lot of intense conversations going on right now as to the best way to get this up and running again.)

Ms. Pritchett thanked the School Committee for their support. She said that last year was stressful due to all of the changes in the Music Department offerings. However, Ms. Pritchett said she was very happy to always remind everyone in her department that although many changes were underway, the changes were not due to cuts in funding.

Ms. Bickford asked Ms. Pritchett to let the School Committee know whether the number of music hours increased or decreased for students as a result of the changes at the High School.

Ms. Pritchett said she would and noted that a lot of pressure with scheduling issues stemmed from sharing the staff with JGMS.

Ms. Bickford cautioned Ms. Pritchett to try to ensure that the High School does not lose the advanced music students due to the changes in leveling and curriculum. She said it was an important balance that had to be monitored.

Ms. Seibert said that she is pleased to see how music benefits students as learners and that it is important to remind everyone of this fact.

Ms. Seibert asked if the High School could offer Marching Band as a course. Ms. Pritchett did not think that there would be room in the schedule.

Ms. Seibert asked Ms. Pritchett about her wish for the future. Ms. Pritchett said that she would like a full time instrument teacher at the Middle School. She thinks the Middle School students would truly benefit from such a mentor and would go to the High School better prepared.

Mr. Hafer said that since music builds upon itself, when is the right time to start introducing students to music? Ms. Pritchett said that third grade is developmentally the right time. She also commented that having the High School students perform at the elementary schools demonstrates to the younger students how much fun music can be if you stay with it.

Mr. Hafer asked if there was a music appreciation class. Ms. Pritchett said it was offered in the past but was not popular. However, the Music Technology course aims to fill the niche of the music appreciation class.

Mr. Pierce thinks it would be a good idea to look at offering courses that will attract students who “are not into music”. (i.e. The Beatles, a history of Rock & Roll). Ms. Pritchett agrees that the High School could use a course that attracts a student population that is not interested in musical instruments and/or performance.

Mr. Pierce asked if the Marching Band was ever considered at the elementary levels (for Marching in parades etc.). Ms. Pritchett said there is a Marching Band Committee and it is targeting the Middle School students.

Ms. O’Gara thanked Ms. Pritchett for her efforts especially with those that brought music and performance to the community.

5. Discussion: Food Services/Lunch Prices

Mr. Ken Whittier, Director of Food Services, updated the School Committee on the financial status of the Food Services. He noted that as of January 2009, total income to the Food Services increased by \$13, 600 over last January. He noted, that this occurred without a price increase.

Mr. Whittier estimates that income at the end of the year will be around \$57,000.

He said that there has been an increase in adult sales, especially at Lane where the new Cafeteria Manager instituted a new adult menu. It is very popular.

There has also been an increase in catering and vending revenue.

However, the cost of food has increased by approximately 13.75% for January 2009 v. January 2008. Mr. Whittier noted that this is significant. He also said that labor costs have been lower than last year due to High School efficiencies and a retirement. Overall, the cost per meal has increased by approximately 18 cents.

Mr. Whittier commented that the new store at the High School has negatively affected breakfast sales at the High School.

Mr. Whittier presented participation rates for the month of January. Lane, JGMS, and Davis all had approximately 50-55% participation which is the State target. However, the High School's rate was down around 37%. He noted that students at the High School have lots of choices and can buy different combinations. Also, the twice yearly exams affect the participation rate too. Also, early release days drain the participation percentages. He fears long lines at the cafeterias also hinder participation.

Mr. Whittier reported on Free and Reduced meals. Currently, Bedford has 5.7% on the free meal program and 2.6% of the reduced meal program. He said that the State reimburses us for these programs.

Mr. Whittier said his department continues to address the five citations that came from the 2006 Coordinated Review.

Mr. Whittier also noted the following new initiatives are having a positive effect:

- Increasing usage of local foods
- In-house vending
- Larger substitute staff list
- Davis School prepayment plan
- New drying agent at the Lane School (to help turnaround)
- Eco-friendly detergents are used.

Mr. Whittier addressed the question of whether lunch prices should be increased. Mr. Whittier suggested that Bedford keep the same lunch prices next year and consider raising prices on the vending and/or the a la carte items.

Lastly, Mr. Whittier reviewed a few desired capital improvement projects. He would like to replace the Lane School freezer since it is structurally flawed, too small, and inefficient. Lane currently uses small freezers to supplement. Also, the Davis swipe card system is old and needs replacement. (\$6,500-13,000)

The School Committee thanked Mr. Whittier and were happy to see positive numbers in his reports.

Ms. Bickford asked if we were still offering healthful snacks in the vending machines. Mr. Whittier said yes.

Ms. Bickford asked about long lines at the High School. Mr. Whittier said there are still lines, but the situation has improved somewhat. He said that the larger cafeteria is still

crowded since people like to eat where many of their friends are. He said that the area is not set up to manage the lines efficiently.

Ms. Bickford asked if we could do more to recycle. Mr. Whittier said we do recycle cardboard in all of the kitchens but he would like to recycle more bottles and cans. He also noted that there are not really any good alternatives for foam plates (at the High School) but he is always looking.

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Whittier to explore ways to increase recycling without incurring more costs.

Mr. Hafer said that selling drinks in vending machines in the school gyms would be a good money maker provided recycling and trash receptacles are there too.

Mr. Hafer asked if the Davis prepayment plan was successful. Mr. Whittier said yes, much better than the past.

Mr. Hafer asked if a modest price increase would help raise money to do some of the capital items needed? He suggested doing a full cost allocation analysis to help answer this question.

Mr. Hafer asked how Lane ice cream sales were doing. Mr. Whittier said they are about the same as last year – profitable.

Mr. Pierce thanked Mr. Whittier and commented that it looks like he has a good handle on managing the department and making a profit. He too suggested that Mr. Whittier try to come up with ways to fund some of the capital expense projects on the drawing board.

Ms. O'Gara asked if there were any ideas on how to improve the lines especially at the Middle School. Mr. Whittier said that the Middle School's large enrollment and kitchen design make this very difficult to resolve. He will consider some serving changes and choices.

Ms. O'Gara asked how allergy issues were handled. Mr. Whittier said monthly meetings are held to help plan the menu and to read and discuss ingredient lists. Also, the nurses work very closely with him.

6. BHS Flagpole Plaza Update

Richard Jones, Director of Facilities, gave the School Committee an overview of the Flagpole Plaza planning. He noted that this plan will be shared with the DPW, Library Trustees and the Board of Selectmen since the proposed plaza is adjacent to the Jenks Trail and these people are part of the Jenks Nature Trail agreement.

Mr. Jones explained that the current plan is to relocate the existing flagpole to a plaza that will hold the future Memorial development. Prep work is starting and no tree removal will be expected but one root zone on one tree will be altered. Some new lighting will be installed in order to have the memorial plaza lit.

Ms. Bickford asked if there was any history regarding the current flagpole. Mr. Jones said he would research this. He did discover that the old pole is unique and will discuss this with the architects and the Memorial Committee.

Dr. LaCroix presented the School Committee with a memo describing the plans for the project. She asked the School Committee to review the memo and if acceptable, she will share it with the DPW, Library Trustees and Board of Selectmen.

The School Committee reviewed the memo and Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve moving forward with work on the Flag Pole Plaza as discussed tonight and to include coordination with the Jenks Agreement parties.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. Liaison Updates

- On March 23rd there will be a meeting with Legislators and the EDCO Collaborative.
- The Youth Task Force held a successful evening activity for youth at the Town Center.
- Bedford Education Foundation is meeting this week on fundraising and grant distribution.

8. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix announced that the Davis School Principal search has ended and that there are two outstanding finalists (There were 93 applications and 14 applicants were screened by the Committee). Both candidates spent a day at the school and Phil Banios, Assistant Principal in Groveland, has been selected. Everything will be finalized next week.

9. Minutes for Approval

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the November 18, 2008 meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Future Agenda

Currently, there is a meeting scheduled for 7:00 on March 24th – but this may be cancelled if there is no need for it.

Ms. Bickford asked for an update on the BHS TV studio.

11. Adjournment

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:10 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. O’Gara	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Bickford	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

**EXECUTIVE SEESION
MINUTES OF**

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