

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 31, 2015
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Mr. Hafer called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Pierce, Mr. McAllister, Ms. Guay and Mr. Brosgol. Miss Sophia Kyrou, student representative, was absent.

Mr. Hafer welcomed Mr. Brosgol, the newly elected School Committee member. As a result, the School Committee decided to re-organize.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That he nominate Mike McAllister to serve as Vice Chair of the Bedford School Committee effective immediately.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

Mr. McAllister accepted the nomination.

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. McAllister made the following motion:

MOVED: That he nominate Ann Guay to serve as Secretary of the Bedford School Committee effective immediately.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

Ms. Guay accepted the nomination.

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Hafer thanked the members of the Town Meeting for approving the 2016 budget last week.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills reviewed what was going on in the district with PARCC testing. He reminded everyone that the School Committee elected to do PARCC testing this year on a trial basis (in addition to MCAS). JGMS has administered the PARCC test online and Lane School has used paper.

At JGMS there were a lot of technical difficulties, especially on the PARCC side. Pearson, the company administering the test, acknowledged that the servers kept crashing. Mr. Sills said that this was particularly distressing to the students because when the server crashed during the long questions, all of their work was lost. Also, Mr. Sills said that through trial and error (there were no specifications from the vendor), we learned that JGMS had to reconfigure the access points to prevent the servers from crashing.

Mr. Sills said that some of the questions on the test seemed good but others were not.

Mr. Sills said overall, he thinks that Bedford is ready for a new type of test and PARCC may be the right test. However, there are many technical issues that need to be resolved before PARCC publishes test results. He, along with members of the Massachusetts Association of Superintendents, are writing a letter to the Commissioner of Education about their experience with PARCC and requesting that pilot test results are not released to the public.

Ms. Guay said that it sounds like those taking paper tests have an advantage. Mr. Sills said that it appears that way, but it is not that simple. He would like to continue using the online version and that our technology department is working through the glitches.

Mr. Pierce said he is disappointed to learn that Pearson did not give the students the ability to save their work during a long question/answer session and that the system crashed and all work was lost. He said that this must have been traumatic for many of the students. Mr. Sills said it was and that many were in tears.

Mr. Pierce asked if the Commissioner of Education had any comments about the technical difficulties. Mr. Sills said not really though he knows that Bedford is working hard to resolve the issues.

Mr. Hafer asked if there was anything the School Committee could do. He suggested writing a letter to our State reps. or to Pearson. Mr. Sills said not to act until he gathered more information.

Mr. Sills commented that the other popular test alternative to PARCC, SmarterBalance, has been adopted by more states than the PARCC test. However this test is also experiencing technical difficulties during implementation.

Mr. Sills moved on to some action items.

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve two field trip requests. One request was from Mr. Griffin, Program Administrator for science, to take a group of students to Costa Rica during winter break 2016. He has done this trip in the past but this year, he will have a Spanish teacher also attend in order to attract Spanish students as well as Environmental Club students. Holbrook Travel is the trip coordinator. Mr. Griffin has used this company in the past and he is very impressed with their knowledge of the area.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip for approximately 21 students to travel to Costa Rica on February 15-23, 2016 to explore and learn about the rainforests, coastal ecosystems, and culture of Costa Rica at a cost of \$2,700 per student and no cost to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve a field trip for one student (Deanna Lobo) to attend the All Eastern Chorus in Providence, RI on April 9-12, 2015. Deanna was accepted to this prestigious musical event. The cost is \$300 for Deanna to attend and has been paid already by the student. The cost for the chaperones to stay overnight (\$475) will come from the music department budget. Mr. Maffa will attend and there will be female chaperones on site as well. Ms. O'Toole has agreed to drive Deanna to Providence for the event. Her parents will take her home.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the trip to Providence, RI for Deanna Lobo to participate in the All East Music Festival on April 9-12, 2015 at a cost of \$475 from the Music Department budget.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. McAllister said that he would like to see music festivals held on non-school days.

Mr. Sills announced the following informational items:

- Colleen Farnham, 1.0 School Psychologist from Lane and Davis, will be on a leave of absence for the 2015-2016 school year.
- Mr. Edwin Jones has been appointed 1.0 Teaching Assistant for the Bridge Program at the high school.

Mr. Sills presented the revised and updated job description for Program Administrator for Student Achievement and Data Analysis for grades 6-12. He explained that the reporting structure has been clarified.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description for the Program Administrator for Student Achievement and Data Analysis for grades 6-12 as presented.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills presented a job description for an Inclusion Specialist at the elementary level. The School Committee did not have any questions or concerns.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Inclusion Specialist position for elementary level as presented.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills introduced the School Nurses – Ms. Tracy Fernald, Ms. Nancy Thorsen, Ms. Carol Eaton, and Ms. Lorene Simoneau. (Ms. Kathy Webster, nurse at Lane School, was absent due to personal reasons). All of the nurses are Registered Nurses and licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the DESE. They were here to present to the School Committee.

Ms. Fernald began the presentation by describing the many services they provide to the students (and faculty) of the Bedford schools:

- 35,659 student visits were made during the 2013-14 school year!
- The nurses also provide services to the students enrolled in the LABBB, CASE and Integrated Preschool.
- Nursing assessments are made at each visit.
- 98% of students are returned back to class

Ms. Fernald said that Asthma is the most prevalent health condition in the schools. They also see a variety of life threatening allergies. In addition to treating these conditions and administering medication, a lot of the nurses' time is spent on educating the parents and staff. Also, school-wide training is often done.

Other key jobs of the school nurses include:

- Coordinating medication for school field trips

- Immunization compliance
- Mandatory School Health Screenings (vision, hearing, scoliosis, Body Mass Index)
- End of year reports for the state that include screening data, referrals, and BMI
- Ensuring students in grades K, 3, 6 and 9 have up-to-date physicals
- Work with the Athletic Department to ensure student athletes have medical clearance

The nurses are also involved in town-wide flu clinics and any other public health initiatives with the Board of Health.

Members of the School Committee thanked the nurses for presenting. They all were quite amazed at the scope of the work accomplished.

Mr. Brosgol asked if the nurses have seen an increase in diabetes over the years. All nurses said no but they have definitely experienced a large increase in allergies and the use of epipens.

Mr. Brosgol asked if a lot of students are not immunized. Ms. Fernald said no, just a few and each family has signed the appropriate documentation.

Mr. Pierce asked if it took a long time to collect documentation from each family each year. Ms. Reardon said that it does but the information needs to be updated each year. She believes the district has good compliance with medical paperwork updates.

Ms. Guay said she really appreciates all the work the nurses do. She said that all are especially helpful with the collaboratives. She also know how much time and energy the nurses invest in with items like finding snow pants, snow boots, buying Christmas presents, and all kinds of help for children and families behind the scenes.

Mr. McAllister said he knows that the nurses really do a good job helping the students stay in school and go back to class. He thinks they underestimate the numbers of children they help.

Mr. Hafer asked what else the nursing staff do? Ms. Fernald said that they play an important role in supporting teachers when they have students with medical issues.

Mr. Hafer asked about the new software the Town recently purchased for the board of health. Ms. Fernald said the hope is that this new software will make state reporting and pulling statistics easier. Aspen is not that user friendly in these areas.

Mr. Hafer asked about a wish list. All nurses said it would be ideal if they could find a way to build in about 20 minutes of uninterrupted time to update records and to plan.

Mr. Sills said that he has observed over the years that the nurses have been in the frontline emergencies for student and adults in our buildings. Also, he noted, that many students connect with the nurse on a personal level, which is important to our school culture.

4. School Choice

This issue will be considered at the next School Committee.

5. Flier Distribution Policy

Mr. Sills said that the current policy for flier distribution is to discourage for profit advertising in the schools. However, over the years, there has been some inconsistency in practice of this

policy. The schools receive more and more requests to promote causes (worthwhile and not) by sending home materials with our students.

Mr. Sills and the building principals all feel that schools should not be responsible for telling families about various events. He said the PTAs could do this if they want to.

Mr. Sills would like the policy to say that only school related communications will be sent home with students or advertised in school e-news bulletins. This will be a strict policy – town events such as recreation programs will not be promoted as well.

Mr. Sills will come back with proposed language. The School Committee members agreed with this concept.

6. Superintendent Report

Mr. Sills shared a tape of some BHS students performing at the recent Kennedy Dedication Ceremony.

Mr. Sills reported that the 4th annual Tennacity Challenge was a success. Bedford teams performed very well. Mr. Sills said he is amazed at the expression of volunteerism by members of our community. He thanked everyone who worked hard to make this event such a success.

7. Liaison Reports

Ms. Guay reminded everyone that the town-wide Multicultural Festival will be held Sunday April 12th.

Mr. Brosgol said he is the liaison for the Capital Expenditures Committee and that they are very pleased with the six-year plan process.

Mr. McAllister reported that a group of Bedford High School juniors have won the State Destination Imagination competition and will be competing in the Global Competition in Knoxville later in the spring. He said he was especially proud of the team embracing some of the younger teams from Bedford.

8. Minutes

Mr. McAllister made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 24, 2015 School Committee meeting as amended,

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol

MOTION APPROVED: 3-0-2

(Mr. Brosgol and Ms. Guay abstained because they were not present at the meeting)

9. Future Agenda

Mr. McAllister said that members of the community are asking a lot of questions about the PARCC testing. He would like to have PARCC put on the agenda of a future meeting. Mr. Sills said yes but he said right now, the only action the School Committee can take is to take a stand on recommending that PARCC testing be on a two-three year pilot without repercussions of reporting results.

Nancy Wolk, a resident in the audience, said she and many others would like the opportunity to discuss PARCC at a future meeting. Mr. Hafer agreed because he feels it is important that the School Committee listen to parent concerns about the issue.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Mcallister made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:205 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Hafer **Yes**

Mr. Pierce **Yes**

Mr. McAllister **Yes**

Ms. Guay **Yes**

Mr. Brosgol **Yes**

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 31, 2015

Exhibits/Documents

- Draft of job description for Program Administrator for Student Achievement and Data Analysis Grades 6-12
- Draft of job description for Inclusion Specialist
- Presentation” Bedford Schools Health Services dated March 31, 2015
- Draft of minutes from the February 24, 2015 School Committee meeting.