

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
April 27, 2010**

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order, the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Bickford, Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Hafer and Anne Dickinson-Meltz, student representative.

2. Comments From Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve the “Assistant Director of Special Education: In-District Programs” job description. This is the second time the School Committee has seen this job description.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description of “Assistant Director of Special Education: In-District Program” as amended tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to consider approving an out-of-state field trip to New York City on May 15 – 16, 2010.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip to New York City on May 15 –16, 2010 for 25 students to see a Broadway show at a cost of \$375 per student and no costs to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix announced the following:

Retirement

John Lahiff	Computer Lab Assistant	High School
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Resignations:

Anne Caron	Elementary Teacher	Davis School
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Appointment:

Karen Wolfson	Elementary Math Coach/Teacher	Lane School
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Change in Assignment

Amy Cormie	From .8 Kindergarten to 1.0 Grade 1 Teacher at Davis School
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4. Bedford Education Foundation Presentation

Ilsa Gottlieb and Kate Desjardin, Co-Presidents of the Bedford Education Foundation presented to the School Committee.

Ms. Gottlieb began with an overview of the organization. She explained that the BEF started in 2008 and is an all volunteer organization. The mission of the organization is to “FOCUS on supporting INNOVATION and CREATIVITY within the Bedford Public Schools.” BEF focuses on supporting teachers’ dreams to inspire children by funding projects that are beyond the scope of the typical school budget. The mission of the organization is also to nurture the innate creativity of Bedford’s teachers. The organization seeks out and creates opportunities to work collaboratively with existing parent organizations.

The organization is a registered nonprofit organization. It has published Grant Giving Guidelines and Grant Giving Procedures. Regular monthly meetings are held. The organization has also recruited some strong corporate partners. The financial focus is on building the BEF brand with other business sponsors within the Bedford community. To date, special events such as the Barnes and Noble Holiday Shopping Night and the cocktail party at Palio’s have raised \$25,000. Corporate fundraising has raised \$19,000. Also, web advertising has raised approximately \$900 to date.

Ms. Desjardins spoke about the grant giving. She said she has been very impressed with the creativity of the requests from the teachers. She explained that there is a committee that reviews all requests. Consideration is given equally to all schools and all curricula. To date, 81 total grants have been received and 53 have been funded at a total of \$41,453. Some examples include Digital Microscopes at Davis School, a Smart Board to a third grade classroom at Lane school, 7th grade bone kits and some Kindle readers to the high school.

Ms. Desjardins also explained that the BEF has a High School Student Board that runs separately from the BEF. The students on the board are responsible for determining if projects requested are truly creative and for fundraising.

Mr. Dan Kipp, Mr. Nick Taylor, and Mr. Jack Bernardon, student representatives on the Student Board addressed the School Committee. They explained that the Board is made up of a boy and girl from each high school class. They spoke about their successful fundraiser, the JGMS Basketball Tournament, as well as how they have granted 11 requests for funding to the Davis, Lane and Middle schools. The Grant Giving Process includes an interview by the student team as well as decisions made by the High School Student Board.

Ms. Gottlieb explained the following next steps for the BEF:

- Continue to raise awareness for the organization.
- Continue to work collaboratively with other organizations.
- Seek new leadership and board membership.
- Expand grant writing function.

Ms. O’Gara thanked everyone and was happy to learn about the student board.

Ms. O’Gara asked if teachers can resubmit grants or carry them over to the next year. Ms. Desjardins said yes, that there are no limits given to the teachers. However, the reason that many grants are declined is because there is not enough money to fund the request or the request does not meet criteria, so these would not carryover.

Ms. Bickford also thanked the group for presenting. She asked if teachers get any feedback on a denied request. Ms. Desjardins said yes that they get a letter of explanation.

Ms. Bickford asked for more information on the grant writing process. Ms. White, a member of the Board in the audience gave an example.

She said that PepsiCo is a company that has advertised that they will be setting aside funds to donate to education projects. In order to apply for this grant, the BEF must apply online at the 1st of every month. Ms. White said applying for these grants was a laborious process, similar to trying to buy Red Sox tickets online. The BEF tried last month but did not succeed. They are prepared to try again in May. The hope is to fund a request from JGMS for a Climbing Wall which costs about \$15,000-20,000.

Ms. Bickford asked if other town foundations were funding school budget items. Ms. Gottlieb said yes, but the BEF’s role is not to replace items typically funded by school budgets.

Ms. Bickford said she appreciates this distinction and feels it will be very important in the long term.

Ms. Seibert commented that she learned a lot from the presentation. She asked for clarification on the relationship between the student board and the regular BEF board. Ms. Gottlieb said that they are parallel boards and fall under the same umbrella. They do not meet regularly together but they will try to meet together every once in awhile. She said the student board was implemented in order to “harness the high school student’s ideas and energy and work ethic.”

Mr. Hafer said that he has been involved with the BEF for the last two years. He thanked the BEF committee for their hard work and was proud of the great progress that has been made. He said the objective was to build momentum and the organization has done a great job doing this.

He asked Ms. Gottlieb to “grade” the efforts of the BEF to date. Ms. Gottlieb said she is pleased the organization has raised money to fund some requests and she feels that the BEF is earning respect within the professional community. She feels fundraising is “coming along” and that name recognition of the BEF is “making great strides”.

Ms. Desjardins said that it was too early to give a grade.

Mr. Pierce also complimented the BEF. He asked if students on the Student Board received credits toward community service. Ms. Gottlieb said yes, but believes the students work on the board for other reasons.

Mr. Pierce asked where neighboring towns like Concord or Lexington get their funds. Ms. Gottlieb believes funding comes primarily from parents and not from corporate sponsorships. She also stressed that much of the funding go towards making up school budget deficits. Ms. Gottlieb said the BEF Board understands and respects Bedford's fiscal process and does not want to interfere with this.

5. Space Needs Study

Dr. LaCroix introduced Mr. Frank Locker, a space planning consultant. She explained that he has been working with the Administrative Team since September to examine space needs and requirements for today and the future at the Davis, Lane and Middle schools.

Mr. Locker addressed the School Committee and presented a "Facilities Space Adequacy Study". He explained that the project has evolved over time and that it is clear that Bedford's situation is complicated and requires a lot of interaction with the Leadership Team.

He said his goal was to evaluate the educational space and adequacy of Davis, Lane and JGMS – i.e. match space usage with program needs. He was also charged to develop options to improve operations and efficiency and to provide detailed information about future space requirements for current and planned educational programs and projected enrollments. He described it as a very "complicated puzzle".

Mr. Locker presented his report. The report was organized with a hierarchy of options – room reassignments, simple renovations and new construction. These options were also presented in three phases – Fall 2010 (immediate), within three years, and within five years.

The ground rules were to maintain current class size, keep or improve the quality of relationship locations and to maintain the quality of educational delivery. He also used the recently completed enrollment projection reports.

Mr. Locker discovered the following issues at Davis School:

- The CASE Collaborative room is too small for its population and must be made more functional for its students and teachers.
- Small support rooms
- Many underutilized spaces
- New programs need space
- General Education instructional needs exist. Needs such as the ability to do flexible grouping, a dedicated space for science, ELL Services, and counseling/behavior support are all needed at Davis.
- A Larger OT/PT room is needed.

Mr. Locker presented some very detailed solutions for Davis all within the same footprint. He also plotted out how much new square footage would be needed to fulfill unmet needs.

Mr. Locker then described some of the issues at the Lane School.

- The main shift would be to convert the computer room to a space for the Crossroads Program. This is dependent on laptop deployment replacing the computer lab.
- Storage needs will shift to support the laptops.
- Small support rooms are needed- convert the benches at the end of the hallways to real support rooms.

Again, Mr. Locker presented very detailed solutions for Lane within the same footprint and he also plotted out how much new square footage would be needed to fulfill unmet needs.

At the Middle School, Mr. Locker recommended:

- Fixing the dampness problem in the current storage facilities.
- Establishing a foreign language space
- Finding a more efficient use of the multipurpose classroom by adding a folding wall.
- Reassign the Special Education classroom
- Reassign the Teacher Planning area
- Update Technology Education space and equipment.

Mr. Locker presented very detailed solutions for the middle school within the same footprint as well as a description of how much new square footage would be needed to fulfill unmet needs.

The summarized cost projections for the above recommendations are as follows:

Davis

Fall 2010	\$21,200
Within 3 years	\$65,000
Within 5 years (new space construction)	\$2,475,500

Lane

Fall 2010	\$27,600
Within 3 years	\$67,100
Within 5 years (new space construction)	\$2,921,900

JGMS

Fall 2010	\$50,500
Within 3 years	\$160,900
Within 5 years (new space construction)	\$684,400

Ms. O’Gara thanked Mr. Locker for a comprehensive report. She said that it is interesting to note that the change in technology to laptops happens at a cost. More machines will require more support, more carts, more storage, etc.

Ms. O’Gara asked which building has the most pressing and challenging needs. Mr. Locker and Ms. Taymore answered, “Davis”.

Ms. O’Gara said all the information seems very complicated. Mr. Locker responded by agreeing but he noted that the district decided to take this complicated approach in order to save money. The easy answer would be to add space.

Ms. Bickford asked about the original vision of the “pods” at Davis School. Dr. LaCroix said the pods were designed as a group teaching space where multiple classrooms would come out together. Recently, there has been a shift and the focus is now on gatherings for the entire school. She reminded the School Committee that Davis was built in 1999 and that there have been shifts in the focus since then.

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Locker to describe some of the difficulties at the middle school. Mr. Locker said that with the Team concept, it is not always easy or effective to change some classrooms around because many have to be next to each other because they are on the same team.

Ms. Bickford commented that dismantling the computer labs will have some negative effects on programs and this should be discussed more thoroughly before moving forward.

Mr. Jones agreed with Ms. Bickford and said it would not happen on the first phase.

Ms. Bickford asked where the funding would come from to do any of these projects. Mr. Locker suggested that the District also think about long term funding and begin discussions about new additions with the MSBA sooner than later.

Dr. LaCroix said the process would be to decide what we can do for September 2010 then discuss Special Education program needs and desires and then decide how to pursue meeting these needs. Also, the Technology staff is working on identifying needs for the next 3 to 5 years.

Mr. Hafer commented that it is amazing that Mr. Locker has such a strong grasp of each building and its needs and nuances.

Mr. Hafer asked if we solved our short term problem of finding space for our enrollment blip? Mr. Jones said yes, but it is the next three to five years that requires more analysis.

Ms. Taymore said that growth projections are modest but what is important is to identify what the population looks like and what services it needs.

Ms. Bickford asked if we can meet enrollment needs for September 2010. Dr. LaCroix said yes. Mr. Locker said it is important to look at ways to utilize space more efficiently.

Ms. O’Gara asked if the information presented was done with priority values. Mr. Jones and Ms. Taymore said no.

Mr. Pierce said that the School Committee will have to be prepared to help the community understand why programming needs have changed and require a lot of renovations and/or additions to our schools.

Ms. Bickford asked if there would be a final report. Mr. Locker said yes.

Ms. Dickinson-Meltz asked if these changes were critical and obvious? Mr. Locker said that the Principals and the teachers stated these issues were important. The effects of making these changes will ease operations for the teachers.

Mr. Pierce asked if modular classrooms could be an option. Dr. LaCroix said yes.

6. Special Education Building Needs

Ms. Cyndy Taymore presented School Building Needs Reports to the School Committee. She began by showing the original intention of the Davis, Lane and Middle schools and comparing it to today's population. For example, the 1995 Davis plan called for 12 general education classrooms and today the need is for 17. The 1998 Lane School plan called for 19 general education classrooms and today it has 24.

Ms. Taymore presented more supporting data. She showed how the numbers of ELL students increased from 13 in 1997-98 to 38. She also showed how special education enrollment grew from 352 in 1997-1998 to 489 in 2008-2009.

Ms. Taymore discussed possible reasons for the increase needs and costs in special education. Some of the possibilities include:

- Advances in medical technology
- Rapid rise of children in early intervention and early childhood programs
- Deinstitutionalization of special education students
- Consequence of higher percentage of students living in poverty
- Increase of families experiencing social and economic stress
- Overall increase in Autism

Ms. Taymore noted several things Bedford is doing as a result of the changes in the special education population:

- Expanding the integrated PreK program.
- Establishing an integrated kindergarten program this fall at Davis.
- The Lane School Transitions Program needs larger space.
- Davis School's OT /PT room needs a larger space.
- The new Behaviorist needs space at Lane and Davis.
- RTI requires small group instruction space at all schools.
- Need confidential/secure space for special education records.

Ms. Taymore also described how the needs for general education instruction have changed. There is a need for flexible groupings, a dedicated science space, room for intervention services, Title 1, ELL, and counseling.

Ms. Taymore reminded the School Committee that by law, the school district is obligated to educate the special education students in the least restrictive environment. Ms. Taymore feels that because Bedford lacks space for many in-house programs this obligation has not always been met in the most costly manner.

Ms. O'Gara thanked Ms. Taymore for a very thorough presentation. She asked if the teachers and the students are feeling the pressure of serving the special education

population. Ms. Taymore said yes and said it was important to train staff and supporting staff to help them. She said Teaching Assistants need professional training too.

Ms. Bickford asked if the integrated kindergarten class would affect the size of the other Kindergarten classes next fall. Dr. LaCroix said no and said that the integrated class will look like the other Kindergarten classrooms.

Mr. Hafer said the numbers are staggering and that Ms. Taymore presented a lot of interesting information.

Ms. Taymore and Mr. Coelho discussed the uncertainty of out-of-district tuitions. Ms. Taymore concluded that it is difficult to find accurate out-of-district numbers to use when comparing outside programs v. in-house programs especially in light of availability of placement you may end up with a program that is more expensive.

Mr. Pierce thanked Ms. Taymore and asked why there has been a large drop in the disability category of "Specific Learning Disability". Ms. Taymore explained that Federal regulations have changed and it is now more difficult to be eligible for the specific learning disability category. Previous to this change, it was a "catch all" category.

Ms. Bickford and Mr. Pierce suggested that Mr. Coelho and Ms. Taymore summarize how much the schools can save by developing in-house programs rather than sending students to out-of-district programs. Ms. Bickford believes that this information will help the Town understand why the schools may need to embark on building renovations and/or building additions in the future.

7. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix commented that tonight's Space Needs Study and Special Education Reports complement one another. The Technology Report, which will be presented in the near future, will be another important presentation.

Dr. LaCroix also asked the School Committee to consider approving the concept of an overseas trip for French and Latin students to Europe during the April 2011 break. It is estimated that the cost will be approximately \$3000 per student. If the School Committee agrees with this concept, the Foreign Language department can move forward with some of the plans and then come back to the Committee for a formal approval.

The School Committee gave a consensus that discussions about this trip may begin at the High School. Ms. Seibert reminded Dr. LaCroix that it would be ideal to consolidate all of the upcoming trips so students and parents can learn about them at the same time and make appropriate plans.

Dr. LaCroix outlined some upcoming presentations as follows:

- May 11th - High School Handbook, JGMS Handbook, JGMS School Improvement Plan
- May 25th - Lane School and Davis School School Improvement Plans and Graduation Requirements Review report.
- June 15th - High School School Improvement Plan, System Goals (final look)

Dr. LaCroix reminded everyone that graduation is on June 10, 2010 and it will be outside weather permitting or inside the gym.

8. Liaison Updates

Ms. Seibert mentioned that the Selectmen are applying for "Green Community" status.

9. Minutes

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 22, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 28, 2010 School Committee meeting.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 26, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 9, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the February 23, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the March 9, 2010 Executive Session meeting of the School Committee as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the March 9, 2010 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

10. Adjournment

Ms O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:30 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

School Committee Secretary

Date