

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
February 25, 2014
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room**

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Mr. Hafer, Mr. McAllister and Ms. Guay. Ms. Emily Moss, student representative was also in attendance.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills presented several field trips for approval.

Ms. Flora asked for permission to attend the Sate Career Development Conference in Boston with ten students from the Business Club. Students will be competing and attending seminars in career development. One day of school will be missed. Overnight stay is mandatory. The cost for each student will be approximately \$370 and no cost to the schools.

Mr. McAllister questioned why there is only one chaperone. Mr. Sills said usually there are two – a male and female – and he will ensure this happens.

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee Approve the field trip to the State Career Development Conference in Boston on March 6-8th at no cost to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Nicole O'Toole is asking for permission for six students to attend the Massachusetts All-State Music Festival in Boston on March 20 – 22, 2014. Students will have the opportunity to sing in a chorus with other students from across the state with an outstanding conductor. Two days of school will be missed.

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip on March 20 – 22, 2014 for six students to attend the State Music Festival in Boston at a cost of approximately \$433 from the Music Department budget for the chaperone to stay overnight at the hotel.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. McAllister commented that in general, he does not like field trips that cause students to miss school or to stay overnight. Mr. Sills noted that the school department does try to minimize this.

Mr. Joel Hebert would like approval on a summer trip to Europe in July 2015. He will use the company EF Tours for the planning and guidance on a trip to Berlin, Prague, Switzerland, and Paris on July 1-13, 2015 for approximately 40 students. The cost will be approximately \$3,300 per student. Mr. Sills noted that there has been a big effort to raise funds for scholarships for this trip (and others) so all students who are interested should be able to attend.

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the overseas trip to Berlin, Prague, Switzerland and Paris on July 1-13, 2015 for up to 42 students at no cost to the schools.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. Presentation: Music Department Program Review Team Report

Mr. Marc Keroack, Chair of the visiting team, presented a report on the findings of the recent music department program review. Mr. Keroack is a retired curriculum coordinator of Fine Arts from Chelmsford Public Schools.

Mr. Keroack, on behalf of the visiting team, thanked that administration, teachers and students for their welcome and openness during this program review process. He also gave special thanks to Fran McGrath for her assistance and hospitality.

The team's commendations include:

- Music department has a shared vision
- Technology is an effective aide
- Students and parents are very supportive of the music programs
- There is sufficient financial support
- POMS support is very much appreciated by staff

The team's recommendations for growth include:

- Hold more department meetings on the early release Wednesdays, especially at the elementary level
- Reduce the Chair's teaching load
- Re-examine staff assignments and try to reduce travel time
- Revise itinerant teacher schedules
- More professional development and collegial planning time
- Require more music through grade 7 – ensure every child receives it.
- Schedule ensembles at the middle school to be cross grades and to meet three out of six days.
- Extend technology to middle and elementary schools
- Address lack of storage
- Consider expanding scope of POMS to include theater
- Try to have gender specific choral lessons at JGMS – really builds confidence
- Continue with curriculum development and common assessments (especially at elementary level)
- Maintains separate music space at Davis School
- Begin Choral singing at grade 4
- Create theater electives in grades 7-12

In closing, Mr. Keroack thanked Bedford for being so welcoming to the visiting team and he sincerely hopes this report will help the department grow.

School Committee members had few questions and comments. Ms Seibert was concerned that the schedule at the middle school obviously affects the music program. She asked Ms. O'Toole if she saw away to make it better. Ms. O'Toole said that some changes, such as having 7th and 8th grade

PE together, could enhance the schedule and allow some constructive changes to the middle school music program.

Ms. Seibert also asked for Ms. O'Toole's wish list. She said that she feels the department is adequately staffed but would like more time with the students – both class time and rehearsal time. She would also like more vertical blocking (blended grades).

Emily Moss, student representative, had praise for the music department and said that the teachers always encourage the students to strive to reach their potential. She is always impressed with her peers' skills and talents.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Keroack and the visiting team for the comprehensive report.

Mr. Pierce looks forward to seeing the Action Plan.

5. BHS Press Box

Mr. Hafer reported that the Community Preservation Committee discovered that it is unable to provide the \$90,000 in funding to build the press box. Mr. Hafer said he is convinced that there is a need for the press box and wonders how funding can be secured.

Ms. Seibert believes that the CEC put this project on the bottom of the capital budget priority list because the thought was to explore other options for funding.first

According to Mr. Hafer, Selectman Moonan said he feels that the town would support private fundraising.

Mr. Hafer believes the funding –or at least some of the funding - should come from the School Department by using the Mudge Fund.

Mr. Pierce explained that the School Committee would have to agree to use money from the Mudge Fund for this purpose.

Mr. Hafer agreed to tell the Fields Committee that the School Committee intends to use the Mudge Fund to pay for a portion of the press box project.

Mr. Sills said he thinks this type of commitment will help secure other sources of funding.

The School Committee reached a consensus that the schools will commit to a third of the cost for the new Press Box (\$30,000) and the funds will come from the Mudge Fund Account.

6. FY'15 Budget Discussion

Mr. Sills reviewed the FY'15 budget process.

- In December he proposed a FY'15 budget of \$36,506,859
- A few weeks later, the Finance Committee proposed a budget of no more than \$35 million.
- On January 28, 2013 the School Committee agreed to a reduced FY'15 budget of \$34,845,029
- The Finance Committee then recommended to use \$35,526,473 in the printed warrant for Town Meeting.

Mr. Sills recommended the following in an effort to reduce the gap between the School Committee desired budget and the Finance Committee's recommendation:

- Reduce the Capital Budget by \$26,855 by forgoing the Lane School acoustic project and some of the custodial budget (scrubber). Mr. Sills hopes the town will move this amount to the operating budget.
- Reduce and tighten up on staff and technology by \$60,000 (no library EA, no iPad carts at Lane and Davis, further reduce maintenance supplies and contract services).
- Gap is reduced to \$231,701.

Mr. Sills noted that he has learned that the benefit reserve amount used by the town is based on 80% of school staff taking health insurance. However, only 61% of the school staff take the health insurance benefit. Therefore, he believes the number used for this line item should be around \$130,000 and not \$190,000.

Mr. Sills also received new information on the homeless transportation costs. The actual cost incurred during the month is less than the projected amount and the amount set aside in the reserve account. He estimates about \$80,000 in savings (for the schools) here.

Mr. Sills hopes that his efforts to further reduce expenses and the above new information will be considered by the Finance Committee and together he hopes to reduce the budget gap.

Mr. Hafer agrees with this approach. He believes the School Committee has taken many steps to make the budget more appealing to the Finance Committee. He hopes in turn, the Finance Committee considers ways to move their number a little too.

Mr. Moonan asked if there was anything else that the School Committee would want to come off of the Capital Budget list. School Committee members discussed the possibility of removing the Lane School freezer replacement project.

School Committee members discussed the option of instituting transportation and/or athletic fees. Mr. Hafer noted that instituting fees is not desirable and may end up causing a lot of other problems.

Ms. Seibert said she sees fees as an extra tax on parents for use of public schools.

Mr. Sills thinks there may be other options in the future. He thinks that maybe some day there may be opportunities for families to lease iPads or to bring in their own device.

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee recommend an operating budget for FY'15 of \$35,785,029.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee remove two items (Lane Acoustic Project and Custodial scrubber) from the FY'15 Capital Budget request for \$26, 855 with a recommendation that these funds be transferred to the FY'15 School Committee operating budget

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

7. Open Budget Hearing

The Budget Hearing opened at 9:53 p.m. Mr. Sills presented the FY'15 budget request of \$35,785,029. He reviewed major Capital Expenditures, pointed out the school's successive lean budgets, and key drivers for FY'15. Noted drivers are increasing enrollment, changing school population, increasing class size, mandates, expansion of in-house special education programs and the need for a new system-wide psychologist.

FY'15	\$35,785,029
Guideline	\$35,526,473
Gap	\$ 258,556

Mr. Sills noted that earlier tonight, he and the School Committee discussed various strategies that the Finance Committee could look at to possibly close the gap.

Mr. McAllister said he would like to see a chart that explained actual reductions and reductions of desired items for next year.

The budget hearing closed at 10:12 p.m.

8. Superintendent Report

Mr. Sills reported:

- The new Facilities Director will start in mid March.
- The High School trip to Morocco was very successful
- Boys basketball won the tournament game tonight
- Girls basketball will be playing in their tournament on Friday

9. Future Agenda

The meeting schedule will be March 4th, 11th, and 18th.

10. Adjournment

Ms. Seibert made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:20 p.m

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Pierce Yes

Mr. Hafer Yes

Ms. Seibert Yes

Mr. McAllister Yes

Ms. Guay Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
February 25 2014
Exhibits/Documents

- Budget Recommendation dated February 25, 2014
- School Committee FY15 Budget presentation for Public Hearing dated February 25, 2014

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
February 4, 2014