

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
March 6, 2012**

Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:34 p.m., Ms. Seibert called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Hafer, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce, and Ms. Bickford. Sam Markuse, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments from the Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Bette Mericantante, Food Services, resigned from Davis School.

4. Presentation: Midyear Goals

Dr. LaCroix reported on midyear goals. She distributed a detailed report to the School Committee but presented the following highlights:

Governance and Leadership

1. Communications between school and home
 - Launched new district web site.
 - Embedded five year technology plan into the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan.
2. Communication among and between staff
 - Electronic communications expanded.
 - Work with K-12 Vertical Teams for development and alignment of curriculum continues.
3. Communication between schools and community
 - Outreach to community to ensure broadbased response to Strategic Plan questionnaire. (Approximately 21% of the Bedford population responded.)
 - Continue to use teacher, school and district web site as a venue for connecting with the community.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Continue with establishing high expectations for academic excellence by focusing on programs such as
 - RTI strategy development
 - Improving the K-5 writing program
 - Integrating metacognitive learning strategy at the high school.
 - Scheduling/using the intervention block at Davis and Lane
 - Using a Literacy Coach at Davis and Lane
2. Maintain a balanced comprehensive K-12 curriculum
 - Continue with integrating new frameworks and common core
 - Continue offering 90 minute literacy blocks at Davis and Lane
 - Continue to offer and improve ELL services. (Dr. LaCroix explained that a formal report from the State will soon be forthcoming. She expects that the report will be positive. She

noted that when the State auditors finished the Bedford review, they were very pleased and said that Bedford was the “gold standard”.

- Guidance is devising a plan to implement social and emotional skills to be embedded in all classes at all grade levels (this will eventually become a mandate).
- Davis will be adopting the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program in grades K-2.
- Lane School will likely use the Empowering Writers Program.
- JGMS is just about ready to publish its curriculum maps.
- Grade 9’s one-to-one pilot program is going well (more information will follow)
- Bedford is very close to being awarded a grant with Burlington and Andover for collaboration on improving the one-to-one project.

Assessment and Evaluations

1. Building data teams are being trained.
2. A district wide common assessment plan will be piloted this year as part of the new Educator Evaluation System. Dr. LaCroix explained that the first step is to get used to finding and using common assessments.
3. Continue to evaluate effectiveness of programs. The Art Department program review is underway. The Coordinated Program Review on Civil Rights, ELL, and Title 1 is complete.

Human Resources and Professional Development

1. Provide ongoing training for the one-to-one initiative. Teachers have been trained in common applications for reinforcing student study and organizational skills.
2. Recruit and train competent, motivated Administrators.
 - Hired a new Superintendent – Jon Sills.
 - Hired a new High School Principal – Henry Turner
 - Hired a new Middle School Principal – Kevin Tracy
 - Asked DESE for a waiver to keep Nancy Peterson at Davis School for one more year.
3. Train staff on new Educator Evaluation System
4. Continue with early release professional development day.

Student Academic Support

1. Continue with anti-bullying training to staff, parents and students.
2. Continue to work with students, staff and parents on issues of diversity and tolerance.
3. Launched new scholarship competition for Latino and African-American students.
5. Provide direction and support to students as they prepare for the college application process.
 - Continue with personal outreach to colleges.
 - Continue to communicate BHS’s uniqueness.

Finance and Asset Management

1. Developed an agreed upon FY2013 budget that meets the needs of a growing student population with diminishing resources.

2. Continue to reduce energy use.
3. Negotiate new Collective Bargaining Agreements with Secretaries, Cafeteria Workers and Custodians.
4. Provided a financial analysis of the Special Education Programs that have been established in-house as part of the district's cost avoidance initiatives.
5. Continue to maximize financial resources to support the students from Hanscom Air Force Base.

Members of the School Committee had a few comments and questions.

Mr. Hafer asked how Dr. LaCroix to give herself an overall grade. She said that she is very pleased with everything and that nothing has fallen off of the radar.

Mr. Hafer suggested using data to help describe Bedford's uniqueness. He also wondered if we can use data from Naviance, SAT, etc to help predict expected success in college. Overall, he thinks this is an area where the district should focus on more.

Mr. Hafer would like to see some data on the iPad pilot.

Mr. Pierce asked when the School Committee would see a report on the iPad pilot. Dr. LaCroix said the first report will be more anecdotal. Next year, the report will be more robust as the district is learning how to collect and use hard data on this project.

Mr. Pierce suggested using the web site for more visual feedback – i.e. view more student work and more student voice on the web site.

Mr. Pierce asked about the High School's mandatory homework club. Dr. LaCroix and Ms. Taymore said that it has been very successful and they would like to see if expanded. This desire however will cost a .2 or a .4 FTE.

Mr. Pierce asked how the Lane School's foreign language program is doing in light of the new block schedule this year. Dr. LaCroix said that the foreign language teachers would still rather meet more frequently than they are able.

Ms. Taymore said that Lane also struggles with offering instrument instruction as well.

Ms. O'Gara said that we should take advantage of the fact that many BHS graduates say they are so well prepared for college when they leave BHS.

Ms. O'Gara asked Dr. LaCroix if she would want to establish a separate ELL Department. Dr. LaCroix said no, she thinks ELL instruction is more powerful when it is combined with literacy.

Ms. O'Gara asked if there has been any negative feedback on the early release Wednesdays. Dr. LaCroix said no.

Ms. Bickford asked what the district has to do in order to respond to the NEASC letter. Dr. LaCroix said more details are needed on the required two year follow up. Also a decision is expected in June which will be good for two years.

Ms. Bickford asked about the future social-emotional mandate that is in the future. Ms. Taymore said that it is likely an offshoot of the anti-bullying climate and that it will likely be heavy on regulations. She does not know a lot of the specifics yet. Ms. Taymore also commented that Dr. Ryan, Director of Guidance, has looked at what other states have done in this area and will share what she has found.

Ms. Seibert commented that the elementary schools have been discussing writing curriculum for a long time. She asked what standards are changing. Ms. Taymore said that it is more of a shift and a not a change in standards. The focus will be on creative writing and arguments.

Ms. Seibert said she is concerned that the common core curriculum is not matching children's development, especially in kindergarten.

Ms. Taymore agreed that this is a valid concern and that she is surprised that the State has common core standards for preschool!

5. Field Use for the Bedford Public Schools

Ms. Seibert reported that the topic of turf field is on the agenda again for discussion because it will be an Article on the upcoming Town Meeting warrant. There is a proposal to install turf on the Sabourin football field and lots of residents are discussing this issue. Ms. Seibert said that the School Committee has been asked to comment or express an opinion on this issue since the schools are a major user of the fields in town.

Ms. Seibert reminded the Committee that the Athletic Director recently presented the pros and cons of a turf field at Sabourin and that the Committee has discussed the issue with others as well.

Ms. Seibert read the draft of the warrant article aloud. She noted that the CEC rejected the article and that the Selectmen voted to support it just last night. To her knowledge, no other groups have commented on it.

Ms. Seibert said that it is unusual to ask the School Committee to make an opinion on an issue that is not coming from the School Committee budget, but she said it seems like residents want to know the Committee's opinion.

Sam Markuse, student representative, said that a turf field will let more students play more sports more often, which is a good thing. He also acknowledges that BHS will no longer be at a disadvantaged at the level of play. He is concerned however, about the cost of the project and future costs incurred to maintain or replace the turf.

Mr. Hafer said that residents are looking to the School Committee to state its opinion on the proposal. He said that it is no secret that he supports this initiative and thinks turf is beneficial to the town in many ways. He respects the Athletic Director's voice on the benefits as well. He believes it will help many students in the Bedford Public Schools.

Mr. Hafer feels that there is a town-wide plan for the fields. A Field Use Policy has been developed, a Schedule of Improvements has been made and a plan to expand capacity has been

developed (including this turf proposal). He acknowledges that it is not a visible, well organized plan. However he feels that all of the pieces of the plan have been developed.

Mr. Hafer is aware of the budget constraints that the Town faces but feels that the bonding impact of doing this \$1 million project is negligible to the tax payer. He has not heard anything about this plan risking the Town's superior bond rating. He realizes that the money to do this project comes from one source – our town – but he is supportive of the article.

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: Recognizing that the Bedford Public Schools Interscholastic Athletics and Physical Education programs, along with the town Recreation programs in general, would benefit from an artificial turf at Sabourin Field, the School Committee supports approval of Article 9 (Turf Project for Sabourin Field) at Annual Town Meeting, 2012.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION NOT APPROVED: 2-3

Mr. Pierce said he is still struggling with the lack of an overall field plan in town. Mr. Pierce feels he does not have all of the maintenance cost information on the turf field (and all of the other fields) and is uncomfortable voting to support it without this information. Also, he finds it hard to support a motion with the words “supports approval of Article 9” in it.

Mr. Pierce would like to reword the motion. He is comfortable saying something to the effect that if the town moves forward with the turf field, the School Committee won't stand in the way.

Ms. O’Gara said that as a School Committee member, the Athletic Director’s presentation made her realize how much turf will benefit Bedford Public School students. She supports the BAA arguments too. She acknowledges that money is a concern especially without a lot of information on the cost of maintenance.

Ms. Bickford said that a lot of people in town have worked very hard on this proposal for a very long time. (The design for the proposal came out in 2008.) However, she feels that the process should have been different and should have included a strategic field plan. Ms. Bickford feels that despite the proposal’s benefit to the students, she cannot make this choice above all other needs. She is concerned about the growing enrollment and the resulting capital needs for our schools given the space constraints and the need for additional staff.

Ms. Bickford said in isolation, the argument for a turf field is compelling but turf does not fit into the school’s overall plan and she cannot support a motion for spending a million dollars on this need when there are other needs as well.

Ms. Seibert agreed that a lack of a strategic plan is concerning. She also is concerned that the town does not have the opportunity to evaluate other field expansion options. She said that this is a big plan that will bring a lot of change to the character of the existing field and wonders if this has been explained to all.

Mr. Pierce said that there is still three weeks until Town Meeting so maybe there is time for people to explain the big picture to the residents.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee recognizes that the construction of synthetic turf on Sabourin field as proposed on Article 9 will benefit Bedford Public School's physical education classes as well as interscholastic and extracurricular athletic teams by providing a multi-use, all weather, all season field area. Should Article 9 be approved by Town Meeting, the School Committee affirms its long standing policy and customary practice of sharing access to fields and working cooperatively with all parties who will share use of Sabourin field.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 4-1-0

Ms. O'Gara said she voted no because she finds the motion confusing and wishy-washy. Also she feels that the motion does not say anything different from the last vote on the same issue.

Mr. Hafer said that although he approves this motion, he finds it uncomfortable that the Selectmen voted yes for the article but the School Committee will not, even though the schools will benefit the most from the turf field.

Ms. Seibert said she approves of this motion because it keeps the School Committee neutral and that it recognizes the benefit to the Bedford Public Schools' students.

Ms. Seibert offered to explain the motion and feelings of each school committee member at Town Meeting. Ms. O'Gara said she does not think that this would be necessary.

Mr. Lespasio, a member of the audience and representative from the Turf Committee, said he was thrilled that the Selectmen approved and supports the article. He is however perplexed that the School Committee cannot come up with a more supportive motion given the fact that they will benefit the most. He understands the budgetary concerns but feels that Bedford needs to step up to the new technology of turf fields. He said that there will be a formal field advisory committee established and that this committee will be responsible and accountable for field strategy and long-term planning. The Turf Committee will push forward with a public presentation on March 21st before Town Meeting.

Ms. Seibert thanked Mr. Lespasio and agreed that Town Meeting is the right place to discuss and vote on the turf issue.

6. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix announced that the girls' basketball championship game is Wednesday and that the boy's hockey championship game is Thursday. She congratulated both teams on a great job reaching this point!

She congratulated the JGMS students and staff on a wonderful performance of Bye Bye Birdie last week end She reminded everyone that the high school play is this weekend.

Dr. LaCroix also welcomed Henry Turner as the new BHS Principal!

8. Liaison Reports

None

9. Minutes for Review

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the January 18, 2012 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1

10. Future Agenda

Next meeting will be April 10th.

11. Adjournment

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:50 to Executive Session for contract negotiations for non union personnel to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 6, 2012

Exhibits/Documents

- **Bedford Public Schools' Goals and Objectives dated September 27, 2011**
- **Bedford Public Schools Goals Update presentation dated March 6, 2012**
- **Draft of minutes from January 18, 2012 School Committee Meeting**

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
March 6, 2012