

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
February 14, 2012**

Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:32 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.

2. Comments from the Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve two field trip requests.

The first request is from Mr. Michael Griffin and Ms. Jackie Suprise for permission to take the Environmental Club to Rupert, Vermont to learn about sustainable farming and energy conservation on a working farm. Students will stay overnight on the farm and will participate in some workshops around sustainability and energy conservation. The trip is scheduled for May 18-20, 2012 and will cost approximately \$100 per student. Travel will be by school van. Mr. Griffin explained that this is the first time he and the farm have done this event. Mr. Griffin is pleased to hear that the farm will adjust programming to meet the curriculum needs.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip for the Environmental Club to travel to Merck Forest and Farmland in Rupert, VT on May 18-20, 2012 at no cost to the school department.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The second field trip request is also from Mr. Griffin. He and Ms. Larimore are asking for approval for a trip to Costa Rica on April 12 –22, 2013 to learn about the wide variety of rainforest ecosystems and to gain an understanding and appreciation of the leatherback turtles. The cost to each student will be approximately \$3,209 and no cost to the school department. Students will miss two days of school. The trip is open to 20 students from the Environmental Science class and/or members of the Environmental Club.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Environmental expedition to Costa Rico on April 12-22, 2013 at no cost to the school department.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Griffin noted that this is the same trip as he has offered in the past but this one will include the turtle research piece.

4. Lane School Roof Repairs & BHS Weight Room Floor Replacement

Mr. Richard Jones asked the School Committee to consider approving a repair to the high school weight room floor, which has been damaged by extensive use of free weights by athletic teams and physical education classes. He presented several options for the School Committee to consider.

The first option is to remove the damaged section of flooring and replace it with new wood flooring. The next option is to remove the damaged floor and replace it with concrete infill. The third option is to remove the entire wood floor (2116 square feet) and installing concrete infill and new wood flooring.

Mr. Mangan and Ms. Supprise both support Option 3, the long term approach. Option 1 will require discontinuing use of the free weights or correction every three years or so. Option 2 will limit the use of free weights to only one area of the room. This may constrain the program if expansion is desired in the future.

Mr. Jones explained that the cost for Option 3 is \$36,585. He recommends the long term solution and recommends using the leftover building funds to cover the cost.

Ms. O’Gara asked if Mr. Jones has ever used the vendor, Capital Carpets. Mr. Jones said yes.

Mr. Pierce suggested verifying that the new flooring is appropriate for weight lifting (i.e. supporting the feet, etc.). Mr. Jones agreed to verify this.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve replacing the entire gym/weight room floor (2116 square feet) as outlined as Option 3 in the memo dated February 2, 2012 at a cost of \$36,585 with Capital Carpet and Flooring as the vendor. Funds for this project will come from the BHS Renovation project account.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Jones also asked the School Committee to consider fixing the Lane School roof. Mr. Jones explained that since last year, the Lane School has experienced chronic roof leaks over four rooms located at the end of the classroom wing. The roof that has failed was installed as part of the 1994 addition. It is assumed that the roof has exceeded its ten-year useful life. The roof is currently scheduled for replacement during the 2012 summer break if funding is approved as part of the FY13 Capital Budget at Town Meeting.

However, during last week’s rain storm, the number of roof leaks increased and required the relocation of a classroom for the day. Temporary patches have been applied. Numerous micro-cracks are developing too.

Mr. Jones said that an immediate remedy would be to coat the entire roof at a cost of \$15,000 or another option is to expedite the repair and replace the roof during April vacation. The estimated cost of the roof replacement is \$80,000.

Dr. LaCroix said that the leaking roof at Lane has caused major disruptions to the school days.

Ms. Bickford suggested to Mr. Jones that he write the bid for a roof replacement for work to be done from April through July, and subject to Town Meeting funding approval.

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the payment of \$5,000 to commence a bid package for roof replacement at the Lane School from April – July (out of the operating budget) and to communicate with the Finance Committee the possibility of accelerating the use of funds for the roof repair, contingent on Town Meeting approval.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. Presentation: Educator Evaluation System and Model Contract

Dr. LaCroix shared a condensed version of the Mass DESE presentation on the new educator evaluation regulation. She explained that as a Race-to-the-Top (RTT) district, Bedford has to implement an educator evaluation system in September. Dr. LaCroix explained that this is a “major” change and will need union agreement to implement.

Dr. LaCroix said that the state had a 40 member task force working on this issue and that it took a lot of compromise to get to where it is. She recommends that Bedford adopt the system as is and then if necessary, renegotiate in two years when the teacher contract is ready to be renegotiated. She said that this could be done with a Memorandum of Understanding.

Dr. LaCroix and Ms. Taymore reviewed the new evaluation system:

- This system was developed because no other school-based factor has a greater impact on student achievement as an effective teacher.
- The vision is that every child should be taught by an effective teacher.
- The purpose is to promote teacher growth and development by placing students’ learning at the center.
- The purpose is to recognize excellent teaching and to set a high bar for professional status and shorten time lines for improvement.

Ms. Taymore explained that this is a major shift for staff. “It is important to recognize that every educator is an active participant in the evaluation process.” Ms. Taymore said that self assessment is the starting point.

Ms. Taymore further explained that very specific rubrics will help explain what it means to achieve a standard. (Rubrics are already a part of Bedford’s culture.) Evaluations will be more spontaneous – walk throughs, frequent classroom visits, and mini observations.

Dr. LaCroix said that Bedford will approach this using team goals. For example, the first grade team may have one team goal with regards to reading. All first grade teachers will be held accountable to this goal. The State has said that MCAS and MEPA scores will need to part of the measure of assessment.

The new evaluation system is for teachers, administrators, principals, and counselors – anyone with licensure. There will be four levels of evaluations – unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient and exemplary. The state has warned all districts that no one should be exemplary right away.

Ms. Bickford and Mr. Pierce (as well as other members of the School Committee) said that they are very skeptical that the state does not want any exemplary teachers and that they are trying to position this system as a growth model.

Ms. O’Gara said that this will be a huge cultural issue in Bedford. Teachers will not be happy being categorized as proficient.

Dr. LaCroix said that overall, this new evaluation system can be viewed as applying the special education model to regular education – setting goals. However, team goals will be used at first.

Ms. Taymore said that the focus is really about practice and how it is affecting students. This new system will help school systems deal with unsatisfactory teachers on professional status more efficiently.

Dr. LaCroix highlighted the plans for implementation:

- January 2012 DESE issues forms, templates, and guidance. RTTT districts begin collective bargaining at the local level.
- June 2012 – DESE provides guidance on district determined measures of student learning, growth and achievement.
- Summer 2012 – RTTT districts submit proposals to DESE for review.
- September 2012 – RTTT districts implement educator evaluation.
- January 2013 – all remaining districts begin collective bargaining.
- May 2013 – DESE issues direction on gathering student and staff feedback (and feasibility of parent feedback).
- August 2013 – all districts submit plans for district determined measures of student learning.
- September 2013 – all districts implement educator evaluation system.

Dr. LaCroix said that the School Committee will need to decide if BPS should adopt the model contract, adapt the model or revise the model. She asked the Committee for a “nod” to move forward and begin discussions with the unions.

Mr. Hafer said that philosophically, he sees this as a way to address student performance and effective teaching. He asked Dr. LaCroix if she sees it as a good thing or a bureaucratic mess.

Dr. LaCroix said she does believe it is a good thing. She compared it to the MCAS. Despite all of the issues with the MCAS system, it is a good thing for student learning. She thinks this new system is a “phenomenal” opportunity to focus conversations on student achievement.

Mr. Hafer said he agrees that it is a tool to help get to the root of student achievement – effective teaching. However, it looks like a big, complex, bureaucratic system. It does focus on a way to measure good teaching.

Mr. Hafer said that it will be a challenge to manage all of the teacher evaluation forms on top of managing all the student data requirements. He asked if Dr. LaCroix sees a need for more administrative help to manage this. Dr. LaCroix said yes, there will be a need for more clerical help.

Mr. Hafer asked Dr. LaCroix if she thinks the collective bargaining process will see other risks in this system, especially regarding tying it to merit-based pay. Dr. LaCroix said that she is not sure

but she is approaching it with reason. It is the new law and she would like to work with the union to figure out a way to adopt it so that it works for Bedford.

Mr. Pierce commented that it would be very difficult for us to come up with our own plan if we decided to not adopt the state plan. Therefore, he supports the model plan as a start.

Ms. O’Gara noted that supervisory work will be tremendous and that it will be easy to get lost in this plan and lose sight of the true goal – teaching students. Dr. LaCroix agreed with this concern but said that the model relies on self assessments. She said she sees a lot of pitfalls and that it will not be perfect next year.

Ms. Bickford said that she is concerned with the amount of time required of the evaluator and also with the inconsistency among evaluators.

Ms. Taymore responded by explaining that the State is trying to define a new system and that Bedford will be learning as we do it. The expectation is that it will evolve over time.

Ms. Seibert said that it looks like the system will help bring all teachers together and to collaborate on data, which is not always an easy conversation to have. Ms. Taymore agreed and said that our current Data Teams and new Program Administrators will do this. They will help teachers get more comfortable with data driven conversations.

Ms. Seibert said that it is really is a change in the profession and many teachers may begin to think that they did not get into teaching to do this (and may end up leaving).

Dr. LaCroix said that Bedford is well positioned for these changes. She reminded everyone that it is a growth model and the focus is on student achievement. The shift will be from “what did I teach to what did the students learn.”

Mr. Pierce asked if the School Committee needs to take any actions.

Dr. LaCroix said she wants to take the subject matter to the Collective Bargaining table to see if they will adopt it. If they do, then Dr. LaCroix will present a Memorandum of Agreement to the School Committee to review and approve.

Ms. Seibert said that the School Committee feels that the new teacher evaluation system is a thorough and thoughtful system and cannot imagine creating a unique one for the Bedford Public Schools.

6. Open Budget Hearing for FY13 Operating Budget

The official Open Budget Hearing opened at 9:35. Dr. LaCroix reviewed the FY13 School Committee approved budget.

	FY13 School Approved Budget
Salary	\$23,548,722
Non Salary	\$ 9,238,480
Total	\$32,787,202

The major cost centers are as follows:

Regular Education	\$21,109,000
Special Education	\$ 9,270,291
Facilities	\$2,407,911
Total	\$32,787,202 which is 3.38% larger than the FY12 budget.

Dr. LaCroix also described the budget by location.

High School	\$8,777,825
Middle School	\$6,033,311
Davis	\$4,346,387
Lane	\$4,725,667
System-wide	\$8,904,012

Dr. LaCroix also reviewed some savings/cost avoidance analyses from bringing in-house several special education programs. For example estimated cost avoidance in FY09 (the first year the schools started to do this) was \$1,870,389 for 96 students and 24.5 staff assigned. In FY12, the estimated cost avoided was \$2,922,135 for 109 students and a staff of 35. FY13, it is estimated that costs avoided will be \$3,051,512 for 112 students and a staff of 38.6.

Also, Dr. LaCroix noted that the facilities budget for FY13 decreased from FY12 by 1.34%.

There were no questions or comments from the School Committee or the audience. The public budget hearing closed at 9:40 p.m.

7. Policy Approvals

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve two policies that they reviewed in a previous meeting.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the Bedford Public Schools' Acceptable Technology Use Policy for Students as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve Bedford Public Schools' Social Network Policy for Staff as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

8. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix asked that the School Committee consider a request from the Athletic Director to allow 8th graders to play on the boys JV Lacrosse team. He will also be asking for League approval. He would like to do this so he can have a JV team and said that there will not be any cuts.

Ms. Bickford was a little worried about safety concerns when 8th grade boys play with 11th grade boys.

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Exhibits/Documents

- **New Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Regulations presentation dated Feb. 14, 2012**
- **FY 2013 School Committee Approved Budget Request Executive Summary**
- **Draft – Bedford Public Schools Acceptable Technology Use Policy for Students (LJNDBA)**
- **Draft - Bedford Public Schools Social Networking Policy for Staff**

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