



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE PUBLIC FORUM
January 22, 2016**

LOCATION: Chestnut Hill Community School Auditorium
TIME: 5:00 p.m.

Minutes

Pledge of Allegiance

I. Call to order

Superintendent Coffin started the forum at 5:00 pm.

II. Public Forum – Communication procedures implemented at CHCS last week

After opening remarks related the events and procedures, Superintendent Coffin opened the forum to questions, comments, and concerns. Noted below are the questions, comments, and concerns given by the public;

- Did the children know, after the fact, why there was a Shelter in Place?
- The message to parents with regard to safety, more information would have been better. Without an end result I am at work wondering what is happening. It would be better to have information earlier.
- If it is an employee, with contracts etc., what happens to the person? This was a serious event.
- I'm sure it was pretty frenzied, did not get the email message until 10:05 pm. It should be out earlier, before the children get home. Many stories from children when they got home from school.
- Your protocols were followed and the faculty and staff should be commended. I wanted to make sure we talk about the upside not focus totally on the hype from social media.
- The school is obligated by law to report the incident.
- Could the children have been in danger?
- The firearm could go off.
- Concern that a faculty member brought gun to school.
- Would we have known about it if it didn't come out on social media?
- Why didn't first communication say a faculty member brought a gun in and the issue was taken care of?
- Why was this not reported?
- It was reported, but that is the law that it has to be reported.
- Bigger issue is who brought it on the grounds.
- Parts of protocol cannot be shared, what are you able to share?

- Common sense tells you don't bring firearms.
- What happens if a parent, who has a license to carry concealed, doesn't have the common sense to not bring a firearm to school?
- The laws are part of firearm training. Those with guns should know that you can't bring a firearm onto school property.
- Do you anticipate a final resolution communication?
- There are people that don't know there are no firearms on school grounds that carry concealed how to educate the public?
- The front door protocol, should ask who you are or what you are here for?
- Is a subcommittee looking for volunteers to assist?

Superintendent Coffin addressed the questions and concerns from the public.

- The protocols of the district are not shared with the general public for safety reasons.
- The situation protocols were in place within 5 minutes, which included the district resource officer in the building, police notified, and the Shelter in Place in effect.
- Further investigation was started after the Shelter in Place was in effect.
- Notification to CHCS parents on that day, with the rest of the district the following day.
- The children continued with classroom instruction during the Shelter in Place, and did not know what had gone on during it.
- Administration will revisit regulations and law with staff.
- With regard to notification during the school day, if sent out early you may not listen to the whole message and this could cause some panic. Working on making sure communication is swifter.
- The children were not in danger.
- Communication would have gone out regardless of social media.
- The district cannot legally discuss specifics to the investigation of the incident.
- The district will revisit with staff the entry policies/protocols of the schools.

Mr. Fritsch noted;

- This is the first incident to ever happen, we are trying to improve our system, this was not a bad emergency and staff, admin, and Superintendent are looking at protocols.
- Those that have a license should already know the law with regard to no firearms on school property.

III. Adjourn

Superintendent Coffin closed the meeting at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

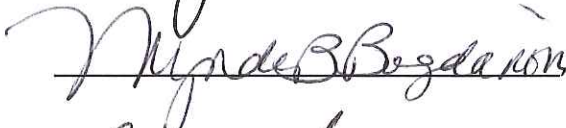
Ramona Griffin

Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signatures:



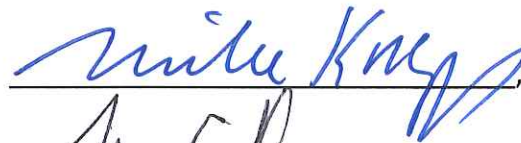
Richard Fritsch, Chair



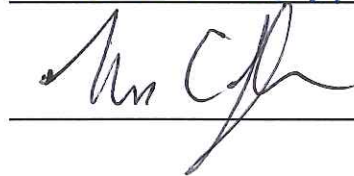
Myndi Bogdanovich, Vice Chair



Dawn French, Secretary



Michael Knapp, Member



Thomas Laughner, Member

The mission of the Belchertown Public Schools is to ensure that every student meets with success every day. To that end, we pledge to ensure that we have rigorous, standards-based curriculum; instruction designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in every classroom; and access to the global learning community via state-of-the-art technology in schools that are communities of respect and civility for all.

The Belchertown School Committee conducts its business in open session pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The public is welcome to comment only on items on the agenda for this meeting as noted above. If you wish to address the School Committee regarding an item not on the agenda for this meeting, please contact the Superintendent of Schools at 413.323.0423 or via email at superintendent@belchertown.org to determine the best way to address your concerns (see [School Committee Policy BEDH](#)).