



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
February 25, 2014**

**LOCATION:** Belchertown High School – Veterans’ Memorial Auditorium

**TIME:** 7:00 pm

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair, present; Ms. Clare Popowich, Vice-Chair, present; Mr. Richard Fritsch, Secretary, absent; Ms. Myndi Bogdanovich, Member, absent; Dr. Michael Knapp, Member, present

**ADMINISTRATION:** Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools, present

**BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:** Michael DeBarge, Benjamin Stone, and Sienna Nielsen – no members present

**VISITORS:** Chief Francis Fox, Belchertown Police Department; Officer Jason Krol, Belchertown Police Department School Resource Officer; Mr. Thomas Ruscio, JBMS Principal

### MINUTES

- I. Call to order  
Dr. Tsoumas called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm
- II. Special awards and presentations  
None
- III. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representatives  
None
- IV. Approval of minutes
  - A. February 11, 2014  
MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved, seconded by Dr. Knapp, to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2014 meeting as presented.  
VOTE: All in favor, 3-0-0
- V. Public comment regarding items on the agenda
  - A. Public hearing on the proposed district Emergency Operations Plan

Dr. Houle presented an overview of the district’s Emergency Operations Plan, including its development by a School Safety Task Force comprised of administrators, teachers, town officials, and parents. She noted that the purpose of the plan is to ensure that advance planning will enact an appropriate response to threats to the health and safety of students, staff, volunteers, and other guests in our school system. Five aspects went into the development of the planning: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. An initial risk assessment

by the task force noted four threat areas that should be part of the plan: (1) fire/hazardous materials, (2) medical, (3) natural disasters, and (4) physical violence. Goals and objectives for the five aspects under each threat area were then fleshed out by workgroups within the task force. Using the resources of the federal government, the plan outlines the principles from the National Incident Management System (NIMS) for an Incident Command System and Unified Command, which would guide the district's actions from mitigation/response through recovery of each threat. The plan clearly spells out roles and responsibilities for administration, faculty, and staff under these guidelines.

The plan also outlines a communications plan using our bulk telephone/email/messaging system for internal and external communications, a radio system for internal communications with a connection to the town's dispatch center at the police department (Dr. Houle demonstrated the emergency tone out and the communications with dispatch.), the use of morning/end-of-day meetings for staff, and the use of proper protocols within unified command to ensure proper communication with first responders, the community, and the press. Other modes for communication include our web site and a dedicated message hotline: 413.323.0423, extension 101.

Dr. Houle also noted that she established a district Twitter account for the purposes of pushing out information: @Belchertownps. She stated that she has begun using it for notification of school cancellation for snow and updates to her blog. The former has resulted in a great deal of interest, particularly on the part of high school students who wish to be "in the know" before the announcement is put out through the media or via the bulk messaging system. The purpose of enacting it for these reasons is to get the public used to this mode of communication, as it is a quick way to get updates out to the community in an event of an emergency. The need to use multiple modes of communication is to ensure that the public receives factual information regarding an incident and to mitigate against the use of rumors from unofficial sources via social media.

The emergency operations poster that has been posted in all classrooms was also updated to reflect the new plan and included in the plan. Once approved, these posters will be reproduced and posted in all classrooms.

Another important aspect of the plan is to attend to the physical and psychological needs of students, staff, and family members. One way to do that is through the use of classroom lockdown kits that can be used to provide comfort and safety during a lengthy situation. These kits are commercially available, but are costly. It is the hope of the task force to solicit donations to keep costs minimal. Some interest has been expressed in helping out with this.

The other part of the plan that will address the physical and psychological needs of families is the use of the Standard Reunification Method, developed by the I Love U Guys foundation, which is part of the plan. Dr. Houle summarized how the system

works and that arrangements have been and are continuing to be made to ensure that we can enact this system as we need to during the recovery phase of an incident.

Dr. Houle summarized the presentation with some suggestions as to how the public can help by working with the district and town to follow protocols:

- Avoid “calling in” so communication resources remain open to needs
- Use official sources to get information – do not try to disseminate information based on the rumor mill
- Avoid arriving “on scene” and hampering rescue/response efforts – wait for information on reunification area
- Personal/Family plan – ensure information is up-to-date in our student information system so information can be received, bookmark our web site, follow us on Twitter: @Belchertownps.

She also suggested the following as helpful actions:

- Resources: donations will be helpful
  - Classroom lockdown kits – more specific information will be forthcoming
  - Items for reunification – more specific information will also be forthcoming
- Volunteers to assist, if needed

The presentation concluded with an opportunity for questions or comments from the Committee or the public. Both Chief Fox and Officer Krol praised the work of the task force and how everyone came together and worked to put this plan together. Dr. Houle also publicly thanked Deputy Chief Ian Cyr, University of Massachusetts, Amherst Police Department, for his assistance with the plan.

The School Committee members noted that this plan was very comprehensive in its scope and all in the room agreed that the goal was to never have to use the plan, but being prepared for an event was necessary. Dr. Houle stated that next steps would be to develop training on the implementation of the plan and that she, Officer Krol, and Deputy Chief Cyr would be working on this action item next.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved, seconded by Ms. Popowich, to approve the Belchertown Emergency Operations Plan as presented.

VOTE: All in favor, 3-0-0

#### B. Other agenda items

There were no comments about other agenda items from the public.

### VI. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent

#### A. Belchertown Public Schools Emergency Operations Plan

##### 1. Completion of the work of the School Safety Task Force

With the plan having been approved, Dr. Tsoumas noted that it was appropriate to disband the School Safety Task Force.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved, seconded by Dr. Knapp, to disband the School Safety Task Force.

VOTE: All in favor, 3-0-0

Dr. Houle stated that she would send out a thank-you letter to the members of the task force on behalf of the Committee to express their and her appreciation for their service.

B. Service Agreement: Valley Human Services

Dr. Houle presented an extension of the current agreement with Valley Human Services and the Carson Center for providing counseling services to students in the district as need be. This agreement, if approved, would be in force through June, 2015.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved, seconded by Dr. Knapp, to approve the agreement with Valley Human Services and the Carson Center through June, 2015 as presented.

DISCUSSION: Dr. Houle reminded the Committee that these services are provided at no charge to the district. All services are billed to third-party insurance.

VOTE: All in favor, 3-0-0

VII. Reports of subcommittees/representative to Collaborative for Educational Services

A. Collaborative for Educational Services (Ms. Bogdanovich)

No report given.

B. Curriculum & Instruction (Dr. Tsoumas/Dr. Knapp)

Dr. Houle stated that there would be a need to meet with this subcommittee to discuss some future directions with implementing a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) component to the program of studies at the middle and high schools. A meeting for this purpose was set for Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

C. Healthy & Safer Schools Advisory Committee (Ms. Popowich)

D. Jessica's Boundless Playground Committee (Dr. Tsoumas)

1. Report from February 12, 2014 meeting

Dr. Tsoumas reported that they met with the contractor for the project, developed a time table of activities, and that Mr. Lachance and Mr. Williams were working on logistics for site preparation. The next steps would be to work on donations of goods and services, and to get groups moving forward.

E. Personnel & Policy (Ms. Popowich/Ms. Bogdanovich)

1. Next meeting: March 18, 2014 regarding preschool policies and library procedures

F. Property & Transportation (Mr. Fritsch/Dr. Knapp)

No report from the subcommittee. Dr. Houle stated that the bids for regular buses had closed and that she would be bringing forward a bid for approval at the March 18, 2014 meeting.

G. Technology Advisory Committee (Mr. Fritsch)

1. Report from February 5, 2014 meeting

This group did not meet due to the weather. Dr. Houle stated that she would find out when the next meeting would take place.

- VIII. New business  
None
- IX. Unfinished business  
None
- X. Correspondence  
A. Agenda: February 25, 2014  
B. Minutes: February 11, 2014  
C. Carson Center Service Agreement  
D. Belchertown Emergency Operations Plan
- XI. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Parts (2) and (3), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Unit C, Custodians, as conducting said business in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's negotiating position. The Committee will return to open session.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dr. Knapp, yes; Ms. Popowich, yes; Dr. Tsoumas yes at 7:52 pm.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 8:45 pm. Dr. Tsoumas announced that there were no actions to be taken by the Committee in Open Session.

MOTION: Dr. Knapp moved, seconded by Ms. Popowich, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 pm.  
VOTE: All in favor, 3-0-0

*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.*

**2011-2015 Strategic Plan Goals (adopted by the Belchertown School Committee, 3/1/11):**

- Goal #1: To have guaranteed (standards-based and implemented by all), viable (doable and accessible to every student), seamless K-12 curriculum in every content area.
- Goal #2: To have rigorous (standards-based), relevant (grounded in 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills), differentiated instructional practices with the ability to access the global learning community via technology available to every learner.
- Goal #3: To implement a plan to ensure that our students understand the importance of acceptance, tolerance, and respect supported by all adults in the community.

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](mailto:superintendent@belchertown.org) to determine the best way to address your concerns (see [School Committee Policy BEDH](#)).

Minutes prepared by Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_, Linda Tsoumas, Chair  
*Clare Popowich*  
\_\_\_\_\_, Clare Popowich, Vice-Chair  
*Michael Knapp*  
\_\_\_\_\_, Michael Knapp, Member