



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING AND  
JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE AND  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
APRIL 23, 2013**

**LOCATION:** Swift River Elementary School, C-Side Commons  
**TIME:** 7:00 pm

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair (present); Mr. Eric Weiss, Vice Chair (present); Ms. Clare Popowich, Secretary (present); Ms. Beverly Phaneuf (present); Mr. Richard Fritsch (present)

**ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools (present); Mr. Brian Cameron, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning (present); Ms. Kristi Guzzo, Director of Student Support Services (present); Mr. Ben Admussen, Data Administrator (present); Mr. Scott Karen, Director of Technology (present); Mr. Robert Lachance, Director of Buildings and Grounds (present); Ms. Sandra Bremer, Cold Spring School Principal (present); Mr. Robert Kuhn, Swift River Elementary School Principal (present); Dr. Jose Irizarry, Chestnut Hill Community School Interim Principal (present); Mr. Thomas Ruscio, Jabish Brook Middle School Principal (present); Ms. Christine Vigneux, Belchertown High School Principal (present); Ms. Phyllis DuComb, School Nurse Leader (present); Mr. Robert Marchewka, Dean of Students/Athletic Director (present)

**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN OFFICIALS:**

Mr. Gary Brougham, Town Administrator (present); Ms. Jill Panto, Town Accountant (present); Ms. Lisa Banner, Town Treasurer/Collector (not present)

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Mr. Paul Silva, Chair (present); Mr. Steven Rose (present); Mr. Kyle Vincent (not present); Ms. Mary Olberding (present); Ms. Kate DeCou (present)

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEMBERS:**

Mr. George Archible, Chair (present); Mr. William Barnett, Vice-Chair (present); Ms. Brenda Aldrich, Clerk and Education Liaison (present); Mr. Ronald Aponte (present); Mr. Kenneth Elstein (present)

**BHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:**

(not present)

**VISITORS:**

Mr. Greg Scibelli, Sentinel reporter; Mr. Jim Russell, Republican reporter; Mr. Lewis Louraine, BCTV Channel 5 Station Manager; Ms. Amanda Johnson, JBMS teacher; Ms. Katharine Faron, JBMS Long Term Substitute Teacher; Mr. Thomas Howell, BHS teacher; Ms. Christina Aponte; Ms. Rebekah Aponte; Ms. Mona Griffin; Mr. Robert Griffin

## MINUTES

- I. Call to order  
 Dr. Tsoumas called to order the Regular School Committee meeting at 7:02 p.m.
- A. Dr. Tsoumas made the Public Assembly Notice announcement.
- B. The Regular School Committee meeting paused for a call to order by the Select Board and the Finance Committee, as follows:  
 Mr. Archible called to order the meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 7:03 p.m.  
 Mr. Silva called to order the meeting of the Finance Committee at 7:03 p.m.
- C. At this time, Dr. Tsoumas proposed to reorder the agenda of the School Committee meeting to first address *Item IV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda*, followed by *Item VI. B. FY 2014 Budget*.
- MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the reorder of the School Committee meeting agenda, as proposed. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.
- VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously
- II. Special awards and presentations  
 None
- III. Update from BHS Student Advisory Council representative  
 None
- IV. Public comment regarding items on the agenda  
 Dr. Tsoumas asked that members of the public wishing to comment should please stand, identify themselves and state their address.  
 After presentation of the proposed FY 2014 Budget, Mr. Robert Griffin, of Wilson Rd., stated that it appeared that the district is spending beyond the amount of the Race To The Top grant funding, and Dr. Houle concurred, but clarified that this was necessary spending which would have been higher in the future had Belchertown not received the RTTT grant.
- V. Approval of minutes  
 A. April 9, 2013  
 MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2013 Regular School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Phaneuf seconded the motion.  
 VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously
- VI. Reports and recommendations of the Superintendent  
 A. Class of 2013 trip to Funway Park, Litchfield, NH  
 Ms. Vigneux presented a request for an out-of-state senior class day trip to Funway Park in Litchfield, NH, on May 24, 2013. After spending time at the park, the students will then attend a Murder Mystery Dinner in Boston. Ms. Debra Davidsohn, BHS Guidance Counselor, and Ms. Christine Holesovsky, BHS Teacher, will chaperone this event along with 8-10 additional approved chaperones. Dr. Houle stated that she had reviewed the field trip request and found all the paperwork to be in order according to policy, and she therefore recommends approval by the School Committee of this request.
- MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the request for the Class of 2013 field trip to Funway Park, Litchfield, NH on May 24, 2013, as presented. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion.
- VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

**B. FY 2014 Budget**

Dr. Houle gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Belchertown Public Schools FY 2014 Proposed Budget, which was described as a level service budget first brought before the School Committee in March, as well as an FY 2014 Level Service Summary of Changes. Two different sets of figures were presented: All Funds Budget (all expenditures and revenue offsets, including grants and revolving funds) and Local Education Agency (LEA) Budget (Chapter 70 reimbursement for public education and the local town contribution), and Dr. Houle elaborated on the details of each. After arriving at a bottom line, further refinement was done in order to align the budget with the district strategic goals and school improvement plans. Reductions were taken to accommodate areas of additional needs so that these items would be budget-neutral, and these are described in the FY 2014 Level Service Summary of Changes. The resulting school district budget figures represented a gap of \$243,421.00 in order to meet the budget recommended by the Finance Committee. With the need to close that gap in mind, and as directed by the School Committee, Dr. Houle and administrators developed a three-tiered plan of budget adjustments and she reviewed those items. These adjustments include reductions in personnel, building projects, extra-curricular activities, and increases in bus fees, athletic fees, and parking fees. With regard to the proposed increases in fees, she said that she had researched fees in surrounding school districts, and found that Belchertown was among those who charged the lowest amounts. Dr. Houle also reported on the many new unfunded or underfunded mandates from the DESE facing the school district, i.e., reports, submission of information and data, curriculum/instruction/assessment initiatives, as well as new health and safety initiatives, etc., and she noted that there are more regulations and requirements with less funding every year. However, in spite of increasing demands coupled with budgetary decreases, Dr. Houle was pleased to note the many accomplishments of the Belchertown school district in the last few years: clearly articulated K-12 curriculum is nearly complete; accountability status of several schools has improved; technology infrastructure has been stabilized and updated; cohesion and collaboration now exists among all five schools. Dr. Houle concluded that the three-tiered budget proposal, as well as the proposed increases in fees, would close the gap with the Finance Committee's recommendation for the school budget, and also provide some surplus cash for the School Committee reserves, which is essentially the school district's "rainy day fund". It is Dr. Houle's recommendation that the School Committee accept the proposed budget adjustments in order to close the gap between the school district's projected budget and the Finance Committee's recommendation, based on available revenues, in time for the April 30, 2013 public budget hearing.

Mr. Silva discussed the available town-wide revenue, as well as town-wide expenses. He explained that since available revenues are not always enough for the upcoming fiscal year, he would ask town residents to attend the Town Meeting on May 13<sup>th</sup> in order to request that funds be borrowed from the town's stabilization fund. The amount requested is typically \$250,000.00, but Mr. Silva proposed that this year the town be asked to release \$325,000.00 from the stabilization fund to help meet increasing needs.

Dr. Tsoumas opened the floor for discussion among the town boards, but neither the Select Board nor the Finance Committee had any comment.

Mr. Weiss remarked that throughout his service on the School Committee, he has witnessed budget cuts increasing each year, forcing the school district to work with a limited amount of resources. He also expressed his gratitude to the Superintendent, School Committee Chair and the Finance Committee for working together prior to this evening's meeting to come up with the revised FY 2014 budget proposal.

MOTION: Mr. Weiss moved to approve the adjusted Belchertown Public Schools FY 2014 Proposed Budget, including the infusion of reductions and increases in fees into the bottom line to meet the Finance Committee-recommended number, as presented. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

C. Recommendation for Preschool program changes and fees

In a Personnel & Policy Subcommittee meeting held earlier this evening, Ms. Popowich stated that Ms. Guzzo presented a proposal for a three-fold change to the Belchertown Public Schools' Integrated Early Childhood Program. Dr. Houle has reviewed this proposal, as presented in Ms. Guzzo's memorandum included in tonight's correspondence, and recommended that it be brought to the full School Committee for approval.

At the School Committee's request, Ms. Guzzo then briefly reviewed the three items in her proposal, with explanations for each, as follows:

- 1) to increase the amount of days in which students attend the Integrated Early Childhood Program by one extra day each week, which will increase the number of in school instructional time from 350 hours to 440 hours
- 2) to add three-year-old students to the peer group in order to provide more peer slots and provide students at a younger age with earlier experience in the classroom setting
- 3) to increase the fee for role model peers from \$1,800 to \$2,300 per year to help offset the cost for the proposed 5<sup>th</sup> day of school.

Dr. Houle stated that a sliding fee scale would be offered to families in need, and preferential treatment would be given to siblings in the PreK admission lottery. It was also noted that the fees had not been changed or increased in many years.

MOTION: The School Committee moved to recommend approval of the Preschool program changes and fees in Ms. Guzzo's proposal, as presented by the Personnel & Policy Subcommittee.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

VII. Unfinished business  
None

VIII. New business  
None

IX. Correspondence  
A. Agenda: April 23, 2013  
B. Minutes: April 9, 2013  
C. Out-of-State Field Trip Request: BHS Class of 2013  
D. FY 2014 Proposed Budget documents  
E. Proposal for Preschool program changes and fees  
F. Thank you letter to CSSR PTO for Family Fun Run/Walk event

X. Vote to enter into Executive Session under M.G.L., c. 30A, §21, Part (3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Unit A, Teachers, Unit B, Secretaries, Unit C, Custodians, Unit D, Food Service Workers, Unit E, Paraprofessionals, and with nonunion school administrators as conducting said business in open session would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's negotiating position. The Committee will not return to open session.

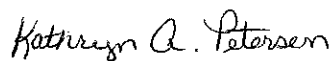
Dr. Tsoumas – yes  
Mr. Weiss - yes  
Ms. Popowich – yes  
Ms. Phaneuf - yes  
Mr. Fritsch – yes

MOTION: Mr. Archible moved to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 7:55 p.m.  
Mr. Aponte seconded the motion.

MOTION: Mr. Silva moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 7:55 p.m.  
Ms. DeCou seconded the motion.

The School Committee entered into Executive Session at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Kathryn A. Petersen  
Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signatures:

 Linda Tsoumas, Chair

 Eric Weiss, Vice Chair

 Clare Popowich, Secretary

 Beverly Phaneuf, Member

 Richard Fritsch, 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.*

**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 Dr. Judith Houle, Superintendent of Schools, at 413.323.0423 or via email at [jhoule@belchertown.org](mailto:jhoule@belchertown.org) to determine the best way to address your concerns.

BELCHERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR SESSION  
SIGN IN SHEET

DATE: 4-23-13

PLS. PRINT NAME BELOW

HR Aldrich

Thomas Rucio

Ronald Aponte

Christie

Christie

Scott Kne

Phyllis DeLo

Mona Lippin

Robert E. Off

ing

Calvin

C Aponte

R Aponte

Tim/Rosa

A. Johnson

K. Eaton