

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
January 18, 2011**

Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 6:30 p.m., Mr. Hafer called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce and Ms. Bickford

2. Adjourn to Executive Session

Ms Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn to Executive Session at 6:30 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford.

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

3. Return to Open Session

At 7:45 p.m., Mr. Hafer called to order the open session meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce and Ms. Bickford.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ms. O’Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the January 4, 2011 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

5. Comments from Public

None

6. Presentation:: BHS Program of Studies

Mr. Jon Sills, Principal, said that only a few substantial changes were made to the BHS Program of Studies for the 2011-2012 school year. He presented a memo to the School Committee that highlighted all of the changes. Mr. Sills discussed a few of the more substantial changes.

One change is that there will now be Math Intensive class offered for 9th grade as well as an English level 2 class. These classes were added to accommodate the students coming from the Crossroads Program at the Middle School. Mr. Sills said the curriculum covered in these classes will be the same as the other 9th grade Math and English classes. However, these new classes will be taught by Special Education teachers.

Rather than read the memo describing the changes to the Program of Studies, Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to comment and/or ask any questions.

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Sills to explain the thought process behind the change in the requirements for moving to a higher level in English. The new requirements add the language “a 93 on tests and papers” to the guideline for change to a higher level.

Mr. Sills said that 9th graders get a lot of opportunities to strengthen their grades. Therefore, the thought process was to tie moving up a level to the grades on tests and papers rather than the final grade. However, Mr. Sills said that he has decided not to move forward with this change.

Mr. Sills also pointed out that the new Program of Studies clarifies the Geometry Level 4 prerequisites so that it is consistent with prerequisites of other level 4 classes.

Ms. Bickford asked to see a reformatted Science table and Mr. Sills agreed to provide it.

Ms. Bickford asked about the Anatomy and Physiology Level 5 change. Mr. Sills explained that the Science Department does not offer Level 5 classes in general, but offers AP instead. However, this practice is being reconsidered. This particular class has not been very popular and has been difficult for teachers to prepare. Mr. Sills said that the entire issue of Level 5/AP classes in science will be discussed.

Ms. Bickford asked if the level 2/3 Environmental Science class will be offered. Mr. Sills said yes and a Level 5/AP will also be offered. He is interested to see if the level 2/3 is a popular choice.

Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Sills to explain some of the changes being made at the Skills Center. Mr. Sills explained that the Skills Center needs to be a more targeted intervention facility. It will target any and all students who need intervention.

Ms. Bickford suggested defining the term “RTI” within the Program of Studies. Mr. Sills agreed and handed out a definition that described Response to Intervention. Ms. Taymore reviewed the definition and agreed to work with Mr. Sills to refine the definition.

Mr. Pierce said that the guidelines that have been developed for English placements could be used as feedback to students and parents. Mr. Sills said that these very discussions are beginning to happen. The NEASC review indicated that the high school needs to figure out a way to communicate benchmark information along with grades.

Ms. O’Gara said she is pleased to see how the English requirements have been clarified. She thinks it is helpful that parents are now receiving GRADE test results too.

Ms. Seibert asked why GRADE results are used a part of the requirements for leveling decisions. Mr. Sills said that there is a desire to have three benchmarks/requirements to make leveling decisions. Teachers have been pleased with the GRADE test as one assessment tool and as one decision tool .

Ms. O’Gara thanked Mr. Sills for clarifying the Foreign Language chart.

Ms. Seibert suggested that Mr. Sills add the fact that seniors can extend an existing project for the Senior Culminating Project course. Ms. Seibert feels that some students may be more interested in taking this course if they know they can continue working on an existing project and do not have to come up with a brand new idea. Mr. Sills agreed and will tweak the descriptions accordingly.

Ms. Seibert said that she is concerned that placing Journalism course description at the end of the Program of Studies will make it less desirable. Mr. Sills assured Ms. Seibert that the Guidance Department will make sure all students are aware of the course.

Ms. Seibert said that the descriptions of the Special Education programs are very vague and is concerned that appropriate students and families may not understand. Mr. Sills said that it is hard to be descriptive about the programs without revealing too much about the students and their needs. He believes the descriptions are clear to the target audiences.

Ms. Seibert asked Mr. Sills about the process for the senior P.E. waiver for current juniors who might have a schedule conflict for pre-requisite classes. Mr. Sills agreed to look at each situation as it arises for the individual students.

Mr. Hafer asked if the changes made to the leveling guidelines affect a lot of students. Mr. Sills said no. The goal of the changes was to be clearer.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the BHS Program of Studies for the 2011-2012 School Year as outlined in the January 3, 2011 memorandum as amended tonight.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

6. FY'12 Budget Discussion/Vote

Dr. LaCroix explained that tonight, the School Committee would continue discussing the FY'12 budget and focus on priorities and reductions. At the end of the discussion, the School Committee will vote on a budget to present to the Finance Committee. Dr. LaCroix explained that very likely, this will not be the final vote on the budget. The budget will be a work in process up until it is voted on a Town Meeting in March.

Dr. LaCroix began the discussion with a review as follows:

Maintenance of Services Budget

On November 30, 2010, Dr. LaCroix presented a "Maintenance of Services" budget that was 5.13% higher than FY'11. She explained that the drivers of this increase included Special Education out-of-district tuitions and transportation and Early Retirements/Sick Leave Buy Backs. She noted that this year ten people announced their retirements (compared to zero last year). This budget also asked to add an ELL Teacher, a .5 Lane Assistant Principal and a .5 Lane Special Education Team Chairperson position. The budget also included money for computer replacements, textbook purchases and \$400,000 in collective bargaining reserves.

Level Funded Budget

On December 7, 2010, Dr. LaCroix presented a level funded budget, which was \$1.6 million less than the Maintenance of Services budget. This budget had a headcount reduction of 20.7 FTEs and \$200,000 reduction in athletics and extra curricular activities.

Finance Committee Guideline Budget

On January 4, 2011, Dr. LaCroix presented a budget that had \$2.1 million reduction from the Maintenance of Services budget. Further cuts were articulated that resulted in a loss of 35.3 positions. These cuts were articulated to address a \$526,621 reduction in the Finance Committee guideline which represents the school's 65% portion of town's deficit in the model.

Tonight, the School Committee continued with reviewing the proposed reductions. Mr. Hafer explained that the School Committee stopped last week at the Athletics/Extra Curricular activities.

Ms. Bickford asked to go back and review some of the items that were on last week's list of reductions. She felt that the School Committee did not reach a consensus on many of these cuts but reached more of an acknowledgement. As a result of the review, Ms. Bickford asked to put the Teaching Assistant cuts aside. The School Committee agreed.

Other items the School Committee agreed to hold from the reduction list included:

- Lane School .8 and .2 Educational Assistants
- All Teaching Assistants
- Summer Custodians
- Late Bus
- All athletic and extra curricular reductions

The School Committee also agreed to put on hold all of the other proposed cuts for now.

Ms. Bickford did ask if it was absolutely necessary to add a .5 SPED Team Chair position and a .5 Assistant Principal position at Lane. Ms. Taymore said yes and that she cut a lot of items from the Grant to make this work. Her concern is that there are some challenging students and challenging programs at Lane and these two positions are critical to their success.

Ms. Bickford also questioned adding more time to the Computer Lab assistant at Lane (from .3 to .8). Dr. LaCroix said it would not be wise to put this off because demand for computer lab assistance has grown quite a bit especially due to the one to one computer trial.

Ms. Bickford suggested for budget purposes that a cut to the Teaching Assistants be reduced to 2 rather than 7.8. She also noted that it makes sense for Ms. Taymore and Dr. LaCroix to decide where the cuts are to be made based on student needs.

At the end of this discussion, the School Committee reached consensus on \$813,00 of cuts, which included a personnel reduction of 5.5.

Mr. Hafer suggested that the School Committee not calculate the amount of healthcare savings from the reduction in FTEs/headcounts. Mr. Pierce disagreed. He believes that a value should be assigned to this savings. (He calculated it to be approximately \$32,000).

Ms. Bickford said that she and the entire School Committee acknowledge the Town's constrained fiscal position. However, she wants to remind everyone that the schools are faced with some large non-discretionary and legal requirements. (\$309,000 for Early Retirements/Sick Leave Buy Backs and \$479,000 increase in Special Education out-of-district costs). Ms. Bickford also stated that she would like the town to apply the \$562,503 of state aid in the same manner as it has done in the past with Pothole Funds – as an offset to budget items.

Ms. Bickford then discussed some financial calculations and assumptions that she used to come up with a proposed budget number to bring to the Finance Committee for discussion. This budget number, \$32,258,587.95, represents the agreed upon reductions and a 65/35 split of state aid received for educating the students from Hanscom. She also hopes that contract negotiations will help make this number a reality.

All in all, Ms. Bickford understands that there are lots of unknowns with Town finances at this point in the budget process. She believes that it makes sense to stop the School Committee's budget discussions for now and to vote on a budget number to bring to the Finance Committee for further discussions.

Ms. Bickford also commented that over the last several weeks, the School Committee has heard from many people about how much they value the schools and its programs.

Ms. Bickford also noted that the fee analysis that Mr. Coelho has developed will be shared with the Finance Committee for future discussions. The School Committee acknowledged that they generally do not want to implement fees for programs or services at this time.

After discussions, Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee's fiscal FY'12 budget is \$32,828,380.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

School Committee members commented that this number is a 2.69% increase over the FY'11 budget. They all agreed however, that this is just the beginning of a series of discussions with the Finance Committee.

7. Liaison Reports

Ms. Seibert reported that there will be a Fiscal Planning meeting next week. She also noted that at the end of February, Fiscal Planning will host a budget discussion for the public. The School Committee will participate in this meeting too.

Ms. Seibert also reminded everyone about the Bedford Education Foundation's fundraiser at Waxy O'Connor's restaurant on January 29th.

8. Future Agenda

Mr. Hafer said that the new Energy Policy developed by the Energy Task Force will be circulated to the School Committee after the budget process is over.

The next School Committee meeting will be February 1, 2011.

9. Adjournment

Ms Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:40 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 18, 2010

Exhibits/Documents

- Memo to Dr. LaCroix regarding proposed Program of Studies Changes for 2011-2012 from Jon Sills dated January 3, 2011.
- Draft of minutes from the January 4, 2011 School Committee meeting.

Bedford School Committee

**Executive Session Minutes
January 18, 2011**