

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
December 18, 2012
Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:35 p.m., Ms Bickford called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Hafer, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce, Ms. Seibert and Ben Driscoll, student representative.

Ms. Bickford called for a moment of silence in honor of the lives lost in the shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Ct.

2. Report on School Security/Comments from the Public

As a result of the recent school shooting in Newtown, Ct, Mr. Sills reported on security at Bedford schools. He acknowledged that these are frightening times and he and his Administrative Team are reviewing safety and security procedures, just like all other school districts across the country.

Mr. Sills reviewed Bedford’s security procedure history. In 1999, the tragedy in Columbine, Colorado was a notable event. Bedford identified security concerns after this event. Each school established a crisis team and since 2005, Bedford has had a district level crisis team that coordinates work from all four schools. It includes police, fire, and Bedford Youth and Family Services (BYFS). As a result, protocols and procedures have been established for many issues – intruders, fire, assault, death of a student, lock downs, hostages, bomb threats, weapons, and pandemic flu in schools.

Bedford schools practice lockdown drills. The schools also have a locked-door policy, except for the front doors. Visitors are expected to check-in. Also, anti-bullying and counseling work is in place to protect victims and to minimize acts of retribution.

In 2009, an in-depth survey on security was sent to parents. After this information was analyzed, the School Administration, Crisis Team and School Committee decided that:

- All faculty and staff should wear badges.
- Front doors would not be locked but all other doors would be locked in all school buildings.
- Cameras would not be deployed.

In the immediate aftermath of the recent tragedy in Newtown, Ct., Mr. Sills and the Administrative and Crisis teams have resolved to re-examine the safety and security measures and policies. A task force has been established including Principals, Assistant Principals, police and fire representatives, the Director of Facilities, a School Committee member, a BYFS representative, and a parent from each school.

This task force is charged with identifying safety and security procedures at each school and the areas of concern or potential danger that exists and can be addressed in some way through the implementation of new procedures, addition of personnel, or the use of new technology.

Each principal will hold a roundtable discussion to gather input from interested parents and community members.

For now, front doors at each school will be locked. Police will do extra patrols around the schools. According to Mr. Sills, these efforts will be taken to reassure parents, faculty, and students that everything will remain calm and safe at our schools.

Mr. Sills will make a further recommendation to the School Committee at a meeting in February.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Sills for the detailed update. They did not have any questions. Ms. Bickford asked the parents in the audience if they had any questions or concerns.

Ms. Marylou Barsam, a parent from Lane School, said that her child did not discuss the Newtown tragedy in school with faculty but students were talking about it on the playground. Her daughter is worried that this could happen again. She asks that the School Committee make short-term plans that err on the side of conservatism. She wants to ensure that the children are safe in schools. She does not think the School Committee should worry about changing Bedford's culture at this point in time.

Mr. Steven Steele said he was grateful that Davis School did not mention the tragedy at all to the Davis students.

Ms Ann Gardsbane, a parent of a kindergartener at Davis School, said that she was amazed at how easy it is to access the schools. At Davis, she can walk into the door and easily avoid the office. "No one will stop you. You do not encounter any adults."

Ms. Brook Halloran, also a parent of a kindergartner at Davis School, also appreciates the fact that Davis teachers did not discuss the tragedy. She said it is sad that we have to change and shift with the times. "Today, it is dangerous and we need to create a safe environment for our children."

3. Update: Shared Energy Manager and FY'14 Energy Projects

A shared position between the Town of Arlington and the Bedford Public Schools, an Energy Manager, was approved in the summer. Mr. Jones noted that a portion of the anticipated salary is in the school department FY'14 budget. He also noted that he will be interviewing for the position, starting tomorrow.

Mr. Jones then shared information with the School Committee that examined electric, gas and oil projected use at targeted rates for FY'14. Mr. Jones explained that delivery costs for electricity has risen dramatically over the last few years and has caused our electric bills to increase. However, he will ensure that usage will continue to go down at the schools.

Mr. Jones also noted that he expects that the price of natural gas to remain consistent. However, there is a pipeline capacity issue, which is putting pressure on price.

The School Committee had some questions on Mr. Jones's analysis and he agreed to check his work and will confirm with Mr. Coelho or redo the analysis.

The School Committee asked Mr. Jones to clarify how adding an additional custodian in FY'14 would relieve some of the high overtime cost his department has been experiencing. Mr. Jones explained that a floating custodian would cover planned absences without incurring overtime costs. He said that this request is back filling a lost position at Davis and Lane. Overall, an

addition to the custodial staff would result in cleaner buildings. He really sees this as “better service” rather than a cost savings.

Mr. Hafer asked if Mr. Jones discussed this addition with the town (since they share the facilities budget with the schools). Mr. Jones said he has not yet done so.

Ms. Bickford asked what would happen if the town does not want to add another custodian. Mr. Jones said he would hire a part time person to work for the schools only.

4. Contract Signing: Lane School Gas Conversion

Mr. Jones asked the School Committee to approve a contract with AALANCO for the oil to gas conversion project at Lane School. The contract is in the amount of \$39,183. Mr. Jones explained that funding for the project is from the FY’13 Capital Projects budget from the town-wide energy conservation program account. The contractor can start the work in four weeks.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the contract with AALANCO of Westborough, MA in the amount of \$39,183 for work to convert Lane School from oil to gas.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Jones said that the School Committee needs to think about the underground oil tank at the High School. Currently there are no issues with the tank, but this situation could change. It is something that should be resolved. He will write a memo to the School Committee describing different options. He said no immediate action is required.

5. Update: Educatius International

Mr. Sills announced that the high school received clearance from Educatius International to accept foreign students to study at our high school. He said the company is accepting applications for next school year (2013-2014).

Mr. Pierce said he would like to see a copy of the brochure with BHS in it.

Ms. Bickford reminded everyone that there is no cost to us to be part of this exchange. Students will pay tuition to us.

6. Continued Discussion: FY’14 Budget Proposal

The School Committee reviewed information from Mr. Coelho regarding offset revenue account balances. They noted that school rental continues to decline. Mr. Coelho agreed and said that the Recreation Department and one summer camp are the only groups that consistently rent our school buildings.

The School Committee reviewed information on the decline of revenue in the Food Services account. They noted that both revenue and participation are decreasing. Mr. Coelho explained that the new government regulations have negatively affected our school lunch programs. Food options are less attractive to students, are served in significantly smaller portions and cost more. Also, no a-la-carte or vending sales are allowed. Fruits and vegetables must now be served with all meals and this is expensive and students don’t eat them. Food Services is no longer a self-sustaining budget. In fact, the budget is currently \$32,000 in the red.

Ms. Seibert said she heard that some of the regulations will be changed but she does not know when this will happen and whether it will help.

Mr. Coelho said he doubts it will happen right away and that we need to figure out a way to get the customers (the students) back.

Ms. O’Gara asked if there was a collection problem at Davis. Mr. Coelho said no.

Ms. Bickford asked if there were any statewide efforts underway to do something about the regulations. Mr. Sills said he would talk to other Superintendent about this problem.

Mr. Coelho said Mr. Whittier will be revising the Food Services projections to reflect this new reality.

The School Committee asked Mr. Sills and Mr. Coelho to gather more information on the PC replacement schedule. The budget request asks for 139 PCs to be replaced in FY’ 14, the same number as last year.

Ms. Seibert said she was surprised to see that we need the same number of PC replacements as we did last year especially if there are plans to close the computer lab near the library in the high school. Mr. Sills explained that this lab has Wyse terminals and not PCs and that these terminals cannot be deployed outside of the high school.

Mr. Sills and Mr. Coelho agreed to reexamine the number of scheduled PC replacements given the overall changes at the high school and will report back to the School Committee. Mr. Sills did comment that with a new Technology Director in place this year, many things were kept “as is” for the time being. Mr. Sills noted that he will be sending a recommendation to the school committee regarding some changes to the technology department and the FY’ 14 budget impact. He is not quite ready to discuss tonight.

Ms. Bickford reviewed the current budget process:

- Original FY’ 14 Budget proposal is a \$1,922,352 increase over last year’s (5.68%)
- Town financial guideline for schools, issued after the FY’ 14 budget proposal, is 2.15% (\$706,175)
- Difference between town’s guideline and school’s proposed budget is \$1,200,000.

Mr. Sills agreed to prepare various scenarios for the School Committee to consider as a way to come closer (or match) the town’s recommendation. Mr. Sills will look at what things he can do without and what things can we push off to the future.

Ms. Bickford explained that the School Committee will meet on January 15, 22, and 29. The plan will be to vote on a budget to present to Finance Committee on the January 22nd meeting.

7. Superintendent’s Report

Mr. Sills shared a letter he received from the Department of Children and Families saying how supportive Bedford is with helping displaced families.

Mr. Sills also reported that many of the students from the Class of 2013 have been accepted (early action or decision) into some great colleges and universities. For example:

- 8 students have been accepted to Northeastern University
- 1 student has been accepted to Tufts
- 2 students have been accepted to Yale
- 1 student has been accepted to Harvard
- 2 students have been accepted to University of Pennsylvania
- 1 student has been accepted to Brown.
- 1 student has been accepted to John Hopkins.

Ms. Sills said this is a great testament to great teaching and to Guidance Department reaching out to colleges.

8.) Liaison Reports

Ms. Seibert said that the CEC announced the priorities but will have some further discussions. The final results will be announced on December 19th. They seem to be onboard with the School's request for classroom renovations.

Ms. Bickford said that the Fiscal Planning Committee suggested stating capital project requests in terms of capacity.

Mr. Hafer said the BEF Winter Bash had great attendance and raised \$7,700. Also, the Barnes and Noble fundraiser was just held and looked to be very successful as well. Overall, the BEF is trying to recruit new members especially from parents of younger students.

Mr. Hafer said that the Outdoor Recreations Field Committee is still involved in field analysis and will report back to Selectmen on January 7th.

Ms. Bickford and the Strategic Communications Task Force met State Representative Gordon and they discussed the Hanscom initiative and Chapter 70 funding.

9. Future Agenda

Ms. Seibert would like to invite the new EDCO Collaborative Director to a School Committee meeting. Ms. Bickford agreed and suggested that January would be a good time to do this.

10. Adjournment

Ms. O'Gara made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:05 p.m. not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

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

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 18, 2012
Exhibits/Documents

- Memo dated December 14, 2013 from Mr. Jones to Mr. Sills regarding contract with AALANCO for oil to gas conversion at Lane School.

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Executive Session
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