

## **BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**January 19, 2021**

### **Live Virtual Online Meeting using ZOOM Audio/Video Conference Software**

*\*\* Due to the COVID-19 Crisis, this meeting was live-streamed over the internet using ZOOM video/audio conferencing software in order to adhere with social distancing measures put in place by Governor Baker. This meeting was open to the public for live chat during Public Comment.*

#### **1. Call to Order**

At 7:03 pm, Mr. Brosgol called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Guay, Mr. Morrison, Ms. Santiago, Ms. Scoville and student representative Ryan Doucette.

#### **2. Comments from Public**

*Public comment is available through the webinar feature of Zoom™.*

*Participants are instructed to use the “raise hand” function in the software and add their name using the “chat” function. Mr. Conrad will invite the panelist into the webinar and each person is allowed three minutes to comment.*

#### **Holly Munsie**

##### **Lexington Circle**

Ms. Munsie communicated her concern with surveys going out and trying to bring back more students to in-person learning. Parents need to know the trade off in bringing back more students to in-person learning such as what percentage of students would have to change classroom/teachers to accommodate these changes while maintaining current safety protocols. Consider teacher’s safety and wellness, extra time for dismissal changes.

#### **Nicholas Howard**

##### **Daniels Road**

Mr. Howard is concerned that some parents have fears of bringing back more students to in-person learning, while some parents are comfortable with 2-days in person learning and don’t want to be forced to send students in for 4 days. While others are concerned the remote option will go away.

#### **Katy O’Connor**

##### **Radcliffe Circle**

Ms. O’Connor is in support of getting more kindergarten students back in school and wanted to thank everyone involved for their efforts. Ms. O’Connor is hoping that more focus can now be shifted to work on getting more third grade students back in person as they are also struggling.

#### **Erica Callahan**

##### **Woodmore Drive**

Ms. Callahan was glad to learn that another survey has gone out to families but is worried that some students still don't fit into a category and may miss an opportunity to gain a spot for in-person learning. Ms. Callahan hopes that surveys would include more options like the bus survey that went out to families earlier in the year.

**Corrine Garrett**

**Reed Lane**

Ms. Garrett extended appreciation to the Davis staff for finding a way to bring back students for in-person learning while adhering to all safety protocols. Ms. Garrett is in support of the pool testing program.

**Stephanie Keep**

**Great Road**

Ms. Keep communicated her disappointment that an open community forum as still not been presented. Ms. Keep feels that so many hours have been spent gathering comments yet people aren't being heard.

**Jennifer Lee**

**Washington Street**

Ms. Lee extended appreciation to school administration and school committee for all they have done. Ms. Lee stated that she is support of the expansion 4 day in-person learning for those families that would like to take advantage of the offer.

**3. FY 22 Budget update**

Mr. Conrad and Ms. Kirrane presented a budget update on all three scenarios to the school committee. The overarching goal of the three scenario budgets is to understand the cost impacts of each. The district has been striving throughout the pandemic, to bring students back as soon as can be done safely for both students and staff in a stable and sustainable manner.

- **Scenario 1- Base Budget: Normal Conditions:** Several changes were necessary to the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and additions that comprise the baseline budget. A 0.5 FTE BCBA teacher that had been omitted was added as well as support for JV Hockey. This results in an increase of \$43,108 in the FY22 requested additions and a change in request from \$317,554 to \$360,662. To partially accommodate this increase savings of \$20,000 were found in the MOE Budget. Instead of a 3.75% base budget increase the revised request is for 3.8% above the FY21 approved budget. The district has made every effort to propose a base budget within the established 3.5% Finance Committee guideline and came within \$127,478 of meeting this goal.
- **Scenario 2- Recovery Budget: Improving Conditions where some but not all of the current safety protocols are in place:** In response to the most current information available several adjustments have been made. These changes included several additions and reductions including additional support (+\$100,000) for substitutes for Covid-19 related absences and accommodations:
  - Elimination of 8.0 FTE reductions (+210, 536) in paraprofessional support

- Decreased support (-\$51,800) for furniture and equipment (some items are anticipated to be purchased in the current year)
  - Anticipated federal relief funding will allow a budget decrease of (-\$242,321) for PPE, sanitation, advanced filtration and other safety protocols- these expenses were 100% covered by relief funding in FY21 and information about pending federal action suggest a similar expectation is reasonable for FY22.
- **Scenario 3- Continuing Covid-19 Impact Budget:** The revised budget request of \$47,221,528 an increase of \$5,180,069 or 12.3 %, is higher than the original proposal by about \$234,000 and 0.5%. The continuing COVID budget is preliminary and the cost impact likely exceed the estimates provided. This scenario describes the fiscal impact of continuing severe covid-19 fiscal impacts with all Bedford students with the opportunity to attend school in-person, with a remote option still available. This budget also relies on several additional sources of funding
    - Town of Bedford reserve of \$450,000 for extraordinary special education costs
    - Anticipated federal funding for COVID-19 direct expenses for PPE, sanitation and cleaning, air filtration and other safety protocols (\$232,321)
  - **Remote Option:** Costs associated with the remote option integrated operationally as it is in the current year are included in the second and third budget scenarios. The recommended staffing levels include remote teachers at Davis and Lane and additional paraprofessionals to support the one-school model at JGMS and BHS. The large investment in technology, online curriculum, devices and live streaming technology have already been included. The district is not recommending the state contracted Learning Management systems at this time for Bedford due to cost/value, logistical and quality concerns.
  - **Federal Relief Funding Update:** The district received notice that approximately \$170,000 in relief funding will become available to the district. District is still evaluating the best use of the funds including pool testing. Pool testing is being explored and would be the 7<sup>th</sup> potential health and safety pillar that would help Bedford increase in-person learning. This funding will not be relied upon in the FY22 budget proposal

#### 4. School Counseling Update

Ms. Linsey, Director of Guidance presented on Social Emotional Wellness Amid COVID-19 to school committee. During Ms. Linsey's presentation she pointed out that faculty/staff and students are trying to do more under stress and as a result some of the following issues are what students, staff/faculty are trying to navigate through this school year.

- Students school avoidance – schools have seen an increase, yet at some schools this was happening prior to COVID
- ZOOM fatigue- students and staff
- Students struggle with
  - Building relationships
  - Difficulty with having two sets of teachers- remote/hybrid
  - Internet issues-
    - some students not being able to connect

- some student do not have access to internet. In some cases, hot spots are being distributed to families so that the student can connect on remote learning days
- Staff concerns and fears:
  - for the emotional and physical health and well-being of students and staff are resulting in anxiety. Loss of sleep, exhaustion
- Concerns regarding time and ability to “keep up”, “turn off” or sustain- “it’s taking a toll”
- Staff concern around not doing enough
- Recognition of challenges and the reality of teaching and learning in this model with fidelity and the impact it is having on learning.

## **5. Principals’ Feedback Sharing**

Principal Beth Benoit from Davis, Rob Ackerman from Lane, Kevin Tracey from JGMS, and Heather Galante from BHS presented on Faculty/Staff Self Care & Wellness to the school committee. The principals shared some of the concerns of faculty and staff in addition to what has helped eased some of the anxiety and angst.

Concerns:

- Majority of staff felt an increase in stress
- Headaches, trouble sleeping, fatigue and anxiety
- Worried about their own families’ health and safety and their students’ health both physical and emotional
- Absences and coverage issues adds an additional challenge

What has helped:

- Clear communication
- Colleague and Support from building administrators
- Common prep and planning time
- General feeling of “we are all in this together”
- Appreciation and understanding from families and students

Break in session was taken between 9:35 PM and 9:45 PM

## **6. Superintendent’s Report**

Mr. Conrad presented the School Committee with the following information as part of his Superintendent’s Report: COVID data from October-December with regard to the 40 cases may have been flipped. Mr. Conrad will look into it and provide an update if the information needs to be corrected from his previous statements. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> we have had 25 positive COVID cases in school. Flu shot requirement has been removed. Mr. Conrad had a meeting with health services regarding pool testing. School nurses have been moved up on the list to receive vaccine. Health Department is looking into changing its vaccine/testing sites to indoors. Phased reopening plans: Kindergarten students will begin four day in-person sessions on February 1<sup>st</sup>. First and second grade families will soon receive a survey about the potential to bring more students back to school for in-person sessions. Lane school will also do the same for third – fifth grade. Staffing cost will need to be assessed as will the possibility of moving students from their current classroom/teacher to should

this scenario move forward. JGMS and BHS students can be brought back to in-person learning at the recommendation of the team and both schools would be at capacity after that shift. All safety protocols will remain in place if any of these scenarios were to take place. Lastly, Mr. Conrad commented that he was concerned that the survey gives families the impression that they get to decide the outcome. And that we need to encourage people to respond to the surveys to ensure all groups are included in the data collection, including families of children enrolled in METCO and living on HAFB.

## 7. Adjournment

Ms. Scoville made the following motion:

**MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:29 p.m., not to reopen.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Morrison**

**MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0**

Ms. Santiago	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes

## Exhibits/Documents

- FY 22 Budget Update
- School Counseling Update
- Principal's Feedback

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
School Committee Secretary

4/9/24  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

