PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Parent Barbara L’Heureux read a prepared statement which included comments regarding financials and revolving accounts: not a teacher problem, it’s a widespread problem due to Administration not following regulations, the School Committee is responsible for the school budget, the School Committee & Administration downplayed report findings by auditors, she expressed concern about negligence on the handling of finances. She further expressed concern regarding the hiring of a qualified Director of Finance, who should have a masters in Finance, a solid financial background and experience in a large school district. She has concerns that Mr. Cunha does not have the qualifications to run a $55 million budget. Mr. Nelson responded that he never felt that the Administrators overseeing finances were not competent, including the Asst. Superintendent and Dr. Picone, school audits are performed every other year, audit recommendations are followed, the School Department works with Ways & Means on the budget line by line. There has never been a problem until now with a deficit in the community concert services (except past cafeteria deficits). He further stated he’s been on the School Committee over 20 years, that there is not mismanagement, and they have acted prudently by conducting and following audit recommendations. Ms. Simon stated that the School Committee has been reviewing issues for the past couple months around student activity accounts, which have been investigated and audited. She further explained a number of other school districts are running into similar problems as Massachusetts recently passed new regulations regarding student activity accounts. Burlington has instituted new policies and procedures based on findings and recommendations submitted by Roselli & Clark. Currently, the town’s auditor is reviewing accounts and the school department is waiting for those results. Chairman Murphy arrived 7:25 p.m. Mrs. Monaco stated that she had full confidence in the School Administrative team.

TMM Eileen Sickler suggested posting past audits on the school’s website, which may help with confidence in the School Department. The Superintendent explained the audits performed by Powers & Sullivan yearly is a combined town and school department review.

TMM Gary Mercier inquired why weren’t these deficits caught sooner and why wasn’t the school department caught breaking the law. Chairman Murphy explained that there are no requirements to audit elementary student activity accounts because they are under $25,000 each, no laws were violated, and auditors Roselli and Clark came in to do a review in summer 2017 prior to implementation in 2018.

TMM Betsy Hughes stated that with the school department’s $55 million budget, the School Committee should hire a Director of Operations with the education and experience in finance as financial rules/regulations are much more complicated now and we want the best CFO to keep things in order and would encourage the School Committee to do the same. She further commented that her observations were not personal but business based.

INFORMATION/REPORTS

Student Representative

Bailey Towle commented students had a good winter break, including two snow days, and felt that the school climate was back to normal.

Subcommittee Report

None.

Ways & Means

Sue Harrigan had nothing to report.

COMMUNICATION

Community Garden – End of Year Report

Community Garden representatives Jane McInnich and Peter Coppola were in attendance to review happenings in the garden over the past year. Ms. McInnich noted that participation in individual plots is increasing, they focused on installing fencing to keep out critters this year, and over 900 pounds of produce was donated to the Burlington food pantry. Mr. Coppola also reported increased participation from teachers and parents in the school area of the garden and explained the new pollination garden installed this year. The School Committee thanked them both for their hard work on the community and school gardens.
FY19 Budget Calendar – Discussion

Mr. Cunha distributed the Proposed FY19 Budget Schedule1 dates with the Committee noting the addition of two extra meetings on March 6 and March 20. He further explained they are revamping the budget process with a new template so the budget schedule is a little behind. The Superintendent stated that the school department provides more budget detail than any other town department, the format is changing, and they hope to make an electronic version available. He further commented that he’s confident they can meet or exceed the expectations of the School Committee. The budget subcommittee meetings will be scheduled for March through Dr. Conti and Sue Harrigan.

Chairman Murphy stated that the School Committee takes its job seriously; they act in the best interest of the schools with budgets, policies, and personnel. The Committee would not hire a person they don't feel is qualified and they have 100% confidence in the Superintendent’s hires. He further commented that Mr. Cunha is a hard worker, good guy, the school department is not a corporation, he knows the town being a lifelong resident, and he’s comfortable and confident he's doing a great job. Chairman Murphy concluded with saying it’s discouraged to hear people’s comments tonight, it’s uncalled for and unfair and he has full confidence in the Superintendent, Mr. Cunha, and the business department.

NEW BUSINESS
2018-19 BHS Program of Studies – First Reading

By consensus, this item was taken out of order. Principal Sullivan provided an update on happenings at the high school and distributed a copy of the BHS Fall Newsletter2. In her fall, NEASC reaccreditation visit went well, their team had a good experience with parents, staff and students. NEASC will have some recommendations for BHS, but during a wrap-up session, the team had a lot of positive comments. A draft NEASC report should be available in the spring. The DECA club competed at the state level and they had a record number of first place finishes and two shows of the fall play were held.

Principal Sullivan and Guidance Coordinator Joe Attubato reviewed new courses: 4 math, 2 english, 2 history, 3 science, and 2 new semester courses in business and library. Due to dwindling enrollments 5 courses will be deleted. Eighteen courses will be modified: course levels, course name changes, courses offered to which grade levels, and number of credits. Principal Sullivan informed the Committee of a newly developed course for ELL students who have limited English proficiency. Mrs. Monaco suggested that grade 9 students be allowed to take biology at the college prep level; Principal Sullivan explained Science teacher Mrs. Potter's examining new science pathways. Mrs. Russo commended the high school on expanding opportunities for students and the new diverse courses developed. In response to Ms. Simon, Principal Sullivan answered her question about years that are covered in US History courses and sequences. The Superintendent explained that the state may require a civics competency for a diploma in the future and computer science may also be required as well. The MCAS 2.0 standards for grades 3-8 have increased and it’s anticipated that the BHS MCAS 2.0 standards may also increase. As this is a first reading, the School Committee will take this under advertisement and vote on it at 1/23 meeting.

INSTRUCTION/TECHNOLOGY
MSMS Principal Search Committee

Assistant Superintendent Larkin explained the middle school principal job posting is open until January 26, a search committee of approximately 15 members is being identified, he’ll close requests to participate in the search committee the end of this week, focus group opportunities will be held soon for staff, the community and parents. They'd like for finalists to meet with Dr. Conti in early March. Mrs. Monaco introduced retired middle school principal Mike Tinkoff, who served on the middle school building committee a few years ago. Mr. Tinkoff explained he has 3 grandchildren in school and would like to share his experience and background by participating on the middle school search committee.

Special Education Director Search

Dr. Conti noted that the special education team chairs interviewed candidates for an interim director and he will interview her tomorrow. A job posting will be created for a permanent special education director to begin on July 1 and he will reach out to Personnel Manager Joanne Faust to coordinate the process and collaborate with the PAC group.

Elementary Principal Search

Mr. Larkin stated that a job posting for the Fox Hill Principal position will be created this week, he’s emailed staff for volunteers to participate in the search committee, and anticipates that finalists will meet with the Superintendent by the end of April.

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1 FY19 Budget Schedule
2 BHS Fall Newsletter
Assistant Superintendent Larkin explained that 50 iPad external keyboards have been purchased for each elementary school to aid in MCAS assessment this spring. Last spring, students had difficulty using iPads on the MCAS due to keyboarding and the answer box not showing all typed text. Students will have the opportunity to practice prior to the assessment this year and will have access to a typing course (if they so choose). The School Committee commented that it’s a disservice to students to not properly prepare them for MCAS, they need enough practice to feel comfortable to take the assessment, and they don’t want the students to be frustrated while taking the MCAS.

At the December 9 meeting, Performing Arts Director John Middleton submitted an original alma mater song for Burlington for approval by the School Committee. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Russo to approve the Burlington Alma Mater Song; motion carried 5-0-0.

Dr. Conti and Mr. Cunha met with architects Kevin Buckley and Dan Bradford to debrief after receiving the negative response for the BHS Statement of Interest from the MSBA. The MSBA has indicated they’d like to tour BHS again this year. Dr. Conti noted that it makes sense to resubmit an updated BHS SOI with additional pictures and a video. School districts can submit more than one SOI, but there can only be one priority project. He further explained that at the elementary level for the longer term, the School Committee will need to consider and discuss: does elementary enrollment projections show pressure, possible reconfiguration of schools with grades K-5, visioning, Fox Hill is the only school with enough land to construct a new school, and input will be gathered from parents and the community. The rolling deadline for submission of statements of interest is January – April 2018. The School Committee commented: submit the BHS SOI as priority #1 as district is not ready to submit an elementary SOI, frustration with submitting the BHS request for a seventh time, suggested strengthening educational needs & health issues/air quality in the new BHS SOI, possibility of doing BHS renovation in phases (i.e. HVAC system) via town funding, expressing concern about elementary schools situation, possible need to do an elementary facility study to prepare for submission of an elementary SOI in 2019 (including requesting funding for the study through the warrant process).

Dr. Conti distributed and reviewed a draft copy of the 2018-19 School Calendar, which includes 187 days for the teaching staff. The School Committee commented: to review the number of school days in November, consider moving parent conference day scheduled for November, and to review dates of religious holidays.

Town meeting member Joanne Fustaci referenced a FOIA request she’d made on 12/1 for two years of bank account information for the middle school, the school department requested an extension and she’d like to know the current status. Dr. Conti and Mr. Cunha responded they’d sent her the information via email on January 4 and will resend the email.

Mike Tikinoff stated that teachers spend hours of time teaching content to students and the tool (iPads) are not allowing them to show what they know and can do during MCAS testing.

BEA President Diana Marcus commented that students need to be familiar with the device they are taking the test on. She further noted that a decision on a teaching device (chromebook/iPad) should not be made based on which is better to be used on a standardized test; the device needs to be able to create, and communicate student knowledge in a flexible portable manner.

Chairman Murphy announced that the Committee had a need for executive session to discuss contract negotiations and the approval of executive minutes and MGL Ch. 30A, Section 21 (a) to comply with or act under the authority of any general or special law – specifically GL. c 214, §1B – Privacy because holding it in an open session would have a detrimental effect on the position of the public body. The School Committee will only return to public session for the purpose of adjournment. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Russo at 10:00 p.m. to go into executive session to discuss contract negotiations, litigation, and review executive minutes. Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

3 Draft 2018-19 School Calendar
ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Monaco at 11:00 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 2/13/18
Date approved: 2/13/18