Notice of Public Meeting (As required by G.L. c. 30A, c §18-25)

BOARD: School Committee
DATE: October 29, 2019
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: School Committee Room, 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA

AGENDA*

1. Approval of 10/15/19 Minutes

2. Public Participation

3. Information/Reports
   a). Student Representative
   b). Subcommittee Reports
   c). Ways/Means
   d). Announcements

4. Instruction/Technology (7:00 – 7:30 estimated time)
   a). MSMS New Student Schedule – Initial Update
   b). Proposed MSMS Student Musical

5. Communication

6. Old Business (7:30– 9:00 estimated time)
   b). Policies – Second Reading
       - EBC Emergency Plans (Revision)
       - EEAEC Student Conduct on Buses
       - EFD Meal Charge (Revision)
   c). Elementary Space Needs

7. New Business (9:00 estimated time)
   a). Town Five-Year Energy Reduction Plan – Approval
   b). Public Participation Policy - Discussion

8. Public Participation

9. Executive Session – G.L. c. 30A Section 21(a) Subsection 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel – Superintendent. Location: Superintendent’s Office.

10. Adjournment

*Agenda subject to change
Chair Martha Simon called this meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Room, Administration Offices, 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, Massachusetts. Present: Mrs. Christine Monaco, Mr. Thomas F. Murphy, Jr., and Mr. Stephen Nelson. Superintendent Eric Conti, Business Manager Nichole Coscia and Director of Operations Bob Cunha also present. Mrs. Kristin Russo and Assistant Superintendent Patrick Larkin absent.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Monaco to approve minutes of 10/15/19; motion carried 3-0-1. Mr. Murphy abstained.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

**INFORMATION/REPORTS**

Student Representative

Student representative Bridget reported that the writing center opened last week at BHS, the senior class is selling tee shirts, and the Equity committee met with principals this afternoon and spoke about offering a survey to students in grades 6-12. Dr. Conti further explained that Panorama created the survey, students have reviewed the questions, and teachers will be trained on administering the survey to students. Bridget also reported that the Ideas conference will be held in November.

Subcommittee Reports

None.

Ways/Means

No one in attendance.

Announcements

Ms. Simon wished happy holidays to families that celebrate Diwali.

**INSTRUCTION/TECHNOLOGY**

MSMS New Student Schedule - Initial Update

Last spring the School Committee requested an agenda item be scheduled for October to provide an initial update of how the new middle school schedule was working. Dr. Conti noted that Principal Perchase and Assistant Principal Josh Murphy were in attendance to provide an early glimpse after 8 weeks of the new schedule as well as the transition process.

A very lengthy discussion in excess of one hour followed, with some of the following comments: Principal Perchase: a subcommittee of the school council has been created and met in October to discuss how the new schedule was progressing, it will take time to see outcomes and make adjustments as needed, a survey is being drafted for students & staff to complete in February, a second meeting for parents with Sped Director Mary Houde is scheduled for November 25, parent coffee hours will be held this winter and spring, and when surveys are complete they will begin reviewing surveys. She reviewed strengths, weaknesses, and “threats” of the new schedule. Strengths: 54 minute teaching blocks, students attending specials with students from all 3 teams, a 25 minute lunch block with transition times added, increased teacher collaborative time, and decreased number of pullouts during core instructional time. Weaknesses: some students felt 54 minute blocks are too long, and the reduced number of blocks scheduled in allied sciences subject areas (i.e. only 2 or 3 times in 6 day rotation). Threats: no threats but concerns of decreased amount of collaborative time for allied science classes and the student locker time at the end of the day. Challenges in scheduling special education services noting that new schedule was approved in May and staff normally begins building the following school year schedule in February. She cautioned on making adjustments too soon and noted that the effectiveness of the new schedule will need to be assessed over the long term.

Dr. Conti explained that the instructional schedule is complex, the difficulties of fitting a lot of instruction into a set amount of time, the district offers four foreign languages, we will continue to gather feedback from staff/parents/students, three after school music stipends have been added due to the inability of being able to offer it during the school day and with any major change after such a long time with the previous schedule there will be some minor issues.

School Committee members expressed concern about: 54 minute blocks seem too long, meeting the needs/regulations for special needs students including addressing feedback from families on providing their childrens’ education, are students receiving enough instructional time in world languages, are Burlington students receiving the same amount of world language instructional time as surrounding communities, a new schedule takes time to adjust to and if instructional time is increased in some areas, instructional time will need to be reduced in some other class(es). Principal Perchase stated that she’s open to conversations...
about possible minor schedule tweaks, she’ll research how much foreign language time MSMS students receive over 3 years of classes as well as in surrounding communities, teachers are in favor of longer class blocks as it allows for more projects, different types of learning and also meets contractual obligations.

Chair Simon opened the discussion to audience members and requested that each speaker keep their comments within the three-minute public participation time limit. Four SEPAC parents made extensive comments including: the obligation of public schools to create accessibility for all classes for students with disabilities, the new schedule limits accessibility particularly in the area of specials (i.e. world language, art, music), inclusion is not appropriate for all students, new schedule is better and works for the majority but they are seeking proactive responses for a small number of special education students, would like school staff to offer options regarding pull outs and intervention block and special needs students rights are being violated by not having equitable access to class instruction. Dr. Conti explained that based on the frequency of services for special needs students, it dictates how many and what specials students miss; each student’s services and information needs to be evaluated individually to provide the appropriate instruction. Principal Perchase further explained that administrators have to review what is required by state regulation: the four core academic courses, physical education, and health; the school doesn’t want to take anything away, wants to provide a rich educational experience for all students and noted that other communities are also dealing with needing to affect student attendance at specials by needing to schedule intervention blocks, and the middle school teams need to decide what students need rather than the schedule doing that.

Parents Sara Wolenski, Akito Coram, and Cheryl Johnson all expressed concerns with their regular education students’ reduced class time in world language, would their children be ready as freshman to take a second year world language class, would they struggle transitioning to the high school, and cited other communities who have more world language class time. Assistant Principal Murphy explained that with the new schedule students receive the same amount of world language instruction over three years as they did in the past with instruction in grades 7 and 8, world language teachers at the high school are aware of the new middle school world language class schedules, and anticipates that with current 6th graders they will finish grade 8 at the same place as 8th graders following the old schedule. Chair Simon cited how the community of Lynnfield schools conducts world language, noted that some middle schools have much less world language class instruction, and noted that by increasing world language class time there would need to be a trade off in other programming areas such as music and art. Principal Perchase also explained there is equitable access for math classes for students, the criteria has not changed, and four sections of math are offered. She concluded by explaining that: administrators can consider schedule changes, if a class time is increased it will impact/reduce other class offerings, only a certain amount of class time is available each day, and to provide increased music offerings, they are being held after school for students. Principal Perchase further stated that any families with concerns should reach out to middle school administrators via either email or by phone. Dr. Conti explained he will provide updates as the school year progresses.

Proposed MSMS Student Musical

NEW BUSINESS
Town Five-Year Energy Reduction Plan - Approval
COMMUNICATION

By consensus, item 7a was taken out of order. DPW representatives John Sanchez and Rachel Caplan were in attendance seeking approval of the Town’s Five Year Energy Reduction Plan (included in meeting packet). Ms. Caplan provided a program overview, requirements, a preliminary project plan and benefits to Burlington. The plan calls for a reduction of energy usage of 20% over the next 5 years; by approving the Plan, Burlington will be eligible for a grant of approximately $173,000 and grants in following years of up to $250,000. She further explained that the Board of Selectmen and School Committee are just voting on committing to reducing the town’s energy by 20% over the next five years, the plan itself is a moving piece, and the town’s green team will meet yearly to determine which projects they are going to work on. The deadline for the plan submission is November 20 and they were requesting that the School Committee waive a second reading and approve the
plan this evening.

After brief comments from the Committee including: schools use the most energy of town buildings, the schools will be greener, and it will reduce the schools carbon footprint, it was moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mr. Nelson to support and approve the Town’s Energy Reduction Plan; motion carried 4-0-0.

COMMUNICATION

In response to Mrs. Monaco inquiring about students receiving lunches, Dr. Conti explained that all students receive a lunch even if they have no money on their lunch cards but they may have limitations such as no ice cream etc. If lunch bills pile up, the family will be notified. All families are notified of the option of free/reduced lunch and provided with an application. Mrs. Monaco requested that if there are families who can’t support lunch bills that the School Committee be informed as Burlington is a very generous/helpful community.

OLD BUSINESS
Planning for Success 2019-22 - Second Reading

The draft Planning for Success document was previously reviewed at the September 24 and October 15 meetings. Dr. Conti stated that a few minor edits were made and the document is ready for approval. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Monaco to approve the 2019-22 Planning for Success with edits; motion carried 4-0-0.

Policies – Second Reading

Three policies were submitted for a first reading at the last meeting. Policies EBC – Emergency Plans and EFD – Meal Charge are current policies in existence and were submitted for revision. Conduct on School Buses is a new policy with input provided by school counsel. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve policy EBC Emergency Plans; motion carried 4-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve policy EEAEC Student Conduct on Buses; motion carried 4-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve policy EFD Meal Charge; motion carried 4-0-0.

Elementary Space Needs

Dr. Conti again reviewed the current four elementary configuration options the committee is considering, the MSBA will only consider one priority project per community, if the high school renovation is not approved by the MSBA in December, the School Committee will need to decide on one priority project for submission in the spring. Chair Simon requested that the four elementary options be put on the school website, that 30 minutes be set aside for the 11/19 meeting for a public forum on this subject, and that the meeting packet for the November 19 meeting include a cost per square foot for an elementary school, estimates from the schools’ master plan, and enrollment projections.

Public Participation Policy - Discussion

An updated Public Participation policy was included in the Committee’s packet with minor revisions made by Attorney Darren Klein. The Committee made comments: the need for tweaking of this policy due to legal cases since 2009 when the policy was adopted and with the recent case in Natick, MA (Attorney Klein made suggested revisions specific to that legal case). Chair Simon read out loud the proposed changes. After a brief discussion, the Committee decided to revise the policy tonight. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve revised policy BEDH Public Participation at School Committee meetings; motion carried 4-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

Chair Simon announced that the body has a need for executive session – G.L. c. 30A Section 21(a) Subsection 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel – Superintendent. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Monaco at 9:00 p.m. to enter executive session. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; Ms. Simon, aye. Motion carried 4-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mrs. Monaco to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.; motion carried 4-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 11/19/19
Date approved: 11/19/19