

**BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OPEN MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

6:30 p.m.

Tahanto Regional Middle High School
1001 Main Street, Boylston, MA 01505
Multi-Purpose Room

Present:

School Committee: Mr. Michael Totman, Chair; Mrs. Meagan Grill, Vice Chair; Mrs. Lori-Anne Hart, District Clerk; Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti; Mrs. Julie Lee; Ms. Caroline MacKenzie, Student Representative

Administration: Ms. Carol Costello, Acting-Superintendent; Mrs. Lisa Courchaine, Administrative Assistant; Mrs. Nancy Konisky, Director of Finance & Operations; Mrs. Janell Fitzpatrick, Director of Pupil Personnel; Mr. Paul Mara, Director of Technology; Ms. Sally Stukuls, Interim Tahanto Principal; Ms. Kara Ford, Interim Tahanto Assistant Principal; Mr. John Campbell, Berlin Memorial Principal; Mrs. Dawn-Marie Ayles, Interim Boylston Elementary Principal,

(Open Meeting Minutes taken by Lori-Anne Hart, District Clerk)

I. Call to Order

- Mr. Totman called the meeting to order at 6:29pm

II. Pledge of Allegiance

V. Consent Agenda-Vote

**Mrs. Lee made a motion to approve the Consent agenda as presented. Mrs. Grill Seconded.
Vote: 5-0. Motion passes.**

*Mr. Totman notes a change in Agenda order: **Business Item 8***

- Three students from Berlin Memorial School presented.

**Mrs. Grill made a motion to approve the Berlin Memorial School fundraiser activity ,
“Carnations for a Cause”. Mrs. Lee seconded. Vote: 5-0. Motion passes**

III. Public Comments

- Mrs. Kyle Burns from Berlin LINK supports the budget. LINK will provide opportunities for parents to attend town meetings for budget vote with childcare.
- Ms. Christina Medeiros, Boylston PTO Treasurer, supports the budget and Boylston PTO is working on actions similar to LINK.
- Patty Inwood, teacher at Boylston Elementary, represented the teachers (many present) and spoke in support of the budget. She also spoke to the needs of the school.

VI. Reports

A. Student Report-Miss Caroline MacKenzie

- a. She is a senior and former class president
- b. Grade 9 Transition and Welcome Event
 - i. Attendance was low.

- ii. She feels it's been too long to blame Covid for lack of participation & apathy, that the schools need to take drastic measures to address student mental health.
- iii. Per Ms. Stukuls and Ms. Ford, there is an adjustment counselor and that person is busier than pre-Covid. At times students cannot be immediately seen but the wait time is minimal.
- iv. Ms. Ford estimates 55 people attended the event. They did an exit survey.

B. Chair's Report-Mr. Michael Totman (10 minutes)

1. Open Seat Interviews

a. Lisa Mair

- i. Ms. Mair introduces herself as a resident of Berlin since 1998. Her children attended Berlin Memorial School when Ms. Costello was principal. Her daughter is a graduate of Tahanto.
- ii. Ms. Mair respects and supports public schools.
- iii. Answers to School Committee Member Questions:
 - 1. Ms. Grill asks if Ms. Mair understands there are extra stipulations regarding social media due to Open Meeting Law and inquired if Ms. Mair is political on social mediae
 - a. Ms. Mair said she once was, having run for office, but barely had a presence there anymore.
 - 2. Mrs. Hart asks about Braver Angels.
 - a. Ms. Mair is a part of this organization whose mission is to depolarize politics. She is training to be an ambassador and moderator.
 - 3. Mrs. Lee asks Ms. Mair's thoughts on cell phones as they pertain to social issues.
 - a. Ms. Mair thinks cell phone usage for social purposes is not productive, lends itself to false comparisons to others, and is bad for mental health.
 - 4. Mrs. Degliaberti refers to and reads Ms. Mair's response to censorship of books, asking how she plans to support the LGBTQ+ community.
 - a. Ms. Mair states there should be respect for all and that should be based on a community built on respect.
 - 5. Mr. Totman asks if Ms. Mair can attend Tuesday night meetings, which may run earlier next year.
 - a. Ms. Mair affirms her schedule is compatible.

Mrs. Hart made a motion to approve the appointment of Lisa Mair to the BBRSD School Committee. Mrs. Grill seconds. Vote: 5-0. Motion Passes.

Mr. Totman advises change in agenda order, with Aimsweb Presentation being moved up.

D. Presentation: Aimsweb Mid-Winter Benchmarking Assessment Results - [Sally Stukuls](#), Interim Principal and Kara Ford, Interim Assistant Principal

1. Ms. Stukuls explains students in grades 6-8 are tested at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. The “middle” is typically in January or February and those are the results they are sharing.
2. Ms. Ford explains that the benchmark to meet is above 60%, noting 80% of students meet or exceed that benchmark.
3. Please refer to the [Slide Show](#) for specific results.
 - a. In Literacy, all 3 grades ranked higher than the national average, with grade 6 showing the greatest growth and grade 8 testing lower than their fall results. Principals felt this was due to complexity of materials.
 - b. In Math, all 3 grades ranked higher than the national average.
4. The 3 Tiers of Intervention are explained (refer to slide) and grade level interventions discussed.
 - a. Grade 6 interventions take place during Quest block, other grades meet during an elective period.
 - b. Sixtieth percentile was chosen as the goal due to it being higher than the national standard.
 - c. Brief discussion regarding Grade 8 departures, with exit interviews suggested. Mrs. Stukuls said the larger number of students leaving the district for their 9th grade year is why the 8th to 9th Grade Transition & Welcome Event was created.

E. Acting Superintendent of Schools-*Ms. Carol Costello*

Director of Finance and Operations-*Ms. [Nancy Konisky](#)*

1. FY2024 [Budget Presentation](#)
 - a. Mr. Totman notes the presence of Selectboard and Finance Committee members. He explains that at a collaborative meeting on Monday night, the BBRSD School Committee agreed to delay this evening’s vote on the budget, with a possible vote on the 21st of March.
 - b. He thanks Mrs. Grill, Mrs. Lee, Acting-Superintendent Costello, and Mrs. Konisky for their immeasurable efforts on this budget both during and outside of school hours.
 - c. He thanks the teachers for their efforts and notes their upset at the possibility of losing their jobs if this budget is not passed.
 - d. Ms. Costello thanks all groups for attending, noting the teachers who she “cannot advocate enough for.”
 - e. Mrs. Konisky gives a brief overview of the budget.
 - i. Budget was created from the needs identified in the 3-year District Improvement Plan.
 - ii. Special Education costs have increased dramatically, costing over a million dollars.
 - iii. Health Insurance for employees has increased by 10.5%.
 - iv. Two Options are presented: Level Service (same as last year but also includes contractual pay raises and vendor increases) and Below Level Budget, which will result in the loss of 11 staff and will increase classroom sizes.

- f. Ms. Kristen Rubin, Berlin Town Administrator, explains the budget process: School Committee's passed budget always goes to Town Meeting as "recommended" or "not recommended."
 - i. The proposed budget goes on the warrant regardless.
 - ii. Motion can be made by any registered voter.
 - iii. Ms. Rubin explains the budget process should the budget fail to pass or if there is disagreement between towns.
 - iv. Tax increases are discussed, potential dollar amounts shared. To defray cost of increased taxes, some groups can apply for exemptions while others (in Berlin) can do town work, earning up to a \$1825 credit.
 - v. Timeline for voting is discussed.
- g. Mr. Howard Drobner of the Boylston Finance Committee states Berlin and Boylston follow the same process.
 - i. After last night's FinCom meeting, proposed level budget appears possible.
- h. Mr. Matt Mecum, Boylston Selectman, states that as a town, we need to be careful of tax increases. He suggests writing to our local representatives.
- i. Mr. Scott Schultz, Chair of the Berlin Finance Committee, says they are trying to find a way to fund the school budget at level services.
- j. Mr. Mecum suggests the creation of a committee comprising of Selectboard, Finance Committee, and School Committee members, who could work collaboratively on the budget throughout the year.
- k. School Committee members discuss needs that the level budget won't address.
- l. Committee members ask questions of both Finance Committees. The process is re-explained.
- m. Mr. Campbell shares that if Berlin does not pass the budget, Boylston teachers will be cut due to lack of seniority.
 - i. He warns this will affect the ability to send "Tahanto ready" students to the middle school.
 - ii. Currently, 1 in 4 kids from BES and 1 in 5 kids from BMS are below grade level.
- n. Mrs. Ayles shares that the incoming Boylston Kindergarten class has 57 students; this means classrooms close to 20 with no paraprofessional assistance.
- o. Revenue was discussed, Mrs. Konisky explains that we didn't lose revenue but we also didn't gain any.
- p. Mr. Totman suggests a writing campaign to elected officials. He also assigns the Student Success Committee the task of reviewing the Holliston Special Education Resolution with the intent to create a BBRSD version.

Mr. Totman opens the floor to those present, asking if anyone else would like to make a statement.

- Teacher Ms. Lisa Sequeira asks Ms. Rubin some questions regarding town meeting process.
- Mr. Mark Johnson, Planning Committee member and Boylston parent, states he may have connections via his profession for the IT support and printers we have in our budget. He notes that the town's tax rate recently dropped while home values increased and that there are currently

3 new commercial buildings being built, which will eventually create more tax revenue for the town. He supports the Level or Above Level Budget.

- Ms. Christina Medeiros, Treasurer of the Boylston PTO, states she is getting texts from parents who are watching from home. Feels there was a lack of transparency on the cuts since they are just learning of them now and thinks there should be a better way for parents to be involved.

VII. Business Items

1. 2023-2024 School Year Calendar-First Read

2. Program of Studies-First Read

- Mrs. Lee requests future separation of Middle and High School courses.
- Mrs. Degliaberti asks why so many courses are being deleted, it is explained that teachers went from teaching 6 to 5 classes as their contract states.

3. School Choice Recommendations-First Read

4. Harassment Policy

- Not voting tonight.
- Mrs. Hart explains that this policy was updated in May of 2022 by Attorney Dupere, who noted the change in MA Laws regarding protected classes. The committee voted down in June with the request that the Policy Subcommittee review it and it was passed in August of 2022. The MASC belatedly shared their update at the end of August and the subcommittee is comparing the two policies at their next meeting, it will likely be a vote rather than a first read.

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5. Policy: JFBB - School Choice

- This was passed at our last meeting.

6. Mrs. Grill made a motion to approve an increase in substitute teacher pay from \$95 to \$100 per day, Certified and retired teachers would receive \$120 per day. Mrs. Lee seconded. Vote: 5-0. Motion passes.

7. Mrs. Degliaberti made a motion to approve the request for Parents to fundraise for Nature's Classroom. Mrs. Grill seconded. Vote: 5-0. Motion Passes.

8. School budget-tabled.

VIII. Future Agenda Item Proposals (10 minutes)

- Mrs. Degliaberti asked for update on Radon
- Ms. Costello welcomed our new Administrative Assistant, Ms. Lisa Courchaine .

X. Upcoming Meeting Dates

- **Added in March 21, 2020**
- **April 4, 2023**

Mrs. Lee made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Grill seconded. Vote: 5-0. Motion Passes. Meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.

Mission Statement: To support and challenge all students to achieve personal and academic excellence in a student-centered environment.

The listing of items is those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may, in fact, be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

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