

# **BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES OF**

**January 20, 2009**

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

At 7:30 p.m., Ms. O'Gara called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present were Mr. Pierce, Mr. Hafer, Ms. Seibert and Ms. Bickford. Charles Connell, student representative, was also present.

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

None

### **3. Personnel Report**

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to approve an overnight field trip request from Jackie Supprise and Mike Griffin. They would like to take the students enrolled in the Cooperative Activities Course to the Boston Rock Gym in Woburn. The students will go there on January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. Students will miss 2 periods on January 29<sup>th</sup>. The plan is to stay overnight in the gym in a situation that simulates outdoor rock climbing and camping. The school van will be used and there will not be any other costs incurred by the schools.

Ms. Bickford asked why this is happening during the week and not on a weekend. She said she was concerned about students missing homework assignments.

Mr. Sills, Principal of BHS, said that this was the only option for scheduling. He also mentioned that all of the students, except one, are seniors and he expects that the students would get their homework completed.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip request by Ms. Supprise and Mr. Griffin for 10 students enrolled in the Cooperative Activities Class to travel by school van to the Boston Rock Gym in Woburn on January 28-29, 2009 at no cost to the schools.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford**

**MOTION APPROVED 5-0**

### **4. Presentation: Bedford High School Program of Studies**

Before presenting the proposed changes to the 2009-2010 Program of Studies, Mr. Sills showed the School Committee a project completed by three National Honor Society students. He showed this to the Committee because he is very proud of their work. Stacey Hronowski, the other student representative to the School Committee, was involved in this project.

Mr. Jon Sills presented the proposed changes for the 2009-2010 Program of Studies. He presented the School Committee with a memo that highlighted all of the changes and a brief rationale statement behind each change. He discussed the significant changes with the Committee.

The first significant change discussed was the change in scope and sequence to the math offerings. Mr. Sills said that this change was necessary to more accurately describe the path through the mathematics curriculum.

Mr. Sills also said that they would be removing "Trigonometry" from the Continuing Algebra course in order to reflect a change to the current course curriculum. He said that Trigonometry concepts would be removed in order to have a stronger foundation in Algebra and will be incorporated in the new Trigonometry/Statistics course being offered next year.

Ms. Bickford asked if the staff looked at the effect of this decision (removing Trigonometry from this course) on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math placements. She said that many people are told that if your child does not take Algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, they can still get to Calculus by taking Precalculus over the summer. People often feel that this is a reasonable course of action because Trigonometry is covered in the previous course. Ms. Bickford is concerned that if the Trigonometry portion is removed, there is a bigger hurdle for the students who want to catch up to Calculus.

Mr. Sills said that he would go back to the staff and ask how they feel about this concern and he will report back to Ms. Bickford.

Mr. Sills also explained that Discrete Math course will be discontinued and be replaced with Business Math and Personal Finance 3. Also, there will be a new Trigonometry/Statistics course added to the schedule for those students interested in a higher-level math class.

Ms. Bickford asked who would teach the new Personal Finance and Business Math courses. Mr. Sills said faculty from both the business department and math department would teach them (not as a team but different sections.)

Ms. Bickford said that she would like to put the sequence maps back into the Program of Studies. She feels this is very helpful for students and parents to see especially in math where there are two distinct paths.

Mr. Sills agreed to look into doing this.

Ms. O'Gara asked if there is a course for the level 3 math student to continue with math and not take Personal Finance? Mr. Sills thinks that this may be a very small number of students and that Personal Finance will be a good course. He did not think that Discrete Math held any more weight with colleges.

Ms. O'Gara asked Mr. Sills to consider offering a small class if there was indeed students interested in this. Mr. Sills said it is very hard to make choices regarding course offerings.

The next significant change discussed was the decision to remove the Environmental Science course. Mr. Sills said that this was a difficult decision but there have been small number of students signing up for the Level 3 or 4 classes.

Ms. Bickford said she was concerned that there is an interest from students for a level 4 Environmental Science class and that not all students want to take honors Environmental Sciences as it can be a tough course. Ms. Bickford asked Mr. Sills to leave it as a “place holder” for the future. Mr. Sills agreed to keep it on hold. He thinks Environmental Sciences will be a topic of interest. He said he would speak to the Science Department to see if they can find ways to recruit/drum up support for a class, if the schedule can support it.

Mr. Sills also explained that there were two changes in the Social Studies department. Gender Studies is now offered as a level 5 and a new course, Real World Social Studies level 3 will be offered. These classes replace the Introduction to Law in hopes to appeal to a broader audience. This course will also allow students interested in Psychology and Sociology to be appropriately placed.

Mr. Sills also mentioned that in the Special Education department, the “highly qualified status” rule necessitated a change. The Alternative Math classes will be discontinued and be replaced with a Team Math course, taught by a certified regular education teacher. Students who were in the Alternative Math class can also be put in a math level 2 class with additional support.

The School Committee had some additional questions for Mr. Sills.

Ms. Bickford said that the Physical Education/Health chart needs to be clarified before it goes into the Program of Studies.

Ms. Bickford also asked why there was a change on the procedure for Course Changes after the start of school. The change said that the students should refer to the Parent/Student Handbook. Mr. Sills said that this was inserted because the School Advisory Committee wants to discuss but this will happen after the publication of the Program of Studies. After discussion, Mr. Sills agreed to change it to “section under revision” and he will try to insert it or post the update on the Web.

Ms. Bickford also had a concern regarding the proposed change in the English Department that “in all relevant course descriptions, the expression five paragraph essay was changed to three part essay to reflect more precisely the work we do with essays..”. Ms. Bickford said that she hopes that the skill of writing five paragraph essays is still taught especially because this is on the SATs and MCAS exams. She feels the proposed language is too restrictive.

Ms. Bickford also asked if there was any truth to the rumor that some students with strong proficiency in music were finding it hard to take level 5 classes in orchestra and band because of scheduling difficulties.

Mr. Sills said that there is a change to help with this situation. Students who take two sections of music in the same year will be designated as a level 5. Mr. Sills said that this will be an experiment. All in all, however, the changes made last year have improved the music classes. So, students who are very interested in music can take higher level classes. This recognizes the fact that students taking multiple performance music classes are truly performing at a higher level. The school is trying to get level 5 music classes to happen despite scheduling problems.

Mr. Hafer suggested clarifying school year ending in odd or even numbers since we refer to school years using both numbers.

All members of the School Committee gave Mr. Sills minor edits on the body of the Program of Studies.

Charles Connell asked if the Graphical User Interface course would be offered next year. Mr. Sills agreed to check.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the amended BHS Program of Studies for the 2009-2010 school year.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Dr. LaCroix commented that at the High School, we have to limit the FTE's and that this is the basis of some of Mr. Sills's tough decisions to offer or not offer courses. "We have limited faculty resources and we have really stretched and continue to stretch our faculty but we do have to make decisions to put courses on hold or to change. "

#### **5. Discussion: Facilities Study**

Dr. LaCroix explained that the School Department requested in the Capital Planning procedure, a K-8 enrollment and space planning study. She reminded the Committee that this was requested because we are finding the Davis, Lane and Middle Schools at or close to capacity. JGMS is already using the Multipurpose Room as a classroom to accommodate the growth in the school and the new schedule. Dr. LaCroix said that she believes it is very important to look at what is going on with enrollment and to study our existing space. She believes we need a professional study to look at the existing space and to come up with any redesign ideas. She also believes it is important to talk to the Planning Board to get an estimate of new housing, etc.

Dr. LaCroix said that when this request was discussed at the Capital Expenditures Committee, they did not think it was a priority for the capital budget. Therefore, Dr. LaCroix is considering putting this project on as an article on the Town Meeting Warrant. This would be asking the Town to put money aside to fund this project in the next budget.

Ms. Bickford said that she fully supports this idea and has some edits and comments on the proposed language. She thought it would be prudent to add a line about the surge in enrollment this year. Ms. Bickford also suggested that the enrollment study should be a K-12 study while the space planning portion be focused on K-8. Dr. LaCroix agreed.

Ms. Bickford asked about the scope of the space planning study. Dr. LaCroix said that she suggests an overview at Davis and a more detailed study on Lane and JGMS.

Other members of the School Committee gave Dr. LaCroix some edits for the ATM warrant article.

Dr. LaCroix said that she wanted to remind everyone that this study is not a feasibility study but an enrollment study and a short term look at how we will meet enrollment needs now, within the footprint of our current buildings.

Mr. Hafer agreed that we need to do both steps – enrollment study and short/long term building implications. He noted that the last enrollment study was completed in 2002 and then updated in 2005. Lane and JGMS enrollment studies were done in late 1990s to inform building projects.

Dr. LaCroix explained the process to include this article on the annual town warrant. The School Committee needs to send the proposed language to the Selectmen to discuss. They will decide whether this project ends up on the warrant as a separate article or go back into the Capital Expense article.

The School Committee finalized the language. Dr. LaCroix agreed to redraft and to send out to School Committee members one more time for final review. The School Committee agreed that a vote was not necessary.

#### **6. Liaison Updates**

Mr. Hafer reported that the Bedford Education Foundation is building momentum and raising more money.

#### **7. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. LaCroix wanted to clarify kindergarten plans for the community. She said that there will not be a fifth day of kindergarten implemented for the 2009-2010 school year. No state grants are available and there is no room in the budget. There will be a community survey done to measure the interest in adding a fifth day of kindergarten. Planning may start for the 2010-2011 school year.

Dr. LaCroix also announced that today was an amazing day with the Presidential Inauguration. She was pleased that young people in our schools watched this historic event and that it was especially poignant for our students to see the first African American President.

#### **8. School Committee Minutes for Review**

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the September 9, 2008 School Committee meeting as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes of the September 23, 2008 School Committee meeting as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

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**9. Adjournment**

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:  
**MOVED:** Motion to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.  
**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Seibert**  
**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>		
<b>Ms. O’Gara</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Pierce</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. Seibert</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Hafer</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. Bickford</b>		<b>Yes</b>

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**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**EXECUTIVE SEESION  
MINUTES OF**

**January 20, 2009**