

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**May 5, 2015**  
**Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room**

**1. Call to Order**

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. McAllister called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Pierce, Ms. Guay and Mr. Brosgol. Miss Sophia Kyrrou, student representative, was absent. Mr. Hafer was expected to arrive a little late.

**2. Comments from Public**

None

**3. Personnel Report**

Mr. Sills asked for approval of a field trip request for 65 Marine Biology students to go to Odione State Park in New Hampshire to explore a natural marine environment.

**Ms. Guay made the following motion:**

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the field trip to Odione State Park on May 11, 2015 for 65 Marine Biology students to look for and identify marine organisms in their natural environment.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 4-0**

Mr. Sills also asked for approval of a field trip to New York City to see a Broadway show for Theater Arts students. Students will take a bus back and forth to New York City in one day.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve a trip on Saturday, May 23, 2015 to New York City for 25 Theater Arts students to see a Broadway play at a cost of \$1,000 from the music activity fund.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 4-0**

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve the annual 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Washington DC for next May.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the annual trip to Washington DC for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class on May 31 –June 2, 2016 at a cost of \$710 per student and no cost to the schools.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Ms. Guay suggested that the itinerary include a meeting with our Congressman.

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve the policy on advertisements and solicitations in the school. He presented the final version of the policy and reminded the School Committee that the goal is to reduce the amount of paper and notices that go home and to keep families focused on school news only. Mr. Sills said that this will be a big change because it will prohibit anything but school related news to go home, including Scouts, Bedford Recreation, tutoring etc.

Mr. McAllister asked if parent organizations could fill the void. Mr. Sills said that they are not prohibited from doing this but he is not sure that they want to do it.

Ms. Guay suggested an edit on the prohibition on selling things with the schools name on it. She suggested prohibiting non-school sponsored products only. Mr. Sills agreed.

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve policy KHA Advertisements and Solicitations in the Schools as presented and edited tonight.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. McAllister**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Mr. Sills suggested updating two other related policies – research in schools and student gifts and solicitations. Mr. McAllister suggested citing state language. The other School Committee members decided that the language should be revised so they did not take any action on this.

**Informational Items:**

Jaime Smith – Resignation – Computer Lab at Middle School

Mon Luke – Resignation – Teaching Assistant at High School

Sumiko Miller – Appointment – Long term Teaching Assistant Sub at Lane School

**4. Public Hearing on Proposal to Name Field**

Mr. Sills explained how a proposal to name the High School “B” field in honor of Dave Wilson was discussed with the Ad Hoc Naming Committee, and at an earlier School Committee meeting. Tonight, there will be a public hearing on the proposal.

The official Public Hearing opened at 7:50 p.m. Mr. Rosenberg, a member of the audience, Selectman and a member of the Ad Hoc Naming Committee, said that naming a field after someone is an honor that is not taken lightly. Mr. Rosenberg said that Mr. Wilson is a good example of someone who has served the town well and has made a long lasting impact on boys and girls for almost three decades. Mr. Rosenberg said that Mr. Wilson has asked that the field be named Dave “Coach” Wilson Field.

There were no other public comments. The Public Hearing closed at 7:55 pm.

**Ms. Guay made the following motion:**

**MOVED: That the School Committee agree to name the “B Field” after Dave Coach Wilson.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Mr. Rosenberg said that when signage is planned, he will come back to the School Committee for approval. He said he expects that Bedford Athletics Association will fundraise for this.

**5. Director of Special Education Candidate Presentation**

Mr. Sills introduced Marianne Vines to the School Committee, his candidate for the Director of Special Education position. He reminded the Committee that she has been in the system for several years as Program Administrator at the High School and most recently as interim Special Education Director for the system.

Ms. Vines introduced herself and gave a comprehensive presentation on her background and skills, her beliefs, and vision for the Special Education Department. Some highlights include:

- Started her career in Early Childhood education
- Has worked at all levels of school which has given her a broad perspective.
- She has a child who needs special education services so she can truly understand the parents view.
- She believes in making lasting changes based on principles, not practices.
- She sees her role focusing on empowering and trusting her staff to do their jobs because the staff is a very experienced and talented team.
- Her belief is that students should be educated in their home school.
- She has high expectations for special education students.
- She plans on sharing resources of the special education and regular education staff.

Ms. Vines said she would like to develop an Autism program at Davis and to implement co-taught classes in all the schools. She wants to continue to find ways to bring more students back into Bedford.

The School Committee members asked Ms. Vines questions.

Mr. Brosgol asked what her goal is for reducing the number of out-of-district placements. Ms. Vines said she would like to see a dramatic decrease in out-of-district placements. She said that there are many considerations when doing this, one being space constraints at the schools. She thinks that this will require careful planning and a review to ensure we are using existing space appropriately. What will drive the decisions though is doing what is best for the students, while balancing costs.

Mr. Pierce asked if she had any experience with Special Education law. Ms. Vines said that she has strong skills in this area and is very comfortable because she has had litigation experience in past jobs.

Ms. Guay said that she applauds the district decision to try to develop new in-house programs, especially the Autism program planned for Davis School. She asked about Ms. Vines' plans for getting the general education teachers and parents on board.

Ms. Vines said her plan is to work with the Principals first recognizing the fact that staff maybe uncomfortable. However, she wants to do right by the students. She see herself guiding the Principal and staff and to be present and available to them on a regular basis. She will ensure they will have support to help the students. She will also work with the Principal and SEPAC to introduce the new program at Davis.

Ms. Guay asked if there are any plans to help with Transition Planning for students at the high school. Ms. Vines explained that there has been vast improvement in this area over the last year and she will continue to improve and involve the students.

Mr. McAllister said that the School Committee has worked hard defending the costs for inclusion programs to town government. He said that he would like Ms. Vines to help the School Committee continue to do this and to continue to educate the residents about the importance of inclusion.

Mr. McAllister asked Ms. Vines what her favorite part of the job is and what has surprised her. Ms. Vines said that she enjoys ensuring special education students are taken care of. She was surprised at the numbers of out-placed students and the amount of anxiety staff has about inclusion.

Mr. Hafer asked Ms. Vines how she handles adversarial discussions. Ms. Vines said that when she is faced with difficult discussions, she always brings it back to the needs of the student – the point of agreement.

Mr. Hafer asked about her budgeting experience. Ms. Vines said she worked very closely with Mr. Sills on developing the new program at Davis and worked on budget development with the Principals, the Early Childhood Coordinator and the ODD Coordinator. Mr. Hafer said that it is important for the Special Education Director to help the School Committee understand the financials so they can guide the town finance committees accordingly.

Mr. Sills commented that Ms. Vines has the experience developing new programs in schools. He also noted her broad background in legal matters pertaining to special education.

Mr. Sills thanked Ms. Vines for her presentation.

## **6. JGMS School Improvement Plan**

Mr. Kevin Tracey, Principal, and Mr. Matt Mehler, Assistant Principal, presented the School Improvement plan for 2015-2016 year and the updated Student Handbook.

Mr. Tracey thanked the staff, students and School Council members for working on the School Improvement Plan and Handbook for 2015-2016. His presentation covered the majors points only.

### **School Improvement Plan**

Goal: Governance and Leadership

- Continue to foster a positive school culture.
- During Advisory balance character education and anti-bullying education.
- Examine the manner in how we celebrate success. Mr. Tracey would like to stop holding the traditional Honor Recognition night and put a committee together to see if there is better way to celebrate academic success.
- Examine the experience and perception of our students of color and how it impacts their feeling connected to our school and community.
- More effectively meet the needs of all students by modifying grouping practices by reviewing leveling and doing away with 6<sup>th</sup> grade learning groups. This year, Mr. Tracey will use Aspen to form heterogeneous groupings based on feedback from grade 5 teachers and the amount of support students need.
- Increase student voice in leadership – conduct focus groups in Advisory, review current structure of student government and review student rights.

Goal: Curriculum and Instruction

- Continue focus on instructional best practices. Make sure instruction is engaging and thinking based.
- Continue conversation around our cultural proficiency.
- Complete work on curricular overviews.
- Work towards publishing curricular documents to supplement online guide.

Goal: Assessment

- Continue to review our implemented common assessments. Will coordinate with BHS on Wednesday schedules in order to have more departmental work time (and less faculty meetings)
- Continue to focus on analyzing student achievement data.

Goal: Student Support

- Expand Skill Center Support and Enrichment Program.
- Review and implement Guidance curriculum and implement Student Support team

Mr. Mehler than reviewed the changes planned for the Student Handbook. He also gave the School Committee members a memorandum with the changes.

Mr. Mehler explained that changes were made to implement a new Student Support Team. He also explained changes made to the Code of Conduct. One change is to implement a numeric-grading floor of 55 for the first two grading quarters of full year courses and first grading quarter of half-year courses.

Mr. Pierce commented that the Student Support Team needs to focus on helping kids who have poor grades.

Mr. Hafer said that he is concerned that these changes will end up making students who excel (and there are a lot) not having challenging programs and teachers. Mr. Tracey said he thinks there is a balance and that students who excel will still have opportunities to excel.

Ms. Guay said that she believes if more students who need support in the classroom receive it then teachers can move forward with high achieving students in the classroom.

Mr. McAllister reminded everyone that these students are 11 years old and that there is no evidence that heterogeneous grouping will drag down the opportunity for higher achieving students. He thinks all will benefit. He said the challenge is explaining that the things we do to support struggling students is not done at the expense of high achieving students.

Mr. Pierce said he feels JGMS should put developmental expectations of middle schools on the website to help families know what to expect from their middle school aged children.

Mr. Tracey said that he needs to carefully observe the new way of doing the sixth grade groupings and scheduling to see if it works or to see if a cohort suffers as a result.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the 2015-2016 School Improvement Plan for JGMS as presented tonight.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay**

**MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-1**

**(Mr Hafer abstained)**

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the changes to the 2015-2016 JGMS Student Handbook as presented tonight.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay**  
**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

#### **6. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee if they agree with his recommendation to hire Ms. Vines a Special Education Director.

Mr. Pierce asked Mr. Sills to summarize his opinion of Ms. Vines. Mr. Sills noted that she:

- Is experienced with elementary, middle and high school special education students
- Has a district-wide perspective prior to her current interim position
- Is onboard with the district's direction towards inclusion
- Has experience building programs in public school settings
- Has legal experience and has success working towards resolution
- Is overall tough and compassionate at the same time
- Is thoughtful around professional development

Ms. Guay asked how she is viewed internally. Mr. Sills said some people see her as an agent of change so there are probably some mixed feelings.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the recommendation to appoint Marianne Vines as Director of Special Education as of July 1, 2015.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Mr. Sills said that the Public Health Department has formally asked the School Committee to take over supervisory and fiscal responsibilities of the five school nurses. Mr. Sills said that this has been initiated by the Board of Health because the nurses regularly interact with the Principals and most school nurses report to school departments in the state. Mr. Sills said that the nurses themselves are indifferent. They want to remain autonomous and feel they will continue to serve the children well if they stay with the Board of Health and hope they can continue if they fall under the schools.

Mr. Sills said that the School Committee needs to discuss and understand the current contract negotiations because it could have fiscal ramifications. Mr. Sills said he would like to learn more about the contract in executive session and then discuss it publicly in a School Committee meeting.

Mr. Pierce said he wants the public to know that this is not a power play by the School Committee. He said Bedford is one community and it seems like a reorganization that is really not necessary.

Mr. Sills noted that CASE Collaborative has provided our preschool with a nurse (at no charge) and has also helped us with METCO transportation needs at a low cost. He wanted to thank them for their partnership.

Mr. Sills then shared a list of college acceptances from the class of 2015. He is proud of the wide representation of colleges on the list.

#### **7. Liaison Reports**

None



**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**May 5, 2015**

**Exhibits/Documents**

- Draft of Policy KHA Advertisements and Solicitations in the Schools
- Presentation: Marianne Vines Candidate for Special Education Director
- John Glenn Middle School FY 16 School Improvement Plan presentation
- John Glenn Middle School Proposed Student Handbook Changes presentation and Memorandum dated May 1, 2015
- List of College Acceptances for Class of 2015
- Draft of January 28, 2015 School Committee meeting minutes
- Draft of March 10, 2015 School Committee meeting minutes