

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 4, 2014
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

PRESENT: Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, Chair; Bonnie Brodner, Vice-Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart

ABSENT: Sam A. Lehn, Student Representative

The Minutes were taken by Jean M. Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting convened at 7:36 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

The Chair called the meeting to order and invited public comment.

Judy Crocker, 15 Currier Court, commented on Dr. Ash's comments about the high quality of education mentioned at Saturday's public hearing. Ms. Crocker also spoke to enrichment math, New England Math League (NEML), cultural shift, curriculum and teacher stress. Ms. Crocker encouraged Dr. Ash to try and make the best use of Lexington's resources (teaching personnel).

II. Superintendents Announcements

Dr. Ash shared (i) residents want to know if there is school tomorrow. He explained his reasoning for not making decisions the night before when other towns are closing; and (ii) Bridge Elementary School personnel have had to pull the fire alarm due to an odor in the building several times during the last month and on each of those occasions, the fire department did not find any natural gas leak. Meg Colella, Principal, Bridge Elementary School wrote to Bridge families letting them know that they have identified the issue and reassured them that it was not a safety issue. Patrick Goddard, Director of Public Facilities is working to correct the identified issues.

III. School Committee Member Announcements

Bonnie Brodner shared (i) that she attended the Chinese American Association of Lexington (CAAL) New Year celebration on Saturday night; (ii) the PTA/PTO's Presidents' Council are co-sponsoring with the Chinese Asian Americans of Lexington (CAAL) a Roundtable Discussion on Wednesday, February 26 from 7:00-9:00 pm in the cafeteria of the new Estabrook Elementary School to strengthen bridges with Lexington's Chinese community; (iii) asked her colleagues about the suggestion that the Safe Routes to School coordinator be moved into the budget. Would it be a paid position?

Judy Crocker, 15 Currier Court, responded to Ms. Brodner's question regarding the coordinator position which would be part of the Safe Routes to School Committee (SRTS). The job has grown and is becoming too much for a volunteer.

Jessie Steigerwald shared that there has been discussion with Deborah Mauger, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) regarding a need for a transportation coordinator on the municipal side and exploration of mass transit for kids after school. Jessie Steigerwald is liaison to the School Transportation and Safety Committee..

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent Business and Finance shared that she serves as the school liaison to SRTS and is charged to review safety and mitigation on school property. She is trying to determine if it makes sense to hire a coordinator to liaise with BOS, and the Transportation Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) with regard to safety on school property. This still needs to be explored and nothing has been decided yet.

Mary Ann Stewart shared (i) due to weather, the meeting with the Suburban Coalition Panel Conversation with Representative Kaufman and Senator Barrett along with Mass Policy Center President Noah Berger is rescheduled to February 26; (ii) the Elementary World Language working meeting is rescheduled to February 26; (iii) PPC Site Council meeting is rescheduled until February 26 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and (iv) Ms. Stewart requested Dr. Ash to provide school improvement plans to be distributed to the Committee before the PPC meeting on February 26.

Dr. Ash shared that he requested a mid-year report and now has all nine on school improvement plans and will share them with the Committee. Dr. Ash has not yet talked with Chair on the best way to share the plans or whether put them on as a future agenda item. Dr. Ash will know by early next week when the Committee will have all nine school improvement plans.

Mary Ann Stewart asked Ms. Steigerwald about a meeting she had attended at the invitation from someone in Arlington on one-to-one technology and asked if she were going to share an update with Committee.

Mary Ann Stewart also shared that Digital Learning Day is February 5, which is about digital citizenship. She noted that Sandy Trach, Principal, Estabrook Elementary School, had sent the Committee an article that she had published in the National Association of Elementary School Principals Journal. It has become a springboard for what will be a conversation on Twitter tomorrow night from 8:00-9:00 p.m. on digital safety. Sandy Trach will be moderating tomorrow night. There will be an archived version of that event and you can locate it at #DIGISAFETY. This is a national event and Edgipedia and the Digitopia Library of Congress at the website, www.digitalllearningday.org.

Ms. Stewart also announced that the Committee should keep an eye on the House II Budget, specifically, the homeless transportation funding budget which is well below funding level. Level funding for the circuit breaker is at \$252.5 million dollars and the METCO program is level funded at \$18.6 million dollars.

Jessie Steigerwald responded to Ms. Stewart that she had shared an update with the Committee after she went and toured one of Arlington's elementary school regarding their one-to-one iPad program and the update is in the minutes.

Jessie Steigerwald announced (i) the Youth Service Council meeting is being postponed until the following week. Bill Blount will be attending along with Margaret Coppe and they will provide an update on their subcommittee. The School Transportation and Safety Committee is meeting this Thursday at 9:00 a.m. Ms. Steigerwald thanked Elaine Celi, Mary Ellen Dunn and Judy Crocker for their work at keeping the bus fee at \$300.

Ms. Steigerwald offered her services if the Policy Subcommittee is having a hard time getting started. Ms. Steigerwald announced that she spent her time at Clarke Middle School today meeting four 8th grade classrooms working on their mock town meeting. They will be debating whether Lexington should adopt a bylaw change that would outlaw the sale of individual containers of plastic water bottles under a certain size. The date for the 8th Grade Mock Town Meeting will be Saturday, March 8. More volunteers are needed and if anyone is interested they can contact Mary Barry, Social Studies Department Head or Ms. Steigerwald.

Margaret Coppe announced the 2020 Vision Committee Report was submitted to the Board of Selectmen last night and the whole report is online on the town website, entitled "Civic Participation by Asian Residents of Lexington; Experiences, Findings and Recommendations." The 2020 Vision Committee is waiting to hear if the BOS is going to respond to the recommendations that were made.

IV. Agenda

1. School Committee Discussion of the Superintendent's FY 15 Recommended Budget

The Chair shared that the public hearings are over. She would like to hear about items still on table and possibly take a straw vote tonight so Dr. Ash and Mary Ellen Dunn can adjust numbers and then the Committee will vote on the budget a week from tonight.

Jessie Steigerwald had question regarding the Landscape Committee for Dr. Ash and also requested to hear from the Landscape Committee.

Dr. Ash replied that he had no answer at this time.

Nancy Sofen, 3 Abernathy Road and member of the Landscape Committee shared the history of the committee and the need to transition this over to the town or school to take over. She hopes when the new High School is built that the landscaping will be included in the budget.

Betsy Weiss shared her views on the work of the Landscape Committee and the money and volunteer time that have been spent over the past 10 years. Ms. Weiss urged the Committee to add \$5,000 to its budget to be spent on plantings and the summer work program.

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding (i) where the money would come from and does it belong in the school budget; (ii) whether or not this has an educational aspect and is part of the curriculum; (iii) other science educational programs offered such as the

Big Backyard Program and how that is funded; and (iv) per pupil expenditure at the elementary school level. There was a feeling among the Committee members for more information to be provided to them in order to make an informed decision.

Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development explained to the Committee that the Big Backyard Program is supplemented by PTAs and Karen McCarthy, the LPS; K-5 Science Curriculum Coordinator provides training.

Dr. Ash shared a handout with the Committee regarding the supply budget increase and he asked Ms. Dunn to come to the microphone to talk about the proposed increase.

Mary Ellen Dunn reviewed the handout with the Committee and it included the CPI index for 2000-2014. Ms. Dunn discussed the per pupil expenditure recalculations and it showed all grades had not been funded correctly. Ms. Dunn shared the total CPI adjustments and stated that she still needs more time to review. Ms. Dunn also spoke about having a central registrar which would help detect non-Lexington residents who are attending Lexington Public Schools.

The Committee had questions and comments regarding (i) elementary school allocation; (ii) whether text books at the high school are included in this category; (iii) 9-12 math, (iv) adjusting for authorization for collective bargaining; (v) removing athletic fee; (vi) Dr. Ash to make decisions about funding for supplies; (vii) what amount would Dr. Ash be comfortable with; (viii) supplemental funding; (ix) what are the Avalon numbers; (x) legal fees; (xi) Special Education litigation cases; (xii) effects of increased enrollment for teachers and departments; and (xiii) small bookshelves.

Jessie Steigerwald provided Committee members with a brief memorandum on academic enrichment field trips and she proposed the following: (i) set a specific limit on cost of trip; (ii) set up some need based financial aid; (iii) the existing criteria for some need based financial aid such as free and reduced lunch; and (iv) lower expense for all students; and (v) provide stipends for teachers on these trips to avoid shifting teacher travel expenses to students. Ms. Steigerwald would like Mary Ellen Dunn to oversee these funds. Ms. Steigerwald's vision is if you go to Lexington Public Schools and trips are offered, every child should believe that they have a change to go regardless of financial circumstances.

The Committee had comments regarding Ms. Steigerwald's proposal (i) too broad and too premature and not in favor of adding money right to the budget; (ii) would like to hear more from Mary Ellen Dunn; (iii) does not want to use taxpayer money on this; and (iv) does not support this at this time and the stipend would be taxable.

The Committee discussed the .4 Communication position. The Committee was split 3-2 on revisiting the position next year.

Ms. Steigerwald was not in favor of a full-time data administrator for FY15. The majority of the Committee was in agreement on (i) data assessment position; and (ii) 9-12 Math (\$7,000).

The Committee would like more information regarding (i) supply budget; (ii) landscaping; and (iii) unallocated money (\$657,344).

The Chair requested new numbers from Mary Ellen Dunn before next week's meeting.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, wondered if the Committee was going to discuss any of the proposals made at the public hearings. Ms. McKenna also inquired if there was any mention of the Elementary World Language Program.

2. Bullying Prevention and Intervention

The Chair presented the Third Reading of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Revised and reviewed the changes from the Second Reading.

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding definitions in the policy and other suggested changes.

Motion to Accept the Third Reading of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention, as revised (Steigerwald, Brodner) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

IV. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn (Brodner, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

The Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, February 11, 2014, at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room, 1625 Massachusetts Avenue.

Meeting Materials: Meeting Agenda; Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

Voted by the School Committee May 13, 2014