

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room

1625 Massachusetts Avenue

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair, Judith Crocker, Alessandro Alessandrini, William Hurley, Jessie Steigerwald

ABSENT: Abigail Schwartz, Student Representative

The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary

The meeting convened at 7:33pm

Call to order and welcome: Chair Margaret Coppe called the meeting to order, and introduced committee members.

Public Comments:

Bonnie Brodner, 8 Trodden Path: She asked about holidays. Last year an email was sent out about whether some holidays were on chopping block, or if more would be added. She is wondering what the status of that survey is. This is the time to make changes, before the calendar is set. She is concerned that some holidays would be eliminated and not everyone could weigh in with an opinion.

Margaret Coppe explained that a committee has not been formed yet, and that they are waiting to meet with various members of the community. They are not ready to make a change of that magnitude right now. Jessie Steigerwald stated that the School Committee did not establish a subcommittee to review holidays. There was no current proposal before the School Committee to add or delete other holidays.

Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash explained snow days. Superintendents talk to a lot of people before making the decision to cancel school. Yesterday he was determined that if it was safe to open schools, he would. After speaking with the DPW, Public Facilities, area superintendents, Mary Ellen Dunn Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Operations, and the bus company, he came to the decision to have a delayed opening. The delay was because of bus drivers and staff who had to travel to Lexington. With 5 snow days, the unofficial last day of school will be June 23. The last possible day we could go is June 30. If we would need more, the options are Saturdays, or April vacation days, but he thinks it is extremely unlikely.

He announced that Mary Ellen Dunn will be leaving June 30 to be Deputy Superintendent of Schools, for Finance and Administration in Brookline. He thanked her for 9 years and for doing an extraordinary and important job in the school system. The people on her team are outstanding. He has been very happy to have her on his team.

There is a memo from Dr. Ash in member's meeting packets about the Ad Hoc Committee for Youth at Risk report. It shows what is being recommended by the committee, and the responses from the administration. He hopes that the next step will be the members of that committee will review the response and begin conversation.

Pat Goddard spoke about the Hastings gym and Bridge hot water heater. The Hastings gymnasium has another beam that is fractured. The gym is now closed. The principal and staff are rearranging and rescheduling things. A structural engineer will be there tomorrow and repair will hopefully be done quickly.

Bridge had water leaking out of the hot water heater. There is a fracture in the hot water heater. It should be up and running soon and the repair will be under warranty. Gerard Cody, Lexington Health Director was made aware of the situation and made the following recommendations: students are encouraged to wash with cold water and soap, as it is an acceptable means of staying clean; hand sanitizers were supplied in all restrooms; the kitchen was going to make its own hot water. He knew that the repair might take up to two weeks.

School Committee Member Announcements:

Judith Crocker: She and Margaret Coppe visited with the Hastings PTA and discussed overcrowding. She also reminded the public that the LHS science fair is February 24.

William Hurley: He attended the TMMA executive meeting as he is the liaison to that committee. He echoed Dr. Ash's sentiments for Mary Ellen Dunn. He has been thrilled she has been here in Lexington. She is a first class highly skilled professional.

Jessie Steigerwald: She also praised Mary Ellen Dunn. Brookline will benefit and she has given a tremendous contribution to Lexington. The work on the busses has been amazing, and she has done a great job with student activities and informing the policy subcommittee. Mock Town Meeting is currently in session. Thanks to the Social Studies Department teachers at the middle schools. March 16th is the Town Wide Mock Town Meeting at Clarke Middle School. Thanks to Dr. Ash and all staff, DPW, and the Department of Facilities for handling the snow so well. When there is a snow day and schools are closed, students and teachers are at home. Some people asked if teachers could send homework and some people were upset that schoolwork was assigned.

Alessandro Alessandrini: Thanks to Ms. Dunn. We could not have done things during the economic down turn without her. She went above and beyond with the budget. Thank you. Thanks to the bus drivers for today with the snowy roads. Governor Baker, before being elected Governor, wanted to cut METCO program funds. He wants to send a letter with the support of the committee in favor of METCO program funds.

Margaret Coppe: She also thanks Mary Ellen Dunn. She is always helpful and found answers to all questions.

Public Hearing on the Superintendent's FY16 Recommended Budget

8:00pm hearing begins.

Rina Farber-Mazor, LHS French Teacher: She spoke to the committee last Saturday about the workload for LHS teachers. A student of hers, who read the school committee notes, brought the

topic up at the Student Faculty Senate meeting last Wednesday. Ms. Farber-Mazor read a letter from Brittney Fitzgibbon, History teacher. Last year she taught 5 classes, this year only teaches 4. She had 123 students last year, and under 100 students this year. The most important change is that she knows her students better, their personal relationships, personalities, their home life, and she communicates more with parents. She has more time for student senate meetings, advises after school clubs, and volunteers more. She works with other students in the learning center, the METCO learning center and is involved with the Latino scholars. She feels she is a better educator and supports all students. This year she could write many more college recommendations, 25 last year and 40 this year. Feedback on work gets back to students more quickly, as do formative assessments, and she is able to meet with fellow teachers. This job feels much more sustainable than it did last year.

Joe Blumberg, 36 Sherborn Road: He is the moderator of Student/Faculty Senate at Lexington High School. He read statements from students in support of the LHS teachers reducing their workload. His handouts were forwarded to the School Committee Chair.

Rosemary Loomis, LHS English Teacher: It is an honor to educate children but we need more time to focus more intently on each student. Our profession demands us to show proofs, prepare and follow up classes, maintain websites, hold meetings with students, parents, administrators, and with individual students. One paper takes 20 minutes to review. Most educators spend this time. The educator bears the brunt of the load that the curriculum requires. We should change if we can, as it benefits students and the community. Please consider this very real need.

Jane Yao, LHS Mandarin Teacher: She read a letter from Heather Kimura, LHS French Teacher and Lili Pan, LHS Mandarin Teacher: They said they are thankful for working in such a supportive district and for your consideration in reducing the teaching load. Teaching 4 courses would improve student's access to teachers. It would increase teacher's time and resources to collaborate and use technology. It would enhance swift and extensive feedback to students. Both students and teachers would benefit.

Monica Cantwell, 65 Bridge Street: She is a parent, and hopes that members will listen to the high school teachers. It is not often they seek the help of the School Committee. All teachers should be treated equally with exception of science due to labs. All should be treated fairly and please do not balance the budget on the backs of the high school teachers. An educator under duress can make students more stressed. X-block is gone, and teachers are doing more now than in past years. Stress is one of the most serious issues at the high school. After school activities need teachers. It's no secret that the schools are overcrowded and we will need more faculty. Do not add more teachers, change the policy now. Teachers with 4 classes will have more flexibility and it should help the school run more smoothly. Money spent will benefit all students in the system and it will be money well spent.

Mike Egbert, LHS Social Studies Teacher: He does not live here but is very proud to work in this town. Thank you to the school committee. He then read a letter from Lindsay Banks, a LHS Social Studies Teacher. Two years ago she was honored to receive the Sharon Wong Award for work done with African American Latino scholars. It is incredibly demanding work, which she is passionate about it. She is also incredibly passionate about her teaching. Last summer she had a baby and still wants to continue her work. With 5 classes she doesn't know if she could handle work and home life.

Maureen Haviland, LHS Latin Teacher: She has been teaching at LHS for 12 years and spoke at the last hearing. As much as she loves her job, students, colleagues, she is constantly overwhelmed. It strains her to the limit. She has had to cut back offering independent studies. She loves that piece but has not offered it because she cannot find the time. Much more often than she would like she does things the way she always has because she cannot find the time for change. Students who need focused support are missing out. We have lost high quality teachers to other districts that only teach 4 classes and it makes her sad and worried. Please seriously consider this so we can teach as well as possible, not as much as possible.

Sarah Hahn-Dupont, 64 LedgeLawn Avenue, LHS Student: She is a senior at LHS. She has thoroughly enjoyed LHS, but it is high performance and high stress. One week of a stress reducing week during the school year is not enough. Teachers are great mentors. Students are up until 2 AM working. She is really worried students are going to lose their mentors because they are so stressed. It is terrifying to think they could lose them. It is a mental sanity question.

Margaret Hahn-Dupont, 64 LedgeLawn Avenue: She is a Professor of Law at Northeastern University and knows how difficult it is to provide an excellent education when you feel a burden of how many classes you need to teach. The hours outside the classroom are enormous. Sarah, her daughter, has been the lucky recipient of these teachers but they are suffering from the burden of the course load. People move here because of the incredibly strong school system. If these teachers leave, she does not know what it will do to the school system. She commends the committee for taking this on and does not envy them for having to do the budget. Take into account that the teachers are the soul of the school. To the extent you can give help, please do.

Public Hearing closed at 8:29pm

Agenda:

Report of the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee

Judith Crocker and William Hurley showed a power point presentation from the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee.

Members discussed space issues to get ready for tomorrow's summit and special town meeting as a school committee. They agreed that additional space cannot come online fast enough and eventually the high school will need to be addressed.

Regarding Hastings: There are not 2 empty classrooms. Dr. Ash explained that due to the large number of ILP students at Hastings, we accommodate their needs by reducing class sizes/teacher pupil ratio. Every single classroom is being used and the school is at capacity. The modulars are well beyond their life expectancy. The ballpark for capacity should be 420 students or slightly lower because with ILP in the general education setting the ratio is lower. Should also show 300 as a number because at some point the modulars will disappear and that will be the capacity without the modulars. Structural concerns in the gym are also important.

Members agreed to approve going ahead with the \$800,000 to begin design study and also submitting the SOI to MSBA in April.

Regarding Estabrook: Members discussed the available seats and not redistricting other students there. There are 72 seats. It would cost \$85,000 per bus, to bus kids there. The issue before

town meeting is whether to appropriate money to study adding extra space to that building. . We already have 3 classrooms and need 9 more to get to the enrollment projection.

The committee agreed to go forward with recommending the need for an additional 18 classrooms across the district to accommodate increasing enrollment.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower Street: She asked why the committee is not using the 24-26 classrooms that Dr. Ash recommended because 18 does not seem adequate.

Members explained that it would be to reach a goal of 1 extra classroom per school and they are not locked in to anything. 18 classrooms will carry us for the next 5 years.

Dawn McKenna: She wanted to state a factual comment, and reported on the Town Capital Stabilization Fund. The Town Manager is recommending adding \$9.3 million to the \$8 million that is currently in it.

Vote to Approve the FY16 Operating Budget

Margaret Coppe spoke about the many teachers from LHS came to seek a change in the teaching load. The School Committee has met in Executive Session and wants to continue exploring the request to change the teaching load in upcoming collective bargaining. It is not able to be funded in the upcoming budget. Jessie Steigerwald has tremendous empathy for the teachers. She would like to see us make progress but understands why it is a subject for collective bargaining. She believes we need to do a better job in the fall with the budget and does wish it had been incorporated.

Mary Ellen Dunn explained the fees. They will be raising the lunch price 25 cents. The last increase was in 2006. It is due to capital: installing a dishwasher at LHS, and eliminating Styrofoam trays. Hopefully these objectives will meet the community's needs.

MOTION to transfer \$623,783 from the Revenue Allocation to Unclassified, for the purposes of health insurance, Medicare and workers compensation for new positions.

The School Department budgets for estimated costs associated with each position added/removed from its previous year's budgeted FTE amount. This transfer, to the Unclassified Account, includes estimated costs associated with health insurance, dental insurance, workers compensation, and Medicare. Health and Dental Insurance costs are calculated based on a fixed per FTE formula provided by the Town annually (pro-rated for fractional FTEs added). Worker's Compensation and Medicare costs are calculated using a percentage of the total salary for the position being added/removed. Medicare costs are 1.45% of the total position cost and workers compensation is 6.1% for every \$100 of the total position cost. (Hurley, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

MOTION to Approve the Lexington Public School Recommended Operating Budget for FY16 in the Amount of \$92,060,316 and associated fees. (Alessandrini, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The annual authorization for the Transportation Revolving Fund has been standing at \$830,000. The request is to increase it to \$850,000 because we are potentially going to exceed the cap,

partly due to increased ridership. The number could be as high as \$875,000. If the program continues on the increase of ridership it has been, it will be needed. The cap is based on enrolled ridership.

Dawn McKenna: She recommends setting it to the higher \$875,000 rather than lowering and asked why all revolving funds have to be voted by town meeting. Mary Ellen Dunn said that \$850,000 is fine and it is voted at town meeting due to specific statutory authorizations.

MOTION to request Town Meeting, pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2; re-authorize the use of the Transportation Revolving Fund, and to authorize to expend amounts from such revolving fund accounts, and to determine whether the maximum amounts that may be expended from such revolving fund accounts in FY2016 shall be the \$850,000. (Steigerwald, Crocker)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Vote to Approve the FY16 Capital Budget

Members had some questions about the vehicle with aerial lift and the LHS modulars.

MOTION to Approve the Lexington Public School Recommended School Capital Request for FY16 in the Amount of \$1,986,000. (Crocker, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

MOTION to Approve the Lexington Public School Recommended School Facilities' Capital Request for FY16 in the Amount of \$7,572,625. (Steigerwald, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Phyllis Neufeld, LEA President: She wanted to make sure that Margaret Coppe said that the School Committee is not including reducing LHS teacher workloads for FY16, but as we enter negotiations we could be looking for a potential reduction for FY17.

Financing Lexington High School Modulars

Patrick Goddard explained that funding the LHS modulars \$500,000 would be done by getting \$150,000 from the Appropriation Committee from the reserve fund transfer, and \$350,000 from an additional appropriation at Special Town Meeting.

First Reading of Mission/Vision Statement

The statement was read and members moved the last line to the 3rd line.

MOTION to approve the first reading of the Mission/Vision Statement. (Crocker, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Superintendent's Evaluation

Members made a few edits to the evaluation. They will post the evaluation as amended on the website.

MOTION to approve the Superintendent's evaluation, as amended. (Crocker, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 4-0-1 with W. Hurley abstaining.

Consent Agenda:

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of October 7, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of October 21, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of November 18, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of November 19, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 15, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 16, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 17, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 18, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 19, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of December 29, 2014

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of January 6, 2015

Vote to approve School Committee minutes of January 13, 2015

Vote to approve, as amended, and not for release, School Committee Executive Session minutes of December 16, 2014, 10:00pm.

Vote to approve, as amended, and not for release, School Committee Executive Session minutes of December 19, 2014.

Vote to approve, as amended, and not for release, School Committee Executive Session minutes of December 29, 2014.

MOTION to approve Consent Agenda, as amended. (Steigerwald, Crocker)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

MOTION to accept the final report of the Ad hoc School Master Planning Committee, and to dissolve its membership as it has met its charge. (Alessandrini, Steigerwald)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

MOTION to adjourn (Alessandrini, Steigerwald)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; Final report from the Ad hoc School Master Planning Committee; FY16 School Committee Operating and Capital Budget Request memo; LHS Modular memo from Pat Goddard; Mission/Vision Statement; School Committee Minutes for approval from 10/7/14, 10/21/14, 11/18/14, 11/19/14, 12/15/14, 12/16/14, 12/17/14, 12/18/14, 12/19/14, 12/29/14, 1/6/15, 1/13/15; Executive Minutes not for release from 12/16/14, 12/19/14, 12/29/14; SMMA Phase 3 Executive Report Master Plan Options

Voted Approved by the School Committee 1.19.16