

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, March 10, 2015
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

7:30 p.m. Call to Order and Welcome:

Public Comment – (Written comments to be presented to the School Committee; oral presentations not to exceed three minutes.)

7:35 p.m. Superintendent's Announcements:

7:45 p.m. School Committee Member Announcements:

7:55 p.m. Agenda:

1. Reorganization of the School Committee (5 minutes)
2. Vote to Approve a Contract Extension for the Period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2018, for Ms. Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (5 minutes)
3. Vote to Approve a Contract Extension for the Period July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2017, for Ms. Ellen Sugita, Director of Special Education (5 minutes)
4. Vote on School Building Project Consensus Plan (5 minutes)
5. Discussion of Town Meeting Articles (45 minutes)
6. Update on School Committee Policies (5 minutes)
7. Discussion of Governor's FY 2016 Budget (20 minutes)

9:25 p.m. Consent Agenda (5 minutes):

1. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 10, 2015
2. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 21, 2015
3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 25, 2015

9:30 p.m. Executive Session:

1. Exemption 3 – To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Potential Litigation Regarding a Student Residency Issue
2. Exemption 3 – To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining Regarding LEA Unit A Negotiations

10:00 p.m. Adjourn:

The next scheduled meeting of the School Committee is as follows:

- Monday, March 23, 2015 – 6:30 p.m., Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street

All agenda items and the order of items are approximate and subject to change.

School Building Project Consensus Plan

Consensus of the 25 February 2015 Lexington Budget Collaboration/Summit

Introduction

This document describes the consensus position of the Lexington Budget Collaboration/Summit (Board of Selectmen [BoS], School Committee, Appropriation Committee, and Capital Expenditures Committee) held on February 25, 2015 (“Summit”), regarding Article 2 of the March 2015 Special Town Meeting #1.

That Article will request initial funding to develop various school-building projects in response to ongoing and future overcrowding issues, and building-condition issues, in the Lexington Public School (LPS) System. The projects cover school buildings serving grades Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K), K-5, and 6-8, and may include pre-fabricated classrooms, brick-and-mortar additions, and/or a new elementary school building. Total costs are estimated to be on the order of \$100 to \$120 million. A debt-exclusion vote will be required to finance the costs of the actual construction and the design & engineering costs for projects that proceed to construction.

This document is the result of the discussions of a working group before the Summit composed of two members from the BoS and each committee, and reflects subsequent feedback obtained from deliberations of the BoS on February 23, 2015, and deliberations of the School Committee on February 21 & 23, 2015, and again at the Summit, as well as input from the Appropriation and Capital Expenditures Committees.

Basic Assumptions

Enrollment growth has been growing at approximately 2% per year for the past seven years and it is causing overcrowding in existing school facilities now. This growth is expected to continue for several more years, bringing even greater pressure to a strained school system.

The LPS System requires expanded school facilities to properly meet its educational mandates, and to limit the need for expensive out-of-district placements.

The long-term goals for the public school system are to:

- keep school buildings moving towards their optimal usage,
- minimize disruptions to students,
- avoid extremes of over- or under-utilization.

The Town must pursue these goals in a fiscally responsible manner, and without ignoring other vital capital projects (e.g., public-safety buildings).

The requested appropriation will be based on a flexible plan that allows the Town to begin by spending some of the requested funds to study a set of alternatives in depth. Some options may be modified or eliminated during this process. In late summer or early fall, the School Committee and the BoS will coordinate the refinement of the plan, with advice from the two

finance committees, and then the BoS will approve additional spending from the original appropriation. Depending on the project, that additional spending will advance the work into the design development or construction-and-bid document phases. The results of this process will inform the request for funds at a fall Special Town Meeting.

Input from the Department of Public Facilities and the Permanent Building Committee is expected throughout this process—for both facility planning and for advice on timing needed to execute desired projects.

Planning Process

The Town must carefully manage its spending in light of the uncertainty around future needs in the school system. Our process for school planning will be to keep a close eye on long-range trends, while limiting definitive construction plans to a 3-year window. We will monitor this plan continually, and re-assess the plan at least annually.

Leased Modular Classrooms

Leased modular classrooms (lifespan of 3 to 10 years) provide only short-term solutions to what we see as a long-term problem.

Pre-Fabricated Classrooms

Adding pre-fabricated classrooms with a lifespan of 20+ years at the Bridge, Bowman, and Fiske elementary schools, and the Diamond and Clarke middle schools, will help to alleviate current overcrowding in those schools.

Once the populations at Bridge and Bowman are lowered, their pre-fabricated classrooms or equivalent square footage of existing space will be adapted for other school system needs such as in-house special education programs. That reallocation will not significantly increase pressure on core spaces.

We will start by doing feasibility and design-development work for all the pre-fabricated classrooms. In order to bring them online quickly, the Town may opt to proceed with construction-and-bid documents for some or all of these locations prior to a fall Special Town Meeting. This will be contingent on a review of the studies and would be initiated by a request of the School Committee, a review of funding needs by the financial committees, with final approval from the BoS.

Bricks and Mortar

The existing Maria Hastings elementary school requires significant repairs. It is also burdened with sub-standard-sized classrooms, and its 8 modular classrooms are well past their intended lifespan. Constructing a new school on the site is the preferred solution. The new school should be designed as a 30-classroom (5 sections of each grade K-5) building with up to 9 more classrooms than the existing facility (including its modulars), assuming that the site and resulting traffic circulation can accommodate that size. The request to the upcoming Special Town

Meeting #1 covers a feasibility study for a new building on the Hastings site both with and without pre-K.

In the fall, if the feasibility study shows that a new Hastings School can be constructed on the site, then a construction proposal for Hastings (and any other components determined to be necessary and desirable) will be brought to Town Meeting and a debt-exclusion vote will be presented to the voters at the end of the year or early in 2016. The current Hastings School will remain in operation during construction.

In parallel, the Town will again file a Statement of Interest (SOI) with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for the Hastings School. We expect to receive a response to this filing by the end of the year; the Town's 2014 SOI filing was declined by the MSBA in December 2014. Should the MSBA accept our request and choose to partner with the Town on the Hastings project, the design will be subject to constraints imposed by the MSBA. The Town will have the opportunity to continue on its own or to engage with the MSBA.

For the (new) Harrington, the architectural consultant firm Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA) has proposed a complicated renovation that incorporates an expanded Pre-K and an enlarged cafeteria and gym. This proposal is expensive considering the number of new classrooms that would result, and it requires moving three geothermal wells. This plan will not be studied.

Contingency funding is included for exploring options at Harrington and Fiske if the preferred plan for a larger Hastings proves to be infeasible. At Harrington and Fiske we have the option to develop feasibility studies for expansion.

Based on the analysis by DiNisco Design, the Estabrook School site is not considered suitable for expansion.

Pre-K

Pre-K requires 15,000 square feet as a standalone program. It is currently hosted at Harrington with a recently expanded satellite program at the Central Office (old Harrington). Relocating the entire Pre-K program to a new building would allow the four Pre-K classrooms at Harrington to be refurbished for use as K-5 classrooms. Filling these four K-5 classrooms would bring the school's population to the maximum of the school's core capacity.

We will study the feasibility of constructing a new Pre-K building or relocating the Pre-K program to an existing building. If a site is identified, then work will proceed on the design-development phase for the construction of a new building or the renovation of an existing building. A plan for the minor refurbishments needed at Harrington would be included in this project.

Middle Schools

For the two Middle Schools, the topography at Diamond is more suitable to an extension, and we would rather do construction at only one Middle School. We will perform a feasibility study for adding a single large extension at Diamond. We will also study an extension at Clarke in the

event that the Diamond site cannot accommodate the physical-space or educational-policy needs (e.g., effects of such a large school) of the school system on its own.

Redistricting

The potential benefits of any redistricting plan are based on untested assumptions. The School Committee will initiate a technical redistricting study to identify plans and will provide an analysis of the pros and cons of each so that policy discussions can occur later this year.

The study will explore redistricting plans that would shift school density away from more-crowded schools towards Estabrook at the northwest end of town. If deemed practical, such a plan will be implemented as soon as possible.

Given the volatility of students moving into and out of the school system throughout town, plans that are not traditional in Lexington should be explored. For example, adding “buffer zones” at district boundaries might allow districts to adapt by placing *new* students into one of two or three adjoining districts. These buffer zones would be large enough to accommodate volatility, but not so large as to require unreasonable bus routes.



Lexington Public Schools

146 Maple Street ♦ Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

(781) 861-2550
email: pash@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us
fax: (781) 863-5829

To: School Committee
From: Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Re: Governor's Recommended Budget (HR 1)
Date: March 9, 2015

Last week, Governor Baker proposed his FY 16 budget to the legislature. His budget includes two significant potential cuts: the elimination of the Kindergarten Expansion grant and a reduction in the rate for special education circuit breaker reimbursements from 72% to 66%-68%. If the legislature agrees with these recommendations, we would lose \$227,000 that pays the cost of our Kindergarten Assistants and \$251,525 in special education reimbursements (if the account is funded at 66%).

While the State is still at the start of the FY 16 budget process, I would like the School Committee guidance on how to proceed. I have listed below three options and my recommendation.

Option #1 – Do Nothing at This Time

Without any intent of sounding partisan, experience has shown that the Democratic legislature rewrote the Republican Governors' budget proposal 16 out of the 16 years prior to Governor Patrick's two terms. In my opinion, it is highly likely that the House of Representatives will write its own budget followed by the Senate writing its own budget, and then followed by the two branches reconciling their two budgets in a joint conference sometime in June or July. The process listed below is likely to include some major changes:

1. *The Governor's budget is released.*
2. *House Ways and Means Committee members review the Governor's budget and release their budget.*
3. *All House members debate the House Ways and Means budget, including any amendments that are filed, and release their final version of the budget.*
4. *Senate Ways and Means members review the Governor's and the House budget and release their budget.*
5. *All Senate members debate the Senate Ways and Means budget, including any amendments that are filed, and releases its final version of the budget.*
6. *The Governor revises his budget. State Finance law requires the Governor to submit budget revisions to his proposed budget if revenue forecasts predict a shortfall after the original submission.*
7. *A conference committee is formed by members of the House and Senate to negotiate any differences in the House and Senate budgets and releases its budget for the Governor's consideration.*
8. *Once approved by both chambers of the Legislature, the Governor has ten days to review the budget. The Governor may approve or veto the entire budget, or may veto or reduce particular line items or sections, but may not add anything.*
9. *The House and Senate may vote to override the Governor's vetoes. Overrides require a two-thirds roll-call vote in each chamber.*
10. *The final budget is appropriated.*

If the Governor's recommended cuts are still included in the final FY 16 budget, the School Committee has the following options: cover the cuts by using potential salary differential savings and/or other savings, identify and implement LPS cuts starting this summer, or request funds from 2016 Annual Town Meeting (the proposed Town budget includes \$110,000 for potential state cuts. In addition, the Town has \$1,000,000 in its Special Education Stabilization Account).

Option 2 – Request Additional Funds at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting

Since the School Committee did not use its full allocation under the revenue allocation model, the School Committee could consider requesting additional funds at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting.

Option 3 – Ask the Superintendent to Identify FY 16 Cuts or Fee Increases at This Time

If the School Committee chooses this option, I will prepare a potential list in the next few weeks.

I recommend Option #1.