

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 10, 2011
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Mary Ann Stewart, School Committee Members Sandro Alessandrini, Bonnie Brodner, Margaret Coppe and Jessie Steigerwald and student representative Noah Coolidge. The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:34 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Mary Ann Stewart)

II. Public Comment

Rina Mered (Parent of two students in LPS): Spoke in favor of Dr. Fiveash. Her son had Dr. Fiveash and when he presented his program (at back to school night) the parents were blown away. Only two teachers use an active board and both of them are leaving, Dr. Fiveash and M. Girondel. There seems to be a pattern. There are other deeply committed teachers who are leaving. The School Committee needs to look into these departures. These teachers inspire students.

III. Superintendent's Announcements

1). Enrollment forecasts: Dr. Ash worked with former School Committee Chair Rod Cole and a demographer, Ruth Quinn Berdell, Business Manager for Wellesley Public Schools and concluded that they needed to first make sure the raw data being used was the most appropriate. They discussed with Town Clerk Donna Hooper about whether all students are in the census or not. After producing an Excel spread sheet it turns out there is a gap between the number of children mentioned in the census and those enrolled in the schools. Last Friday a letter went to the families that are in the schools but not on the census to ask them to register their children in the census. This process will take place over the next three weeks. At the beginning of June Dr. Ash will then send a letter to those parents who still have not registered to urge them to go to the Town Clerk's office and tell them that only children registered on the census will be registered in LPS. A third letter will say that they must prove they live in town, as the schools have a duty to provide an education to children living in town. This process should work well for parents with children in the schools but not necessarily for parents who only have preschool children so, Mrs. Hooper and Dr. Ash want to work with preschools in town to get those children on the census. The goal is to get as many residents in town on the census as possible to get the best enrollment projections and also to ensure that we are providing an education to children who live in town.

Sandro Alessandrini: How will you deal with parents who do not speak English?

Dr. Ash indicated that no plan has been developed as yet.

The Chair stated perhaps the Committee could be updated as to how this was handled as an agenda item in the fall, after all of the letters had been sent.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Bonnie Brodner: There was a good showing at the *Race to Nowhere* community conversation. It was a productive conversation.

Jessie Steigerwald: Thank you to LHS Associate Principal Laura Lasa who was a facilitator that evening. I am going to teach a four-day class through LCE without a stipend. I want to make it clear to everyone. I will not vote on that line item in next year's budget—Dr. Ash will make it a separate line item. I am wondering if we could broaden the Elmo discussion to include Estabrook and Hastings.

Chair Stewart indicated that she is not sure if that can be included in the discussion and will check in with Estabrook and Hastings.

Jessie Steigerwald: Regarding retiring teachers – What are we doing to retain our most experienced teachers? Philosophically, who do we replace our experienced teachers with?

Dr. Ash responded that we always assume a certain degree of turnover every year. Usually the new hire is less expensive than the one who left. We assume that the replacement person coming in will come in with 5-6 years of experience. There is always some salary turnover. It does not make sense to budget assuming that nobody leaves. It is healthy to have a full range of experience.

Ms. Steigerwald responded that if there is any data about people leaving, given community concerns, it would be helpful to receive a report.

Dr. Ash: We will again share with you who is leaving and what their level of experience is.

There was a brief discussion on the demographics of retirees. The Chair then noted that further discussion of this was not appropriate as it constitutes a new agenda item.

Chair Stewart: The School Committee has adopted a set of operating norms to keep us on track. We have decided to not engage in discussion on items as they come up but to consider them as future agenda or discussion items.

Senator Ken Donnelly will hold a panel discussion on the FY 12 budget and protecting essential services on 5/17/11.

The Board of Selectmen will be having their annual goal setting meeting on June 28. We can think about items that we would want to bring forward for that meeting.

We have rescheduled the next School Committee meeting from 5/24 to 5/31 because former poet laureate Robert Pinsky will be at LHS on May 24.

V. Public Hearing on School Choice

Introduced by Paul Ash. This is the only law which requires an elected board to have an annual vote not to participate. The law requires notice in the newspaper and a public hearing. Becoming a school choice community means that any resident in Massachusetts could apply to have their student be educated in our district. This could cost the district money. Two reasons to not participate: crowded classes and philosophical reasons.

No one spoke during the Public Hearing.

The Chair declared the hearing portion of the meeting closed at 8:08 p.m.

VI. Discussion Items

1. Proposed 2012-2013 School Calendar. Presented by Dr. Ash. He recommends that the School Committee put out the calendar for 2012-2013 for public comment. The calendar will be voted upon on May 31. He recommends the structure that was in place this school year. Under this plan teachers would return on August 27. Students would attend school for three days before having a four day Labor Day weekend. School would end on Wednesday, June 19 if there are no snow days and June 26 if there are five snow days. The professional day will be on Election Day 2012. Dr. Ash recommends that on even years we adopt a calendar with a professional day on Election Day unless there is a compelling reason not to. This calendar is a draft showing when conference dates will likely take place and when report cards are likely to come out. A committee has been looking at the elementary report card for several years and it is possible that the frequency of reporting may change. The vote on the calendar is not on the particulars, but on the broad framework of the calendar: when school starts, when it ends and when there will be no school.

Margaret Coppe: I would like to see some evening conferences.

Jessie Steigerwald: I agree with Ms. Coppe. Also, it would be better to post what we are sure of.

Dawn McKenna (precinct 6): Why not take public comment at the next meeting and vote on it the meeting after?

The School Committee decided they would take public comment on the calendar on May 31 and vote on it June 7.

2. English Language Learner Program. Presented by Robyn Dowling-Grant. Ms. Dowling Grant discussed: growth of the program; student demographics; assessment; metrics of success and professional development. She provided statistics on the ELL students in LPS.

There were questions and comments from the Committee and from the audience. Discussion topics included: translated texts, adding foreign language texts to the libraries and various teaching techniques.

3. Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Estabrook School Access Roads. Introduced by Chair Stewart. Presented by Dr. Ash. Dr. Ash is recommending to the School Committee to establish the Estabrook School Access Road Ad-hoc Task Force. The composition of the Committee is outlined in the proposal received by the School Committee. The task force would take input from residents, hear from experts and then bring a report forward in the fall to the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee.

The Chair indicated that the task force should have a School Committee liaison as well and that as chair she would like to serve in this capacity.

There were questions and comments from the Committee and the audience. The Committee discussed the membership of this committee, how members would be chosen, what their charge would be and timing of the committee's establishment. **Chair Stewart** suggested that the chair of the task force be Michelle Ciccolo who would be an excellent chair. The meetings of the ad hoc committee will be public.

There were comments from the audience.

The Committee agreed to amend the proposal for the ad hoc committee as follows: Where it says "...selected by the School Committee" the following words will be added, "...or the Board of Selectmen."

Motion to appoint the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Estabrook School Access Roads with the amendment at the task force membership level (Steigerwald, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

Motion to appoint Michelle Ciccolo as chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Estabrook Access Roads (Brodner, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.

4. Third Quarterly Financial Report. Introduced by Paul Ash. There is a projected surplus of \$609K. This surplus is based on several assumptions. The deficit could be paid down in the revolving fund from this surplus and with some of the remaining funds school supplies could be purchased. Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Mary Ellen Dunn took questions.

VII. Action Items

(Note: the first three action items were taken up before the discussion of the 2012-2013 School Calendar).

1. Vote to Approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School French Student Exchange Trip to Antony, France. Presented by French teachers Heather Silverstein, Rina Farber-Mazor and Foreign Language Department Head Marie Murphy.

Motion to approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School French Student Exchange Trip to Antony, France (Coppe, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

2. Vote to Approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School Field Trip to Munich, Salzburg, and Innsbruck. Presented by German teachers Heidimarie Floerke and Dana Fine, Ms. Floerke's husband and Foreign Language Department Head Marie Murphy.

Motion to approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School Field Trip to Munich, Salzburg, and Innsbruck (Steigerwald, Coppe). The motion passed 5-0.

3. Vote to Approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School Chinese Student Exchange Trip to Hangzhou, China. Presented by Lili Pan and Jieying Yao, Mandarin Teachers at LHS and Foreign Language Department Head Marie Murphy.

Motion to approve 2011-2012 Lexington High School Chinese Student Exchange Trip to Hangzhou, China (Coppe, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.

4. Vote to Accept a \$263 Donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to Lexington Children's Place.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$263 donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to Lexington Children's Place (Steigerwald, Coppe). The motion passed 5-0.

5. Vote to Accept a \$477 Donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to Diamond Middle School.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$477 donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to Diamond Middle School (Coppe, Brodner). The motion passed 5-0.

6. Vote to Accept a \$535 Donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to the Bridge School.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$535 donation from Wilson Farm School Fundraiser to the Bridge School (Brodner, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.

7. Vote to Accept a \$199.80 Donation from the "Box Tops for Education" Fundraiser to the Hastings School.

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$199.80 donation from the "Box Tops for Education" Fundraiser to the Hastings School (Alessandrini, Brodner). The motion passed 5-0.

VIII. The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Documents: *Meeting agenda; Lexington Public Schools draft calendar for 2012-2013; memo from Robyn Dowling-Grant, Coordinator of ELL to Dr. Paul Ash and Members of the Lexington School Committee, re: English Language Learner Program: Update; Power Point of ELL presentation; memo from Superintendent Paul Ash to School Committee Members, re: Estabrook Access Road Committee; Estabrook School Access Ad Hoc Task Force; memo from Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business, Mary Ellen Dunn to Superintendent Paul Ash, re: 3rd Quarter Report for the period ending March 31, 2011; materials relating to LHS field trip to Antony, France; materials relating to LHS field trip to Munich, Salzburg and Innsbruck; materials relating to LHS field trip to Hangzhou, China; letter from Liz Billings-Fouhy, Supervisor of Early Childhood Education, to the School Committee, re: Wilson Farm donation of \$263; letter from Diamond Middle School Principal Anne Carothers, re: Wilson Farm donation of \$477; letter from Bridge School Principal Margaret Colella to the School Committee, re: Wilson Farm donation of \$535; letter from Hastings Principal Louise Lipsitz, to the School Committee, re: donation form Box Tops for Education of \$199.80.*