

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Tuesday, June 12, 2012
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice-Chair; School Committee Members Bonnie Brodner, Mary Ann Stewart, and Jessie Steigerwald, and Noah Coolidge, Student Representative

The minutes were taken by Jean Curran, School Committee Secretary

The Meeting Convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order and before inviting public comment shared that she knew there were a number of people in the audience tonight who would like to speak regarding the discontinuing of the German Foreign Language Program at the high school. She also reassured everyone that Ms. Heidemarie Floerke, High School German, was not being fired but would teach other classes.

Marsha Traber, 106 Maple Street, shared that she was upset that there has been no effort to increase enrollment in the German program and appealed to the Committee to leave the program in place for one more year and try to market the program in order to increase enrollment.

Bob Green, 19 Fair Oaks Dr., shared how he and his daughter were discouraged by middle school staff to sign up for the German program because it would be cut at any time. He urged the Committee to reconsider and let people know where they can go to discuss this matter.

Frances Wentworth, 47 Harding Road, and parent of 2 former students who had taken German, and was worried about future students not having the same opportunity. She spoke about choosing a language and would like the Committee to revisit or reverse the decision to cut the program.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, provided her comments regarding the cutting of the German program and urged the Committee to address the foreign language programs altogether so no other foreign language program is cut.

Jan Gunther, 26 Brent Road, and parent of two children who have gone through the program, is concerned about the future of the program and encouraged the Committee to reinstate the program and give children the same opportunities that that the surrounding communities offer their children.

Margaret Coppe commended the speakers and stated that it is a curriculum decision done at the school level and is unusual that the Committee step in at this time.

Theodora Martin, 60 Liberty Ave. spoke about her children taking German classes.

Bonnie Brodner thanked the speakers and stated that clearly this is a great program and Ms. Floerke is a great teacher, unfortunately the enrollment is continually going down and significant resources are needed. She had questions regarding policy, funding and recruiting.

Alessandro Alessandrini shared that he felt the program should be given one more year and encouraged enrollment to see if interest in this particular program increases.

Regina Daus Haberle, 63 North Hancock Street, shared her thoughts and wanted to know where to go for answers and whether there is another avenue to pursue to keep this program alive.

Jessie Steigerwald commented on the phasing out of any program and how people should understand what the process is and that we should have answers to how people are informed about these decisions. She stated that this is not a Committee decision but that the community needs to know where they can go with questions. She was distressed to hear that children are being discouraged from taking any language.

Mary Ann Stewart thanked the speakers and had clarifying questions with respect to the middle school foreign language offerings, whether this was a budget decision, if grants were available and FTEs.

Margaret Coppe told the committee to forward their questions to her and that she would get them answers.

Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Instruction and Professional Development. She is proud of the foreign language program that is offered and the teachers, and clarified that they do not cut sections of any class because of low enrollment. The German program from 2005 has dwindled from 60 to 54 students and that this is about the overall program and not a budgetary decision. The numbers came out last week and they have just now been able to look at the schedule.

II. Superintendent's Announcements

Dr. Ash had no announcements this evening.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Noah Coolidge shared that this was his final School Committee meeting and has greatly enjoyed his time and thanked the Committee for accepting him into the Committee and the value of the public input and thanked the students for electing him both times. He stated that he believes that the Lexington Public Schools is great and unique. He shared about teacher creativity, student involvement and the outside sponsoring of extracurricular activities. Looking forward to seeing the Lexington 300th Anniversary and hopes that all goes well.

Margaret Coppe wished Noah well and stated that he will be missed. She also wanted the Committee to have discussion at the end of the meeting regarding each member's summer schedule.

Alessandro Alessandrini shared the first Bowman Literary Magazine giving K-5 students a voice through stories, poetry and illustration and was put together by Julie Selhub, fourth grade teacher and the Editorial Board, staff, and parents and thanked the PTA for underwriting this magazine so everyone could have a copy.

Jessie Steigerwald displayed the Lexington 300th Celebration Scavenger Hunt Bookmark and encouraged people to go the website for clues for this scavenger hunt. She also mentioned that middle school 8th grade students will be holding mock town meetings in their classrooms and at the Town Hall and gave a thank you to our teachers and Ms. Pilarski. She asked Dr. Ash to check back with the Chair of the 300th Committee regarding the social studies curriculum.

Mary Ann Stewart shared that the Permanent Building Committee is having a meeting Thursday evening; the Estabrook project is underway with a Contract Manager at Risk for summer enabling work; work continues to be negotiated for a CM at Risk for the fall.

IV. Agenda

1. Vote to Appoint Diane Pelletier as the Interim Director of Special Education (0.8 FTE) effective August 1, 2012

Dr. Ash was pleased to recommend Diane Pelletier to be the Interim Director of Special Education effective August 1, 2012 through June 2013. He stated that they had conducted a search for a full time director and the search did not produce the right candidate for the permanent position. Dr. Ash thanked the parents, teachers, administrators and all involved in the search. He provided a brief description of Ms. Pelletier's background and experience.

Motion to Appoint Diane Pelletier as the Interim Director of Special Education Effective August 1, 2012 through June 30, 2012 (Coppe, Stewart) The Motion was approved (5-0)

Bonnie Brodner stated that she was excited that Ms. Pelletier is coming on board because she has a great background.

Elizabeth Sackton, shared that people are excited about her as interim director. She has a wealth of knowledge and we could use her as a consultant for next steps.

Margaret Coppe questioned Dr. Ash if the Committee needed to vote on the Director of Special Education.

2. Transportation Committee Update

Judy Crocker, Safe Routes to School Coordinator of the Ad Hoc School Transportation & Safety Committee presented an update on what Transportation Committee has been doing over the past six months. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance addressed the Committee regarding the use of the Flexpass and school bus registration.

3. Wellness Policy Revision – First Reading

Margaret Coppe presented the First Reading of the Wellness Policy and read the School Committee Charge for the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding healthy foods, sports, athletics, and curriculum.

Mary Ellen Dunn addressed the Committee on ways to discourage certain foods and drinks to students and encouraging students to think healthier.

Eamonn Sheehan, Program Coordinator for Physical Education and Wellness, addressed the Committee regarding the PE state standards and LPS standards.

Dr. Paul Ash explained the Guidelines and informed the Committee that in the last 24 hours, the State law no longer applies to the 30-minute before and after school for fundraising purposes. The guidelines have been amended based upon the change in law and not the guidelines. Dr. Ash believes that nutrition should not be tied to fundraising. Fundraising efforts will be hurt dramatically. We should educate and not mandate the fundraising efforts by the various clubs and move away from sale of food items that do not meet the nutrition standards. He recommends moving in a direction of selling healthy foods 30-minutes before and after at the high school for fundraising efforts. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Jill Gasperini, P.E. and Wellness Coordinator, addressed the committee regarding the policy and guidelines and urges clubs to find healthier alternatives to fundraising.

Norma Wyse, stated that the Committee has not yet had an opportunity to review the new changes in law and encourages students to be creative.

Mary Ellen Dunn stated that schools must present these guidelines to school committees so that they are complying with all guidelines annually.

Motion to Approve the Charge for the School Health Advisory Council
(Steigerwald, Stewart). **The Motion was approved (5-0)**

Motion to Accept the First Reading of the Wellness Policy with Amendments Associated (Alessandrini, Stewart) **The Motion was approved (5-0).**

4. School Committee Goals

Margaret Coppe presented the draft goals from April. The Committee discussion included extra work on staff for some of these goals in particular with regard to foreign language at the elementary school level.

Dr. Ash addressed the Committee on the costs and work-related issues that arise with these goals, which are major curriculum review processes. He would like to see the elementary school day increased to seven hours.

Carol Pilarski addressed the Committee on the standards that have to be met and the work related to implement the foreign language goal. She also shared that curriculum reviews were underway for the French and Spanish programs.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, shared her thoughts on the reinstatement of the foreign language program at the elementary school level. Urged the Committee to see the big picture and what the community wants.

Harvey Simkovits, 4 Angier Road, provided his comments on how the Committee could set their priorities and goals. He also provided his thoughts on the foreign language program and urged the Committee to think about three options that move from enrichment to immersion. He encouraged Dr. Ash to look into programs that might fit for Lexington and then bring those before the public to obtain their comments to generate dialogue.

Motion to Approve the Goals as amended and prioritize them at a future time (Stewart, Steigerwald) **The Motion was approved** (5-0).

5. Report from School Committee Members on NSBA 2012 Conference

Each Committee member and Dr. Ash shared their experiences and what they took away from the 2012 National School Board Association Conference held in Boston this past April. Strategic planning, developing 21st century learning, school board self-evaluations, safety and technology, Sal Kahn's modeling of education, and community engagement were some of the topics discussed.

6. Vote to Accept a Donation to Hastings School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$3,118.33

Motion to Accept with Gratitude a Donation to Hastings School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$3,118.33 (Steigerwald, Brodner)
The Motion was approved (5-0)

7. Vote to Accept a Donation to Lexington High School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$3,272.43

Motion to Accept with Gratitude a Donation to Lexington High School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$3,272.43 (Alessandrini, Brodner) **The Motion was approved** (5-0)

8. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 25, 2012

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 25, 2012
(Alessandrini, Steigerwald) **The Motion was approved** (5-0)

9. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 8, 2012

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 8, 2012, as amended (Alessandrini, Stewart) The Motion was approved (5-0)

10. Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of May 8, 2012

Motion to Approve and not release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of May 8, 2012 (Brodner, Alessandrini) The Motion was approved (5-0)

11. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 22, 2012

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 22, 2012, as amended (Brodner, Stewart) The Motion was approved (5-0)

12. Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of May 22, 2012

Motion to Approve and not release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of May 22, 2012. (Steigerwald, Alessandrini). The Motion was approved (5-0)

The Committee discussed their summer availability for meetings.

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:43 p.m.

Documents: Meeting Agenda; Resume of Diane E. Pelletier, M.Ed., Lexington School Committee's Draft Wellness Policy; Draft Wellness Policy Implementation Guidelines; School Committee Charge for the School Health Advisory Council; School Committee Draft Goals 2011-2012; Letter dated June 8, 2012 to Dr. Ash and the School Committee from Louise P. Lipsitz re donation from Stop & Shop A+ Program; Letter dated June 8, 2012 to Dr. Ash and the School Committee from Natalie K. Cohen, Principal LHS regarding donation from Stop & Shop A+ Program; Draft School Committee Minutes from Meeting held on April 25, 2012; Draft School Committee Minutes from Meeting held on May 8, 2012; Draft School Committee Minutes from Meeting held on May 22, 2012.

Voted by the School Committee _____ July 17, 2012 _____