

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 15, 2013
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Dr. Paul Ash, Superintendent, Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair; Members Bonnie Brodner and Mary Ann Stewart; and Sam Alpert, Student Representative

Absent: Jessie Steigerwald

The Meeting Minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

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

There were no public comments.

II. Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash asked Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development to come to the microphone to answer questions about professional development days and why they are scheduled during the school year and not during the summer.

Ms. Pilarski responded that Professional Development days are scheduled during the school year instead of prior to the opening of schools because (i) teachers and administrators are focused on text, materials, syllabus and schedules being ready to go by opening day; and (ii) the professional development day in November on even-numbered years was agreed to by the School Committee at the request of the Board of Selectmen and the Town Clerk as the schools are used as polling places.

Andre Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street stated that had no election taken place this year, then we could have had 2 ½ days.

Carol Pilarski responded that historically, there has been one full day professional development day and all the others have been half days. The full day was originally held in October and now in November on even number years for election years. The reason for the full day is because it provides teachers and administrators the ability to delve more deeply into subjects and also because presenters are not always available for half day sessions.

Dr. Ash announced two public hearings on the budget will be held (i) on Wednesday, January 30, 2013 at the Harrington Elementary School at 7:30 p.m. for any resident of Lexington to express their views; and (ii) on Saturday, February 2, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. at

Battin Hall. A second series of public hearings will be held at the same dates and locations on the criteria for the new evaluation standards for educators. The State requires school committees hold public hearings on the criteria for the new evaluation process by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Dr. Ash announced that collective bargaining will begin soon with the Lexington Education Association (LEA) with the new evaluation process. This needs to be implemented by September, 2013 and the public needs time to comment on criteria. Within 24-48 hours the DESE Evaluation will be placed on the LPS website. If someone wants to view the evaluation before that time they can visit the DESE website at www.DOE.Mass.Edu for the hundreds of pages of detail on this requirement. Dr. Ash then asked the Committee which day to schedule public hearings on these criteria.

There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding the proposed dates, public input, and recommendations on how the School Committee will augment the DESE Evaluation with the LEA, and DESE requirements for public hearing.

Phyllis Neufeld, LEA President stated that she was unaware that a public hearing would be held but she would attend and will put this in her minutes and notify the LEA that there will be a public hearing on this issue.

There was further discussion by the Committee on which day and time would work best for the LEA.

Dr. Ash stated that the reason to do this now is because we need to commence collective bargaining on the new evaluation for September. The revision process could be a long process and we have a state deadline to implement in the fall. Summer is not a good time to engage in collective bargaining in order to implement by this by October 1st. Dr. Ash stated that we will be commenting on criteria.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Mary Ann Stewart shared that she attended the Town Meeting Members Executive Committee meeting last week and reported on enrollment facilities and the budget. There were two points (i) a member had a question regarding the Special Town Meeting to be held in the fall as suggested by Dr. Ash, and (ii) a member wanted to know if it would be possible to hold the Special Town Meeting in the spring instead of the fall on the modulars.

Dr. Ash responded that he will not be ready by the spring for a Special Town Meeting. Linda Chase, Director of Student Services and Thomas Plati, Director of Education Technology and Assessment are working on a report and that will not be ready until May or June. We are certain of the need, but not the precise details at this point in time.

Ms. Stewart also questioned the need for an information session around the Common Core State Standards and the impact on Lexington schools. The Town Meeting Members Executive Committee reported that Town Meeting will begin on March 18th and information sessions will be held on March 6th and 7th with a potential third meeting on

March 14th. Ms. Stewart announced that there are no citizen articles this year. Ms. Stewart then announced a bus tour for March 10th with a snow date for March 17th. On the legislative side, she was at the State House today and the Act to Invest in our Communities was filed which proposes an increase of the State Income Tax of \$2 billion dollars and a decrease in the state sales tax. This Friday is the deadline for all bills to be filed.

After hearing about the professional learning in the district she wants to have a discussion about returning voting for Precinct 1 and returning it back to the Harrington Elementary School.

Margaret Coppe announced the 20/20 Vision Committee is releasing their community wide survey on the values of Lexington next week. The survey will be on survey monkey and interns have been hired to compile the results; this is an initiative to see what is important to Lexington citizens and to be used as guidelines for elected committees to use for their planning. Dr. Ash has agreed to send it out via Global Connect as soon as he receives it from the Committee.

Ms. Coppe also shared that she went to the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) meeting last week and had three items she wanted to pass along to the Committee. The PBC are concerned about anything that would involve the buildings regarding safety issues in the schools. There was nothing specific, but they were particularly interested in the Estabrook Elementary School hardware and locks. Mr. Goddard said that retrofitting schools will not be handled by the PBC, and they all agreed that the high school was impossible to secure because of the physical layout.

There is a new team working at Bridge and Bowman Elementary Schools and the PBC are much more optimistic about this team and not getting behind schedule. The latest news on the Estabrook Elementary School is that it may come in earlier than anticipated and is looking to be finished by January, 2014. The PBC are talking about having a topping off ceremony, and that would involve having the final beam signed by the students. The principal will be consulted about the date. Ms. Coppe is waiting to hear from the Stress Reduction Committee about whether they want to come on January 30th after their program that they have organized and she thought it would be good timing, but if they cannot make it on that date, she offered them the February 12th meeting. She is waiting to hear back from them.

Dr. Ash brought up that in his contract the Committee is to evaluate him in February. Ms. Coppe would like to have a discussion with Ms. Stewart since she has kept up with the new superintendent evaluation. Finally, she announced that we have had two resignations from the Policy Subcommittee and she is looking for nominations from the Committee.

IV. Agenda:

I. Recommended FY 14 District Goals

Dr. Ash presented the FY 14 District Goals. His PowerPoint presentation to the Committee included (i) curriculum and instruction; (ii) supervision and evaluation; (iii) professional learning; (iv) student services; (v) technology; and (vi) facilities. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding modulars for the high school, comprehensive guidance program and the meaning of prosocial and resiliency.

Margaret Coppe shared that Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is K-12, replacing the MCAS. It has not been determined if social studies will be part of PARCC at the state level. She also shared that Mr. Harris sent out a bulletin that all teachers will now have to be fingerprinted and asked Mr. Harris who would be conducting the fingerprinting and whether there are budgetary constraints.

Robert Harris, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources stated that the new law requires Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) reports for every person who is on staff in the Lexington Public Schools (LPS) system, not just teachers but all staff, teachers, volunteers and contractors. The CORI report only shows the State of Massachusetts, but a check on the Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) for Level 3 sex offenders is also performed. All of these inquiries are on a three year renewal basis. For new employees, the fingerprinting needs to be done by 2013-2014; for all existing employees 2015-2016. The fingerprinting will be reviewed by Massachusetts State Police Department and they will look at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) database. He anticipates getting more information on that process and there is a cost range \$35-55 for one set of fingerprints. That cost is borne by the employee or applicant. The cost could be sizable for a school district or municipality.

Phyllis Neufeld, President, LEA stated that it is her understanding as part of the new law that there is an initiative to bargain over that fee and the Committee will hear from LEA on this issue.

Linda Chase, Director of Student Services explained that prosocial behavior has two parts: (i) responding to inappropriate behavior and coming up with responses to that behavior; and (ii) noticing kids being good and setting up appropriate expectations for students in school and celebrating when things run well and students meet expectations; incentives are built in. Prosocial behavior teaches students how to cope, to navigate conflict, to persevere through controversy, and to develop strategies to self-cope.

Alessandro Alessandrini questioned whether what Mrs. Chase was talking about, also included being late to either school or class. He asked Sam Alpert if he would share his experience.

Sam Alpert shared his knowledge on the policy on tardiness. His understanding of current rules state that tardiness in class can bring down your grade by 10% and three tardies may equal the equivalent of one unexcused absence. If you go over five unexcused absences you can go appeal. Tardy plays a great deal in student stress. The

Committee had further discussion regarding the Tardy Policy with respect to student stress and anxiety and whether there is a need to revisit this policy.

The Committee also discussed the Draft FY14 District goals and agreed to modify the first goal under Student Services to read: Implement clear and transparent criteria for eligibility and service delivery in collaboration with families so that special education students are appropriately identified and receive services commensurate with their level of disability(ies).

Carol Pilarski commented that the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is being finalized so products and strategies can get out to teachers. Social Studies is in the second year of its curriculum review and will be finished in the third year. Guidance review will begin next year.

Thomas Plati commented on the technology curriculum review and stated that last year there was a plan which has the action steps in several years, which includes curriculum, professional development, hardware and personnel. A particular the goal for 2013-2014 is to articulate technology for grades 1-8 with an expectation of using technology at a grade level and in middle school in academic areas.

Alessandro Alessandrini asked Mr. Plati to expand on what he meant by using software for writing.

Thomas Plati responded that it is more how we coach, how teachers coach and act as coaches to students and how it is used to improve editing, composition language and looking at social web 2.0 skills such blogs and online discussions and having kids participate in these online blogs. There is a noticeable improvement in their writing and they have found that students write more and frequently the quiet students participate more actively and very positively.

Bonnie Brodner inquired if there is a shift to creating programs.

Mary Ann Stewart shared that she and Dr. Ash began a conversation on how to integrate the arts within various curricula and across curricula. There should be some understanding where natural gateways within the curriculum foster some cross curricula collaboration. She is thrilled to hear that arts, foreign language and guidance are on the docket soon.

Dr. Ash responded that is the vision, and lay out for the Committee that a number of years ago a five year plan was planned, but the state changed the testing schedule for MCAS which impacted the curriculum. What is clear to him is if we are going to be a high performing district we will need to review our curriculum on a periodic basis because as the world changes we must too. A way to embed that into our schools is to insist that the superintendent always have a district goal on revising and extending improving our curriculum instruction and inside that goal focus on high priority areas and then fund it. The district goal should never go away.

2. **School Committee Discussion of FY14 Budget**

Margaret Coppe stated that we received earlier this week the answers of those questions from last week's meeting and any new items to discuss. If Dr. Ash has any updates for the budget.

Dr. Ash stated that you have all the responses to your questions and he is happy to respond to any questions.

Alessandro Alessandrini thanked Mary Ellen Dunn for putting this together. He had questions regarding the Director of Special Education and whether we expect to have a goal for FY 14 and it was mentioned that there are two sources that fund the special education position by having half through the operating budget and the other half through the 240 grant.

Mary Ellen Dunn responded the overview of the 240 grant and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal grant and is in the grant section of the budget book. This is an entitlement grant that we receive every year; the funds are determined through a variety of different sources and provide services to our special education population and our low income population as well. There is a five year history, two actual and three projected years. This grant is contingent upon federal funds and so long as funds continue this grant will continue. With respect to the long term plans for funding the position of Director of Special Education she deferred to Dr. Ash.

Dr. Ash responded that even under a sequestration scenario, this position will be funded. If there are large cuts in the IDEA grant which has been around since the 1970s he promised the Committee that there will always be a Director of Special Education. There is federal money which allows you to charge positions to the grant but cannot charge new positions to grant.

Alessandro Alessandrini wanted to know what kind of bus capacity is anticipated and will all busses be at capacity as more and more people take advantage of the reduced fees?

Mary Ellen Dunn responded that in the transportation section under Tab 3000 Section, and on page 5 of this section there is a chart showing ridership and population. There was a 40% increase in bus ridership with the decreased fee; and there was an increase in high school ridership due to the partnership with Lexpress and the flex pass. The middle school population is growing so that this year's planning will be around the number of busses needed at the middle school. Ms. Dunn then shared that the School Safety Study Committee has submitted a recommendation to Dr. Ash regarding bus signup deadlines and she will need to review that and bring it back to the Committee shortly.

The Committee also discussed the German program and minimum enrollment requirement policy. Class size policies from Brookline and Wellesley have been looked

at. Other questions included the line item for custodian for PTA so that their fundraising events do not have to go to pay for a custodian.

Dr. Ash responded to a question about the losses stemming from the failed 2006 override. He said that the vast majority of those items have been restored and they have been steadily restoring the remaining items. Dr. Ash provided detail information on the list.

Bonnie Brodner questioned whether speech pathologists will have to split their time at Fiske since K-5 services are increasing at Bowman?

Linda Chase responded that their goal is to minimize travel, but that is not always possible. The person may stay at Bowman and not travel but this will depend on the student population being served.

Bonnie Brodner had a question under the Recommended Budget Tab, page 12, regarding the \$134,000 for K-5 SSPs and wanted to know if training is included in that amount or is that included in Professional Development?

Carol Pilarski stated that Professional Development is separate from the SSP training and is just for FTEs. That is the salary.

Bonnie Brodner had a question on page 14, at the Diamond Middle School, regarding the Mandarin enrollment and whether 29 students was an unacceptable number.

Bonnie Brodner questioned page 19, health service and small equipment.

Mary Ellen Dunn responded that we have had for a couple of years floating nurses that split their time across schools and Lead Nurse Jill Gasperini has requested a floating nurse due to the needs in different schools. Ms. Dunn stated that this is not an uncommon placement and this staff person would be in addition to the full time nurses in each school.

Alessandro Alessandrini had comments regarding labs and how important they are. He shared how he had gone to his son's fifth grade class and presented to the class and he ended by isolating the DNA of the teacher and every child in the classroom ran to see the DNA and was very excited. The importance of labs opening the eyes of children who may not be in AP courses is very important.

The Chair announced that the budget hearing will be on January 30th and the community may make comments.

3. Vote to Accept a \$250 Donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad Team

Motion to Accept with Gratitude, a \$250 Donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad Team (Alessandrini, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (4-0) Steigerwald Absent

4. **Vote to Approve and Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of August 14, 2012**

Motion to Approve and Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of August 14, 2012 (Stewart, Brodner) The Motion was Approved (4-0) Steigerwald Absent

The Chair reminded everyone that the Summit Meeting is at 7:00 p.m. tomorrow at the Hadley building. The next School Committee meeting is January 30th at Harrington School and she also reminded everyone that this Sunday, January 20th at Cary Hall there will be a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration with a parade beginning at 1:30 p.m. at the Green.

Motion to Adjourn (Brodner, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (4-0) Steigerwald Absent

Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Documents: Meeting Agenda; Draft FY 14 District Goals; Lexington Public Schools 2014 Superintendent's Recommended Budget; Lexington Public Schools Recommended FY District Goals PowerPoint Presentation; Letter from Daniel Mehr, LHS Class of 2003 to Dr. Paul Ash dated December 20, 2012 re a \$250 Donation to the Nick Burnett/Lexington Science Olympiad Team

Voted by the School Committee March 12, 2013