

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 16, 2012
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, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart; and Sam Alpert, Student Representative

The 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 had no announcements

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Jessie Steigerwald reminded members that they are invited by Judy Crocker to ride the school bus. She also noted that many teachers and administrators have volunteered to participate in the October 22nd special event for the 300th Anniversary – a 1970s dance as part of the musical “Breeches, Bloomers & Bellbottoms: Oh My!”

Margaret Coppe reminded members that we will need to get a team together for the School Trivia Bee. She is planning to have the Committee picture for the Town Report taken at the October 30th School Committee Meeting.

IV. Agenda:

1. Update on Estabrook School Project

Margaret Coppe stated that the Committee has been meeting with the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to close the gap between the estimates and the appropriated amounts. On Thursday, October 11th, there was an extensive meeting in order to close the gap of around \$1,000,000 between the estimates and the appropriated amount. The Committee met Saturday October 13, 2012 to vote on those items. Last night, October 15, 2012 went to the BOS to report on where we were and to start the process of putting a number into the Town Warrant for the Special Town Meeting on November 19, 2012. The PBC will be meeting on November 8th and the Committee will meet on November 13th and somewhere in that time period we will have a firm number to go into the Warrant. Then, we will be asking Town Meeting for an increased appropriation in case we need it. Margaret gave thanks to Sandra

Trach, Principal, Joseph Estabrook Elementary School, the Permanent Building Committee (PBC), Patrick Goddard, Director of Public Facilities and the School Committee for working very hard to get the school we want.

Ms. Stewart and Ms. Coppe will attend the next Appropriations Committee Meeting.

Dr. Ash reported that the project scope has not changed. The PBC made clear last Thursday that certain costs went up that were not anticipated such as the cost of steel and other materials which are much more than the original estimate due to the economic conditions at the time the original estimates were made. Also, the PBC noted that because there are a number of other school districts who are competing for bids, it is essential that Lexington's bid go out in December, especially due to the tight construction schedule. The PBC and BOS have told us that we need to deliver the same project that the Town voted on and if costs went up beyond our control that that is a reasonable request to go back and ask for more money. The reduction took place through a process called Value Engineering. Until the project is bid in December we will not know the actual costs, but because we need to sign contracts by the end of December in order to get best price. The Town Meeting would be asked for authorization for increased funding. If more money is needed it will be there. However, if that money is not needed then it will not be spent.

Dr. Ash reminded everyone on Thursday, October 18th at 10:00 a.m. there will be a ground breaking ceremony at the Joseph Estabrook Elementary School, the public is invited and the Committee is invited. Deborah Mauger, Chairman of the BOS, Steve Grossman, State Treasurer, Jack McCarthy, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Building Authority (MSBA), and Sandy Trach, Principal will also be in attendance.

2. Recommended FY 14 Capital Budget

Dr. Ash presented the recommended FY 14 Capital Budget to the Committee for their review, questions and comments. He reviewed the process which the Capital Budget will move through before coming back before the Committee in early 2013 for a final vote. Dr. Ash then noted that the 10 Year Master Plan was not included in the Budget Book. He and Patrick Goddard, Director of Public Facilities have recommended that the Town begin funding a long-term master plan for FY 14. At the last Summit Meeting, Carl Valente Town Manager recommended \$1.3-\$1.4 million be appropriated towards funding the long-term master plan so taxpayers aren't always being asked for future monies. This would be a long-term funding stream on a planned basis.

Patrick Goddard shared with the Committee a couple of projects (i) Lexington High School money for FY14 to finalize plan for additional classrooms and FY15 \$3,000,000 to install eight to ten additional temporary classrooms due to overcrowding (ii) new security video project to standardize all security at each of the schools and also to have access controls in place, and (iii) continuation projects, such as flooring, paving, and painting programs.

There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding the (i) painting projects, (ii) installing air conditioning wall units in the Central Office, (iii) acoustic work at Clark and Diamond Middle Schools and High School language rooms, (iv) Clark Middle School Bus Loop Proposal, (v) print shop renovation and human resource renovations and the only project

was requested for CPA funding, (vi) asbestos removal during renovation, (viii) using other air conditioned schools that could be used during the summer, (ix) outdoor bleachers, (x) high school overcrowding, (xi) heating and cooling issues at existing schools, (xii) high school harvesting and library media room, (xiii) high school auditorium balcony seats, (xiv) school furniture, and (x) additional parking at the Fiske Elementary School and future school paving projects.

Linda Chase, Director of Student Services, spoke to the question of acoustics and stated that it was more about having classrooms available and not about subject areas.

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent Business and Finance Operations, spoke to the Committee regarding the traffic issue at the Clark Middle School. She stated that Anna Monaco, Principal Clarke Middle School will be sending letters to the abutters regarding the status of the gate on Stedman Road and also parking issues that are occurring on Stedman Road. She then spoke about preserving the memorial classroom.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, suggested that the Committee investigate the agreements that were entered into when the gates were put in at the school.

Mary Ellen Dunn stated that she has been working with the Sidewalk Committee for a few years now and that there had been a recommendation for the gate at the time of installation but the school did not execute that agreement. She and her staff will be notifying neighbors and gathering their input and working to solve the problem.

Margaret Coppe invited public comment on the Facilities and Capital Budget. There were no public comments.

3. Recommended FY 14 Capital Budget (Technology and Schools)

Thomas Plati, Director of Education, Technology and Assessment, presented the FY 14 Capital Budget for the technology and schools. His recommendations included the need to replace some workstations and laptops, interactive whiteboards and the addition of projectors to be placed above the whiteboards. He then spoke about the need to complete installation of wireless networks at the high school, middle schools and all elementary schools except Bridge and Bowman because they would be installed during the current renovations to those schools. Two major items to be noted included updating the network equipment in all schools and expanding the iPad pilot program to a larger group of high school and middle school students. Mr. Plati took questions and comments from the Committee regarding (i) life of whiteboards, (ii) possibility of setting up a stabilization fund to plan for upgrades and replacing computers in the future, (iii) incorporation of iPads for the entire system, (iv) use of netbooks, (v) software integration process and 3rd party vendors, (vi) why different applications don't speak with one another.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street had questions regarding (i) the document management system and whether the public can access these documents; and (ii) would like to see line items of all technology items in the budget.

Margaret Coppe indicated that what Mr. Radulescu-Banu had in his hand was a summary sheet. The full School Committee Capital Budget will be posted under the Finance Office. She then noted if that he needed something to please feel free to contact her.

4. School Committee Role in Curriculum Changes

Margaret Coppe spoke to the role of the Committee role in curriculum changes. The Committee discussed their thoughts and what role they felt the Committee should be involved. Most members expressed their displeasure of not knowing ahead of time that the German program had been experiencing decreased enrollment and the conversations about the eventual cutting of that particular program. The Committee also discussed the possibility of setting up either a curriculum committee or a less formal group of Committee members that would meet with Carol Pilarski on a quarterly basis to keep informed of any curriculum developments. There was much discussion which revolved around forming a committee versus a group since a committee would have to hold public notices and meetings. The goal would be for people to speak freely and openly and have a meaningful dialogue. All felt the need for improved communications on curriculum issues. It was decided that more information on the subject was needed to make an informed decision

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, appreciates the conversations and believes that the Committee is making it more complicated and believes that it is about policy. She shared her observations of the Committee under the current administration.

Noelle Givler, 19 Fair Oaks Drive, suggested that the Committee have a public forum to address the curriculum process. Currently there is no ability for people to address curriculum issues and believes that at the very least the Committee could publicly present changes and trends.

Margaret Coppe replied that we do have curriculum reviews. Carol Pilarski makes presentations to the Committee throughout the year and people may not realize that this is already happening.

Noelle Givler, then stated that she did not believe that German program would have fallen into that particular forum.

Margaret Coppe stated that it may not have changed the outcome but the Committee would not have been surprised.

Carol Pilarski shared that her office is responsive to the Committee's needs and she would be very happy to meet on a regular basis regarding curriculum, professional development and achievement. Right now, she and her staff are reviewing the protocols which are in place and would like a little more time to establish them.

Margaret Coppe thanked Carol Pilarski and stated that the Committee has never doubted her. She then reported that Alessandro Alessandrini, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart would bring back various researches on how other communities and boards handle curriculum type groups or committees two meetings from now.

5. Recommended Process to Study the Options to Create an Elementary Foreign Language Program

Margaret Coppe reminded everyone that the Committee is not making any decisions tonight, but it will begin a discussion on what it would take and what the administration would need to get started on for an elementary foreign language process.

Carol Pilarski presented key issues to the Committee as it begins to think about reinstatement of an elementary foreign language program. She emphasized that there are two essential questions prior to any decision (i) what would be the long and short term gains and (ii) what would be the long and short term losses. Some programs would have to be cut in order to be able to be placed into the 170 minutes of teaching time each week. She provided context since 2006 when the override failed and described what has happened since that time in our elementary school, noting the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) has become a high stake test and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is reviewing these scores to close the achievement gap. Curriculum reviews were put in place and as a result we have addressed four curricula: physical education and wellness, math, science and English language arts (ELA). She noted that they are in the second year of a social studies curriculum review and then there will be foreign language curriculum review. Ms. Pilarski stated that we need to think about (i) what do we want students to know, (ii) how do we teach subjects, (iii) research and best practices to help students learn better, and (iv) how to measure student achievement. Since 2006, Professional Learning Circles (PLCs) have been put in place so teachers can collaborate on student data, intervention blocks with short term learning goals, common core goals, critical thinking skills, assessment, analysis, open circle and open curriculum to pro-social growth. She reminded everyone that every minute is being utilized throughout the day and week and once decision is made to reinstate a foreign language program, the Committee will need to decide on the economics, language, hours, minutes, options, and whether it will be a required subject because given the length of the school day there be a need to move other subjects and blocks around.

There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding (i) benefits of starting foreign language early in a child's life, (ii) critical thinking and developmental skills, (iii) global learners, (iv) equity with those children in ESL program who are becoming bilingual, (v) financial implications, (vi) curriculum review and what resources that would be needed to implement the program, (vii) extending school day, (viii) child and teacher stress, (ix) half-day Thursdays and whether those hours could be used, (x) the need to see a comparison of the school day from 2006 against the 2012 school day, (xi) the value of professional development and presenting to the public a clear understanding of what is going on the half day Thursdays.

Dr. Ash noted that last spring that the Committee felt strongly that they would like to see the elementary foreign language program brought back. It is his and Carol Pilarski's job to figure out how to make that happen, but they need the direction of the Committee to move forward. He suggested that perhaps the Committee form a committee consisting of parents and professional educators and have them review the schedule and decide where it could be put into the day. He urged the Committee to consider what the options were and what the disadvantages were too, noting that every program has a constituency group attached to them.

Margaret Coppe invited public comment.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street, shared that the goal should be fluency in foreign language. He understands that MCAS is important but believes that studying a foreign language early has great benefits and would provide students with better understanding in middle school. With respect to timing, he suggested that the Committee review DESE's recommended guidelines. He also suggested polling parents to see how much interest there is to bring this program back.

Jeff Crampton, 7 Lockwood Road, thanked the Committee for looking into reinstating the elementary foreign language program. He shared his observations of current foreign language students being able to read and write but do not have the ability to converse. Mr. Crampton then shared how he learned his foreign language and believes that the program should be reinstated, but it is more important to do it right than quickly. He later stated to the Committee that he felt that the foreign language program would be set up for failure if it was competing against other programs.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, thanked the Committee for their leadership and willingness to discuss this issue. She reminded everyone that we didn't lose elementary language as a separate option; it was bundled in an override question with money. She shared her thoughts regarding costs, immersion class, extending the school day, looking at other communities, and spoke about how her daughter benefitted from an elementary foreign language class. Ms. McKenna then shared her thoughts on Lexington's sister city Antony, France and how technology could be used to communicate.

Carol Pilarski responded to Mr. Crampton's remarks regarding high school students not being able to converse in their language. She pointed out that 85% of high school students take a foreign language and 25% take more than one language. The national test is not just about reading and writing, it also includes oral effectiveness, speaking and listening skills.

The Committee Charge is to review DESE guidelines on various grade levels for foreign language and have a side-by-side schedule look from 2006 and 2012.

6. HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) Policy – Third Reading

Margaret Coppe presented the changes from the Second Reading to the Third Reading. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Motion to Approve the HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) Policy – Third Reading (Stewart, Steigerwald) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

7. **Vote to Accept a Donation of \$500 from the Rotary Club of Lexington to Lexington High School for After School Math and Science Activities**

Motion to Accept a Donation of \$500 from the Rotary Club of Lexington to Lexington High School for After School Math and Science Activities, with Gratitude (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

8. **Vote to Accept a Donation of \$5,000 from Therese and Josef von Rickenbach to the Lexington High School ALPHA Program.**

Margaret Coppe noted that this is a very generous donation which helps kids get back into school and it was this parent's son who requested that the money be donated to this program.

Motion to Accept a Donation of \$5,000 from Therese and Josef von Rickenbach to the Lexington High School ALPHA Program, with Extreme Gratitude and Appreciation (Brodner, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

9. **Vote to Approve School Committee Executive Session Minutes of August 14, 2012**

Jessie Steigerwald requested to discuss her concerns and changes in Executive Session. The Committee agreed to postpone the vote in order to amend the minutes at the next scheduled Executive Session.

Motion to Adjourn (Stewart, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

Meeting Adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Documents: Meeting Agenda; Memorandum to dated October 16, 2012 from Carol Pilarski to Dr. Paul Ash re Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development; Memorandum to dated October 16, 2012 from Carol Pilarski to Dr. Paul Ash re Committee to Consider and Address Questions and Issues related to the Possible Re-Instatement of an Elementary Foreign Language Program; Lexington School Committee Policy on HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) Policy – Third Reading; Letter to Lexington High School After School Activities Coordinator from Dr. Murry A. Awrach, Immediate Past President Rotary Club of Lexington regarding a \$500.00 donation; Letter dated September 24, 2012 to Mary Ellen Dunn from Therese and Josef von Rickenbach of Lexington, MA regarding a \$5,000 donation to the ALPHA Program.

Voted by the School Committee _____ December 18, 2012 _____