

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 17, 2012
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

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

The minutes were taken by Jean Curran.

The meeting was convened at 7:32 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

The Chair called the meeting to order and invited Public Comment.

Phyllis Neufeld, President of the Lexington Education Association (LEA), questioned when Bruce Wellman, consultant for improving professional relationships, would provide his report to the Committee. Dr. Ash stated Mr. Wellman would give his report on either February 28th or March 13th.

II. Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Paul B. Ash announced that he received an urgent telephone call at 7:05 am this morning from Patrick Goddard, Director of Public Facilities, informing him of a burst pipe at the Diamond Middle School. The pipe that burst was located in the ceiling of one of the modular classrooms. The water flooded 20 classrooms, the auditorium, and one of the music rooms. Mr. Goddard reports that two classrooms at the end of the modular wing are still unusable, but the music room and auditorium will be available by Wednesday. The water damaged wall sections, carpeting, a Bose sound system, a stereo, microwave and a violin. Dr. Ash and Mr. Goddard are working with Burnell Controls to find out what happened and what can be done to prevent any flooding in the future. Dr. Ash thanked Mr. Goddard and all his staff who worked very hard to clean up the mess so that students would be able to have class.

Dr. Ash announced that **Natalie Cohen**, Lexington High School Principal is retiring at the end of the school year. He announced to the LHS faculty today that he believes that **Laura Lasa**, Associate Principal at Lexington High School is the best candidate to move the school forward. He made an offer to Ms. Lasa and she accepted. Dr. Ash noted that Ms. Lasa is deeply committed to the Town, the schools and how they operate, and that she brings deep knowledge of outstanding educational practices, has a phenomenal work ethic, and is committed to each child in the school. He said the High School Faculty was very supportive of her appointment.

Ms. Lasa stated she feels very fortunate to follow Natalie Cohen and that they worked well together. She said that the faculty felt relieved that now they can continue to focus on the rest of the year.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Mary Ann Stewart reported that on Monday, January 10th, the Committee opened negotiations with the LEA. She announced the Cary Memorial Library Foundation will be hosting their only fundraiser of the year, *Cary's Cupids*, on Saturday, February 11th. Tickets are \$25.00 per person and may be purchased online, in person at the Library's administrative office, and at the Wales Copy Center.

Jessie Steigerwald attended Lexington's Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration at Cary Hall Auditorium. A screening of the film *Come Walk in My Shoes* was shown. She thanked Ms. Holly Stumpf and Harrington Elementary School Chorus and encouraged people to come out and participate next year.

Margaret Coppe stated that this is the last School Committee meeting before the debt exclusion vote and she reminded everyone to vote on January 24th. She also stated that due to the 2010 Federal Census the precincts in town were adjusted and voters should check to see if their polling place has changed.

Bonnie Brodner, reminded that the polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

IV. Agenda:

1. FY 13 Recommended Budget and Fees

The Committee began the evening's discussion about whether to eliminate the full day kindergarten fee. It was explained that several years ago when full-day kindergarten was first offered in Lexington, the Committee felt that fees were the only way they saw to establish the full-day program. **Carol Pilarski**, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development stated that LPS competes with other communities each year for the kindergarten grants from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). It was also noted that the fee for kindergarten is an all or nothing measure due to state funding requirements. Committee members are in favor of eliminating the full-day kindergarten fee.

The next fee discussed was the elimination or reduction of the school bus fee at the Estabrook Elementary School during construction of the new school. Any reduction in this fee would only be during the construction period of the new Estabrook School and not a permanent reduction or elimination at this time. Discussion revolved around safety, ongoing funding of the plan, commitment and investment in the program by parents, as well as educating parents about the benefits of car pooling. **Judy Crocker**, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, gave comments and took questions from the Committee.

The Committee discussed the elimination of the elementary instrumental music fee. Committee members felt that the music fee is discriminatory because it leaves out those who do not have the financial means to pay for the program and the instrument. Also, the

music program is held during school hours and thus makes it part of the school day. The Committee felt that elimination of this fee would be appropriate.

Motion that the School Committee ask the Superintendent to review reductions for the elimination of full day kindergarten fee, the elimination of the elementary instrumental music fee, and reduce the Estabrook School bus fee by half during construction, and to identify sources of funding. The order in which these are stated are priorities. (Stewart, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

9:10 p.m. Further FY 2013 Budget Items.

Dr. Ash is recommending a 1.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) increase in Occupational Therapists (OTs) and a 3.0 FTE reduction in Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) who are hourly employees. He said this change offers access to more highly skilled personnel who can both evaluate and service students. Dr. Ash stated this recommended staffing pattern includes a cost avoidance of .3 FTE OT for the new Diamond Intensive Learning Program (ILP) and that the overall realignment of OTs results in an anticipated cost savings of \$70,000. This will also bring into line the same amount of OTs at each school, eliminating the need for one-on-one services being provided to some students who do not need one-on-one services, as set forth in students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Dr. Ash invited **Linda Chase**, Director of Student Services, to take questions from the Committee on the recommended budget for OTs, COTAs, quotas, and state laws. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Phyllis Neufeld, President of the LEA explained her understanding of COTAs, gave comments on the human element, and mentioned that two of the COTA's proposed to be eliminated are 63 years old. She expressed her desire for those in support of COTAs, classroom teachers, and others to attend the January 31st School Committee Meeting.

2. Vote to request the Board of Selectmen call a Special Town Meeting on April 2 to appropriate funds for the new Estabrook School, contingent upon the passage of the ballot question on January 24, 2012.

Motion to request the Board of Selectmen call a Special Town Meeting on April 2, 2012 to appropriate funds for the new Estabrook School, contingent upon the passage of the ballot question on January 24, 2012. (Stewart, Steigerwald) The Motion was approved (5-0).

3. Vote to Accept a \$100 Donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad Team

Motion to Accept a \$100 Donation to the Nick Barnett Science Olympiad from Patrick Mehr and Helen Epstein. (Coppe, Brodner) The Motion was approved (5-0).

4. Vote to Accept a \$500 Donation to the Maria Hastings School from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The gift comes as a result of an American Academy of Pediatrics art contest won by Hastings student Raissa Li. As a winner, Miss Li received a check for \$500; because she is a winner, Hastings Elementary School receives a matching amount.

Motion to Accept a \$500 Donation to the Maria Hastings School from the American Academy of Pediatrics. (Steigerwald, Brodner) **The Motion was approved (5-0).**

Sharon Kendall (9 Deering Avenue), questioned Dr. Ash when he would have more information regarding the fees discussed this evening. Dr. Ash responded that he would try to have that information by January 31st.

V. Motion to adjourn this meeting of the Lexington School Committee. (Coppe, Steigerwald) **The Motion was approved (5-0).**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Documents: *Meeting Agenda; Letter to Dr. Ash from Patrick Mehr and Helen Epstein; Letter to School Committee from Louise Lipsitz, Maria Hastings School; Letter to Deb Harvey, Hastings Elementary School from American Academy of Pediatrics; Full-Day Kindergarten Information for FY 13 Budget.*

Voted by the School Committee January 31, 2012