

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, July 17, 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; School Committee Members Mary Ann Stewart, Bonnie Brodner and Jessie Steigerwald; and Sam Alpert, Student Representative

The minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting Convened at 7:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order and introduced Sam Alpert the new Student Representative to the School Committee. She then invited public comment.

There were no public comments.

II. Superintendent's Announcements

Dr. Ash announced that Mary Ann Stewart will be providing an update on the building projects.

Mary Ann Stewart announced that as the liaison for the School Committee to the Permanent Building Committee (PBC), along with Margaret Coppe, attended the PBC meeting held on July 12, 2012. She reported that the PBC knew the construction schedule would be very tight for the Bridge and Bowman Schools. The PBC reported that the interior is on track and on budget, however the new boiler room located outside is running a bit behind schedule but there is a recovery plan in place and members of the PBC are confident that everything will be ready for the school opening and going forward into the fall. Ms. Stewart also announced that the PBC hired Shawmut Construction to perform the site enabling work at the Estabrook School needed during the summer months, such as staging, fill, electricity, and parking and play areas and have decided to continue working with Shawmut for the school year. The projects are on schedule and on budget.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Jessie Steigerwald announced that she was teaching a couple of classes at Explorations this summer and was having a great time. She wanted the public to be aware that she files papers as a special municipal employee and wants the public to be aware of this because that budget is part of the school budget and if anyone has any questions about this program they should feel free to contact her. She also credited teachers who do not have any aides because it is incredible what those teachers do.

IV. Agenda

1. Lexington School Committee Wellness Policy – Second Reading

Margaret Coppe presented the Second Reading of the Wellness Policy and reviewed the changes from the First Reading. She also added that due to the changes in State law the 30 minutes ban before and after school for the sale of goods for fundraising was removed, but added that the Committee is encouraging everyone to seek out fundraising items that do not involve food that

does not meet the nutrition guidelines. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Margaret Coppe noted that Eamonn Sheehan, K-12 Coordinator of Physical Education and Wellness just arrived at the meeting and asked him if he had any input from the School Health Advisory Council. Mr. Sheehan did not have any further comments.

Mary Ann Stewart moved, and Jessie Steigerwald seconded, accepting the Second Reading of the Wellness Policy. The vote was unanimous.

2. Discussion of German Program at Lexington High School

Margaret Coppe provided a brief introduction and an update on the phasing out of the German Program at the High School since the last Committee meetings held on June 5th and June 12th. She invited Dr. Ash to address the Committee.

Dr. Ash invited Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development to share the reasons for the actions taken and their recommendation for tonight along with the ongoing dialogue which has changed their initial decision.

Carol Pilarski restated that she is a former foreign language teacher and also a department chair and a strong advocate for foreign languages and guaranteed that this decision was in no way capricious or precipitous. Each year enrollment numbers and not section numbers are looked at to determine if a particular program should be phased out. For example, the overall enrollment in Spanish is 810 students for the FY 2013 school year with 38 sections; there may be some sections with under 10 students. The overall enrollment in French consisted of 425 students with 20 sections. The overall enrollment in German was very low. In FY 2005 there were 68 students enrolled and in FY 2013 there were only 43 students enrolled. The rationale to eliminate German I in 2012 and begin phasing out was due to the overall decline of enrollment in the German program. The administration received all 9th grade registration requests and it was recommended that the German program be phased out in the fall of 2012 school year. Principal Cohen, Ms. Lasa, Assistant Principal, and Ms. Murphy, Head of the Foreign Language Department, had several reasons for eliminating the program. The main reason being the decline of enrollment in the overall German program. The German I student enrollment for FY2012-2013 was under 10. Ms. Pilarski went on to described the various reasons which also included the decline in enrollment from 2005 through 2012, low spring sign up in 2012, teacher work load and the lone German teacher would have to prepare five different preparations including her English Language Arts Section.

They contacted Ms. Lasa about reversing the decision to phase out the German program in the FY 2012-2013. She informed everyone that the student and teacher schedules have been completed and it would be very difficult and impracticable at this point in time to begin revising these schedules due to the summer holiday, as well as having two new principals and two new deans. Ms. Lasa, Dr. Ash and Ms. Pilarski are recommending that German I not be offered during the FY 2012-2013 but rather be placed in the FY 2013-2014 program of studies based upon a minimum number of enrollment in order to sustain itself. This would provide the time needed to market the German program to encourage students to take the German program.

Margaret Coppe thanked Ms. Pilarski for working with high school administration to come up with this plan. She then invited public comment:

Frances Wentworth, 47 Harding Road, thanked the Committee for putting this on the agenda and stated she had received an email from Ms. Lasa stating that she would be available for discussion when she returns from vacation. Ms. Wentworth highly advocated for the keeping of the program. She discussed her thoughts, ideas and suggestions for keeping the German program. Urges the Committee to vote to run the program this Fall and work to facilitate a future process.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street, stated his thoughts and feelings on the foreign language program in the Lexington Public Schools. He advocated for smaller class sizes overall and would like to see the German program offered in this coming Fall.

Mark Chonofsky, 8 Dee Road, commented on the German teacher's workload, along with his interpretation of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 13 which deals with requested courses and school committee approval. He also quoted case law of Richard Johnson & others vs. School Committee of Brockton, 371 Mass. 896, January 13, 1997.

Janet Kern, 72 Lowell Street, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 1, provided her thoughts on the cancelling of the German program for this year and believes that it will cripple the entire German program altogether. She referenced the DVD that was shown to 8th graders and teacher moral.

Andrew Grossman, 5 Elena Road, provided his thought on why the Committee should keep German program and believes it increases diversity.

Matthew Saradjian, 259 Bedford Street, encourages the Committee to continue the program because it is a unique, effective and memorable program.

Noelle Givler, 19 Fair Oaks Drive – clarified her comments about students being discouraged at the middle school level. She also provided comments on teacher workload, the process and hopes that the Committee will reconsider its decision and reinstate the program.

Tommy Barry, 159 Burlington Street, – he is going into 8th grade at the Diamond Middle School and is currently enrolled in the French program. He is looking forward to enrolling in the German program and was here tonight to represent the future generation. He urged the Committee to keep the program.

Greig Greenwald, 19 Sutherland Road, provided his thoughts on the Lexington Public Schools and its rich diverse education that students receive and believes that this is a community issue.

Lois Strecker, 5 Bennett Avenue – shared her thought about her daughter's experience taking German at LPS and believes that the program should remain and that the Committee should consider the diversity issue.

Regina Daus-Haberle, 63 North Hancock Street – commented that although the German program is small, the Committee and Administration should support these types of programs. Encouraged the Committee to keep the program.

Faith Ferguson, 782 Massachusetts Avenue, shared her own family history with taking the German in the Lexington Public Schools. She encouraged the Committee to keep the German program.

Margaret Coppe thanked all the speakers and everyone who showed up tonight to support the German program. She then opened the discussion to the Committee. There was much discussion

from Committee members regarding enrollment, class size protocol, teacher contract issues, student and teacher scheduling conflicts, a two year trial program, as well as independent study.

Jessie Steigerwald strongly advocated for reversing the decision not to offer German I this fall.

Carol Pilarski took questions from the Committee.

Sam Alpert also shared his background to the Committee as well as his foreign language career in the Lexington Public Schools. He believes that small German class size is part of the culture and appreciates the open and honest dialogue.

Motion to reinstate the German I Program for FY 2012-2013 (Jessie Steigerwald, no second) **Motion does not carry.**

There was further discussion from the Committee regarding guidelines for sufficient enrollment.

Bob Green, 19 Fair Oaks Drive, stated that there needs a clear show of support from the Committee for the German program.

Motion to Place the German 1 Program in the Program of Studies for FY 2013-2014 School Year and 2014-2015 School Year. (Alessandrini, Stewart) **The Motion passed 5-0.**

3. School Committee Liaison Assignments for 2012-2013.

The Committee discussed and chose their liaison assignments.

Motion to Accept the School Committee Liaison Assignments as Discussed (Brodner, Alessandrini) **The Motion was approved 5-0.**

4. Vote to Appoint Voting Representative to the LABBB Collaborative Board of Directors

There was discussion among the Committee members regarding title changes and member changes as well as the new voting requirements for educational collaboratives.

Motion to Appoint Dr. Ash as the Voting Representative to the LABBB Collaborative Board of Directors (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) **The Motion was approved 5-0.**

5. Vote to Appoint Voting Representative to the EDCO Collaborative Board of Directors

Motion to Appoint Dr. Ash, as Superintendent to be the Voting Representative to the EDCO Collaborative Board of Directors (Steigerwald, Brodner) **The Motion was approved 5-0.**

Motion to Appoint Jessie Steigerwald, as School Committee Member to be the non-voting member (Brodner, Alessandrini) **The Motion was approved 5-0.**

6. Schedule Next Regular Meeting of the School Committee

September 11, 2012

7. **Vote to Accept a Donation to Fiske School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$739.20**

Motion to Accept a Donation to Fiske School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the amount of \$739.20 with gratitude (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) The Motion was approved 5-0.

8. **Vote to Accept a \$221 Donation to Lexington Children's Place from LEXFUN Representing Proceeds from Their Annual Consignment Sale**

Motion to Accept a \$221 Donation to Lexington Children's Place from LEXFUN Representing Proceeds from their Annual Consignment Sale with gratitude (Stewart, Steigerwald) The Motion was approved 5-0.

9. **Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of August 23, 2011.**

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of August 23, 2012 (Stewart, Alessandrini) The Motion was approved 5-0.

10. **Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 13, 2012**

Margaret Coppe explained to the Committee why these minutes were now being brought forward for a vote.

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 13, 2012, as amended (Stewart, Steigerwald) The Motion was approved 5-0.

11. **Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of June 5, 2012**

The Committee discussed minor changes to the minutes.

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

12. **Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of June 5, 2012**

Motion to go into Executive Session to return only to approve these minutes.

Motion to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of June 5, 2012 (Stewart, Alessandrini) The Motion was approved 5-0.

13. **Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of June 12, 2012**

The Committee discussed minor changes to the Minutes.

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of June 12, 2012, as amended (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) The Motion was approved 5-0.

V. **Executive Session**

The following Motion was made by Margaret Coppe and seconded by Alessandro Alessandrini:

I move to go into Execution Session to discuss strategy with regard to Collective Bargaining(Exemption 3) with the Lexington Educational Association and that I as Chair declare that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee and that we will reconvene in Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning.

The Motion was unanimously approved by a voice roll call vote:

**Alessandro Alessandrini: aye
Bonnie Brodner: aye
Mary Ann Stewart: aye
Jessie Steigerwald: aye
Margaret Coppe: aye**

The Committee went into Executive Session at 10:35 p.m.

VI. Adjourn from Executive Session and Return to Open Session

**Motion to reconvene in Open Session only for the purpose of adjourning
And was unanimously approved by a voice roll call vote:**

**Alessandro Alessandrini: aye
Bonnie Brodner: aye
Mary Ann Stewart: aye
Jessie Steigerwald: aye
Margaret Coppe: aye**

Motion to Adjourn (Stewart; Brodner). Motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Documents: School Committee Meeting Agenda; Lexington School Committee's Second Reading on the Wellness Policy; Lexington School Committee Wellness Policy Implementation Guidelines May 2012; School Committee Liaison Assignments – July 2011; Letter dated May 11, 2012 from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding Chapter 43 of the Acts of 2012; Letter dated June 30, 2011 from Thomas P. Martellone, Principal Fiske Elementary School regarding check from Ahold Co., A+ School Rewards; Letter dated June 13, 2012 from Elizabeth Billings-Fouhy, Supervisor of Early Childhood Special Education, LPS regarding donation to Lexington Children's Place from LEXFUN; School Committee Minutes of August 23, 2011; School Committee Minutes of March 13, 2012; School Committee Minutes of June 5, 2012; School Committee Minutes of June 12, 2012

Voted by the School Committee September 11, 2012