

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, March 17, 2009**  
**Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room**  
**1625 Massachusetts Avenue**

**Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Members Rod Cole, Tom Diaz, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart. The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.**

**The meeting was convened at 7:34 by Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash**

**I. Election of Officers**

The first order of business is the election of officers for the School Committee. Paul Ash presided over this process.

**Motion to appoint Margaret Coppe as School Committee chair (Cole, Diaz). The motion passed 5-0.**

**Motion to appoint Rod Cole as School Committee vice-chair (Diaz, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.**

Welcome to Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart who each said a few brief words.

**II. Public Comment**

**Patrick Mehr:** Health benefits will come up early in Town Meeting. I am passing around a draft motion regarding this.

**Karen Spector** (president of the METCO scholarship fund): Explained what the METCO scholarship fund is.

**Dawn McKenna:** Sixteen students from indoor track went to nationals. Thank you to community members who supported those who could not afford the trip.

**III. Superintendent's Announcements**

1. Noah Arbesfeld came in sixth in the United States and will be receiving a \$25K INTEL scholarship.
2. The Clarke Middle School chess team came in 1<sup>st</sup> in Massachusetts and the Diamond Middle School team came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in Massachusetts. In the elementary tournament for grades K-6, the Bridge School team placed second; and for grades K-3, the Bridge School team placed third.

3. MATHCOUNTS Team Competition: Clarke came in first place by a wide margin. Three students won four-year college scholarships; two of these students won trips to the national competition at Disney.
4. LHS Honors String Orchestra and Madrigal Singers have been selected to perform at the 2009 Massachusetts Music Educators All-State Conference. This is an honor. We have been invited twice.
5. LHS Science Fair: On March 6<sup>th</sup> 280 students participated.
6. Update on Principal Searches: The Estabrook, Fiske and Diamond principals are retiring. Much work is being done to replace these outstanding educators. My thanks to all of them. All positions have been advertised. This week we are interviewing semifinalists for the elementary positions. By Thursday or Friday, finalist candidates will be selected. Regarding Diamond, the application deadline is the 27<sup>th</sup> and it will take 3-4 weeks to move through that process.
7. Last Day of School (if no additional snow days)  
June 22 – Elementary and Middle Schools (K-8)  
June 25 – Lexington High School (9-12)

The last day of school will be a half-day.

#### **IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns**

##### **Rod Cole:**

- 1) The Financial Review Committee asked to present its report to the School Committee on March 25, prior to presenting it to Town Meeting on March 30.
- 2) Requested that Dr. Ash mention the Coordinated Program Review that is required by the state.

**Paul Ash:** A team comes to report on us regarding compliance in various areas. They interview people without advance notice. We received very few requests for additional information. We received a letter placing us in category one; we are in complete compliance regarding SPED and other areas. This is good news.

- 3) K school bus info: I am not clear not clear the language regarding space available for kindergarten buses.

**Mary Ellen Dunn:** We do not have midday busses like we have had in prior years. It may be more difficult to procure a bus or van at noontime.

**Jessie Steigerwald:**

- 1) I attended kindergarten orientation. It was a very nice welcome.
- 2) Temple Isaiah is having an event on stress that is relevant to schools.
- 3) I am interested in how to update the revenue forecast for next year.

**Mary Ann Stewart:**

- 1) Does the School Committee as a group write a letter for something like METCO funding?

**Dr. Ash** answered in the affirmative.

- 2) Tomorrow is lobby day for METCO.
- 3) I attended the shield of loving kindness to protest the Westborough Baptist Church's message of hate. Thanks to all who were involved.
- 4) I met with parents at their request regarding safe environments for gay, lesbian and transgender students in middle school.
- 5) Last week I was in Washington, DC, as a representative to the National PTA for two days of workshops dedicated to diversity, inclusion, and the whole child.

**Margaret Coppe:**

Thank you to Hank Manz for rescheduling his meeting for tonight.

The Suburban Coalition is having a legislative breakfast on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Mary Ann Stewart will attend.

**V. Discussion Items:**

1. PK – 12 Facilities Master Plan: Introduced by Dr. Ash. Last year we appropriated funds so that the district could have a long-range master plan. It is good to know short-term, medium-range and long-range needs. David Finney gave the presentation and introduced Bob Bell, architect. He gave a comprehensive presentation of the needs at all levels of the system. Some highlights: It would be possible to use a school for swing space, however we have less confidence in the system going to a five-school system than we had the last time the projections were done. Classrooms in the high school are much smaller than what is recommended. There is less state funding now than before. We recommend that as a priority the town move forward to get funding for the high school. We would put Bowman and Bridge into the category of being in good condition. Estabrook and Hastings would be the ones that we would suggest taking out of service sooner. There are facilities needs as well as educational needs in the high school. Security is also an issue at the high school because the buildings are separate. Total cost is \$37.7 million (\$37,689,200). Regarding the Central Office: Two different options were looked at. \$8 million or \$4.9 million dollars. The latter is a less efficient approach. Finney discussed a proposed timeline and explained the MSBA (the new state funding program for schools) which usually provides more than half the funding for a school.

There were questions and comments from the Committee. Mr. Finney painted a picture of what would happen if we do not do the work.

There were questions and comments from the audience.

2. Recommendations on How to Close the \$375,000 Deficit. The item was introduced by Paul Ash and further explained by Mary Ellen Dunn. The size of the deficit has declined. It was \$375K. Now it is \$275 and there may be more reductions. They are working to make the number as accurate as possible. We are closing the budget on April 15 rather than May 1.

There were questions and comments from the Committee.

The stabilization fund was set-up specifically for this purpose.

3. Creation of a PreK-12 Student Services Financial and Operations Manager Position. This was presented by Paul Ash. He explained the rationale behind this new position.

**Phyllis Neufeld** (President of the LEA): Expressed disappointment at the proposal to add this position.

Dr. Ash explained why it is in the LEA's and everyone's interest to support this recommendation. We are spending money in SPED that does not help children. This will streamline administration in the SPED office and allow the SPED staff to spend more time with children.

There were other comments from the audience.

## **VI. Action Items**

1. Vote to Relocate Part of the Pre-K Program and a LABBB Vocational Program to the School Administration Building

**Motion to relocate part of the Pre-K Program and a LABBB vocational program to the School Administration Building with the understanding that the space is not needed for something else. (Diaz, Cole). The motion passed 5-0.**

2. Vote to accept a \$466 Gift, representing a percentage of purchases made on March 5, 2009, from Wilson Farms of Lexington to Hastings School

**Motion to accept a \$466 gift, representing a percentage of purchases made on March 5, 2009, from Wilson Farms of Lexington to Hastings School (Stewart, Steigerwald). The motion passed 5-0.**

**Jessie Steigerwald** brought up the fact that she is co-president at Hastings School and asked if people felt there was a conflict of interest. No one did.

3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 3, 2009
4. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 10, 2009
5. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 25, 2009
6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 3, 2009
7. Vote to Approve School Committee Executive Session Minutes of February 25, 2009

**Motion to approve School Committee minutes of February 3, 2008, February 10, 2008, February 25, 2008, March 3, 2008 and executive session minutes of February 25, 2008 (Diaz, Cole). The motion passed 3-0. Steigerwald and Stewart abstained.**

**VII. Motion to Adjourn (Cole, Diaz). The motion passed 5-0.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:23 p.m.**