

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, November 18, 2014
Jonas Clarke Middle School, Auditorium
17 Stedman Road

PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee Members Jessie Steigerwald, Alessandro Alessandrini, Judith Crocker, William Hurley, Student Representative Abigail Schwartz

The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary

The meeting convened at 7:35pm

Call to order and welcome: Chair Margaret Coppe welcomed everyone.

Public Comments:

None

Superintendent's Announcements:

Boston Globe Names LPS as a "Top Place to Work" for 2014

On November 12th The Boston Globe recognized Lexington Public Schools as one of the best places to work for 2014. Over 300 companies participated in the survey. Lexington Public Schools was ranked 24th amongst Massachusetts largest employers.

Dr. Ash also recognized Phyllis Neufeld for wanting to improve trust, and make it a good working environment. Thanks to many, Lexington Public Schools is a great place to work.

A letter was received from Donna Hooper thanking the School Committee for setting aside November 4th (Election Day) as the LPS Professional Learning Day. 12,000 voters participated in the election and voting and it really helped the municipal side for parking, etc., not having schools in session. November 2016 and 2018 are also election years and she hopes that LPS will set their Professional Learning Day on those days as well.

School Committee Member Announcements:

Update on the Board of Selectman Decision Regarding a Special Town Meeting

Margaret Coppe: Last night the School Committee went before the Board of Selectman seeking a Special Town Meeting and the request was unanimously turned down. Thanks to the committee for all of their work, and special thanks to Dr. Ash and Miriam Sousa for all of their work. At tomorrow night's school committee meeting, November 19, 2014, there will be discussion of where we go next and whether we do something now or wait until phase 3 of the report. The meeting tomorrow night is at 7:30pm. December 1st is a training session for the Superintendent search. Dec. 2nd is the annual School Committee meeting in Boston.

Dr. Ash mentioned that the public is welcome to join the committee in Boston. The bus boards at Central Office at 4:30pm and leaves at 4:45pm. It is a great meeting with principals, staff and parents discussing the Metco program. Conversations begin at 6:00, followed by the school committee meeting. It is held at the Twelfth Baptist Church, 160 Warren Street, Roxbury.

Alessandro Alessandrini: Thanks to the Board of Selectmen for letting the committee go before them. They had good suggestions, and he also thanked all finance committees for all of their feedback. Thanks to all parents who wrote with great feedback and help going forward.

Jessie Steigerwald: The School Committee was unified on the topic which was great, and all were very respectful. Thanks to Abby Schwartz and Margaret Coppe for their team on the LEF Trivia Bee. It was a very exciting and fun night. Her favorite part was the kids cheering on their teachers. Veterans Day festivities were quite moving. She enjoyed the parade. Barbara Manfredi spent a lot of time complimenting the school department. Thanks to Middle School Social Studies Head Mary Barry for her work. The Chief Marshall for the day was Marine Sergeant Cooper, who was great.

Judith Crocker: Thanks to Jessie Steigerwald, Abby Schwartz, and Margaret Coppe for participating in the LEF Trivia Bee. Thanks to the Harrington PTA for sponsoring their overcrowding forum. She had a wonderful time at LHS for the German potluck exchange student breakfast. It was great. She welcomed Bill Hurley to the committee.

William Hurley: Even though he is brand new to the committee, he is already feeling like he's been here for years. His colleagues have been great and the committee all works together with respect and what is in the best interest for children. Thanks to the community for making him feel welcome.

Agenda:

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee for Youth at Risk

Committee members: B.J. Rudman, William Blout, and Eileen Jay presented the report. They explained and went in to detail on the following major recommendations for the schools, town government and community:

- Designate leadership and establish organizational structure
- Enhance social-emotional intelligence and build resiliency
- Reduce sources of unnecessary and unhealthy stress
- Identify and provide support services for youth at risk
- Work on community education and changing the culture
- Find networking opportunities and resources
- Create a joint follow up task force with representatives from the schools, town and community to monitor implementation of these recommendations and to report on progress

Members commented and questioned the committee.

Abigail Schwartz: Would like more boys to be encouraged to participate in yoga classes as it is an activity that does relieve stress; Likes the idea of non-competitive sports teams; Agrees with

reducing homework workload and also having homework free days Having discussions/forums with parents are a great idea; Would like to see increased projects rather than testing.

Judith Crocker: Thanked committee for this incredible document; Liked how the recommendations for schools/community/town government were distinguished; Had questions about youth center/town community center and the rule for sports athletes having to stay for all games (JV/Varsity); Asked if leveling math at the elementary level would alleviate stress or create it; Asked about XBlock and if it was still a topic; Liked the research that was done in peer communities and asked if participating in sports would count as P/E credit.

William Hurley: Complimented the committee on the comprehensive study with very concrete recommendations; Very emotional reading this report and was disturbed by some of the things stated in the report about being competitive/bullying; Suggested inviting people from admissions offices at colleges to see what young people are going through.

Jessie Steigerwald: Appreciated the work and time that was spent on this report; We should focus on learning instead of testing; Would like to set aside 15 minutes on a future agenda for the homework policy; wants to look into unhealthy student stress; has questions on additional positions, honors levels, any budget implications for them; asked about students and sleep on the report and about teacher load (going from 5 to 4 courses); agreed about the mixed message with colleges.

Action Item: appoint a task force to go to next phase.

Alessandro Alessandrini: Liked that the report includes the community and government; Recommended having someone from Needham come here or the committee goes there; When he asked what the committee would love to see happen, they responded with a town wide suicide prevention program – one with kids helping other kids, and changing climate in the community/social media.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street: The presentation makes her question how much coordination the town is actually doing, as some of the things in the report already exist. The academic pressure to be good/get into the best college has not changed. She believes that so much has already been put into reducing stress. She believes 3 things. 1. Culture of staff needs to be changed about homework. 2. Bureaucracy of student navigating what needs to improve. 3. Systematic devaluing of student leadership. Students do not have enough opportunities to take leadership. She believes it was outrageous to have Xblock taken away with no public process. Give the students back the authority.

Update on Special Education Parent Survey and Work with the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

Presented by: Ellen Sugita, Director of Special Education.; Kay Slusser, Assistant Director of Special Education.; Robin Abrams, Co-Chair of the Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Members had some questions and comments on the presentation.

Suggestions: Survey students with IEPs as well as their parents; a measure on litigation activity would be good to see; coffees are great

First Quarterly Financial Report

Mary Ellen Dunn presented the report. Deficit of \$129,000 but not of significance as an amount is held in reserve and that usually declines through the school year. Auditing school activity accounts and a change of the policy will be coming. Transportation is in a deficit. The payment due date was changed to August 1st which has worked favorably, as more parents are paying on time now than when the date was in May or June. There are fewer homeless students this year.

Members had some questions and comments for Ms. Dunn regarding encumbrances, out of district tuition, what is happening at the federal level with grant funding, and losing an ELL grant due to a clerical error.

Vote to Approve EDCO and LABBB Articles of Agreement

Dr. Ash explained that the state law has changed in respect to collaboratives. Each collaborative has to submit to the State its Articles of Agreement. It must explain governing structures, financial reserves, capital funds, and roles of member towns/school committees. Articles of agreement have been brought to each town involved and the vote is mandatory for the committee in order to participate in the collaborative.

Motion to approve EDCO articles of agreement and capital reserve fund. (Hurley, Steigerwald)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Motion to approve LABBB articles of agreement and capital reserve fund. (Alessandrini, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Superintendent Evaluation Standards

In a previous meeting Dr. Ash stated 2 goals already. He recommends the focus for the 4 standards (Section A, in direct alignment with tonight's presentation.) Others are in the packet. Members made a few changes.

Motion to accept the Superintendent's Evaluation Standards, as amended. (Steigerwald, Crocker)

The Motion was approved 5-0

Consent Agenda:

- 1. Vote to Accept a 2013 Intel Science Talent Search School Award in the Amount of \$1,000 from the Society for Science & the Public to Be Used to "support excellence in science, math and/or engineering education" at Lexington High School**

***Motion to accept the 2013 Intel Science talent Search School Award in the amount of \$1,000.
(Steigerwald, Alessandrini)***

The Motion was approved 5-0

Motion to approve School Committee Minutes of May 9, 2012. (Steigerwald, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 3-0-2 with Judith Crocker and William Hurley abstaining

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 31, 2014 as amended. (Steigerwald, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 4-0-1 with William Hurley abstaining.

Motion to adjourn (Alessandrini, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; Report on Recommendations for Reducing Stress, Building Resiliency and Improving Services for Our Youth in Lexington; Special Education Department Response to 2012 SEPAC Parent Survey; FY 2015 – 1st Quarter Financial Report; EDCO Articles of Agreement and Capital Reserve Fund; Recommended Superintendent Evaluation Standards for 2014-2015; Intel Talent Search letter; School Committee Minutes 5/9/12; School Committee Minutes 5/31/14; Culturally Proficient Communication Indicator III-C-2

Voted by the School Committee _____ December 16, 2014 _____