

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, January 20, 2009
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Helen Cohen, School Committee Members Rod Cole, Margaret Coppe, Tom Diaz and Ravi Sakhuja. The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Helen Cohen noted the special nature of this day, the inauguration of the first African American president of the United States.

II. Public Comment

Deb Mauger (president of the League of Women Voters): Announced the 10th annual essay contest for students.

Una Basak (parent of ILP children): Spoke glowingly of the Fiske ILP program and against moving the ILP program to Bridge.

Helen Cohen responded that there is a committee being organized to look at this issue.

Jennifer Lester (parent of child in the ILP program): Also spoke against moving the ILP program from Fiske to Bridge.

Anna Wijatyk (also a parent of an ILP student): Spoke about her son and against moving the ILP program to Bridge.

Mary Ann Stewart (precinct 1): In favor of the position of the parents of ILP parents who have spoken.

Dawn McKenna (precinct 6): The School Committee did vote a policy of dedicated art and music classrooms in 1996.

III. Superintendent's Announcements

1. Dr. Ash spoke about the historical significance of the day noting the peaceful transition of power, Obama's harkening back to Washington's crossing of the Potomac and the values that episode emphasized. Our children were able to watch and engage in a dialogue about the significance of both the events and of Obama's speech.

2. Mark Chenofsky is a junior at LHS. He wrote a law with Representative Kaufman allowing 16 year olds the right to give blood with parental permission.
3. Martha Batten, principal of Estabrook Elementary School, will be retiring at the end of this year.
4. We will hold two public hearings: Saturday, January 31 at 9:00 a.m. at Clarke Middle School and Tuesday, Feb 3rd at the beginning of the regularly scheduled School Committee meeting.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Rod Cole: The inauguration was a big deal at Hastings today.

Tom Diaz: My 7th grade students enjoyed this historic day. I attended a meeting of the Permanent Building Committee.

Margaret Coppe: A Lexington resident performed in the quartet at the inauguration.

Ravi Sakhuja: This was a very special day. The letter that Obama wrote to his children was very moving.

Helen Cohen: All generations of people will have someone in the White House. This three generational family represents all of us.

V. Discussion Items

1. Superintendent's Recommendations to Reduce the FY10 Budget, Based on Available Funds.

The topic was presented by Superintendent Paul Ash. These cuts will either have no effect on the classroom or minimal effect on the classroom. This cut list is the unanimous recommendation of the principals and the Central Office staff. Some cuts are salary and expense savings and some are benefit savings.

There were questions and discussion from the Committee.

Phyllis Neufeld (president of the LEA) responded to Dr. Ash's presentation. She spoke against cutting teachers and IAs and presented a list of alternative possible cuts.

Jim Johnson (husband of Barbara Johnson, an SSP whose hours and benefits may potentially be cut at Bridge) spoke of the moral obligation to consider the affected people as human beings and not numbers. The loss of health care will significantly affect them and their families. They are loyal employees.

Patrick Mehr (precinct 3): Commented on particular aspects of the cut list.

Jesse Steigerwald (precinct 8): Are there other private school buses? What are the alternatives for cuts?

Dr Ash replied if we had to make any other substantial cuts (beyond the 1.8 million, programs would have to be cut.

VI. Action Items

1. Vote to Accept \$2,500.00 Donation from Raytheon Company's "MathMovesU" Grant to Jonas Clarke Middle School

Motion to accept with gratitude a \$2,500.00 donation from Raytheon Company's "MathMovesU" grant to Jonas Clarke Middle School (Diaz, Cole). The motion passed 5-0.

2. Vote to Approve School Committee Executive Session Minutes of January 6, 2009

Motion to approve School Committee Executive Session minutes of January 6, 2009 (Diaz, Cole). The motion passed 5-0.

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