

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, February 24, 2015
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

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

ABSENT: Abigail Schwartz, Student Representative
The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary
The meeting convened at 7:34pm

Call to order and welcome: Chair Margaret Coppe called the meeting to order, and introduced committee members.

Public Comments: None

Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash just came from the Science Fair at LHS. Congratulations to the large number of students who spent a lot of hours on research and learning. The students at LHS have done outstanding work. Parents, judges, and staff are all commended for their help. He watched a student do an experiment on caffeine to see if it caused a reaction in a very small organism. Her enthusiasm was infectious. The point of the science fair is that the students are actively engaged in creativity and learning.

Mr. Pat Goddard updated the committee on the conditions of the school buildings after multiple snowstorms. The Department of Facilities staff has responded admirably. Hastings has had ice dams. They have been cleared, the classrooms have been dried out, the building is stable and all classrooms are being used. There was a failed laminated beam at Hastings. An emergency has been declared for the gym and it is not being used. The repair work went out to bid and the steel is on site. The job will be finished by Friday if all goes smoothly. At LHS there was a natural gas smell in the auditorium twice. It was a result of snow covering the outside air unit and a fracture in the fitting. It was replaced and is functioning. Also at LHS, there were cracks in the drywall of the new modular building. Ten sections had cracks. It was nothing structural, only cosmetic, but they will have the structural engineer review it to support their findings. They will work with the contractor to get the cosmetic repairs done. In addition, there was a leak at Central Office.

Abigail Schwartz: Wanted Mr. Goddard to know that at LHS, the science building had leaks in some ceilings, and there is also a leak in the girls' bathroom in the math building.

Jessie Steigerwald: Asked what happens at Hastings for recess and gym, when they do not have the gym to use, and it is so cold outside. Dr. Ash said he would find out.

Margaret Coppe: Thanked Pat Goddard for all that he and his staff have done with all the storms. And thanks to everyone in the town for their hard work.

Dr. Ash read a letter from Louise Lipsitz, Principal at Hastings, commending the Facilities Department and the custodial staff. They did a tremendous job. The custodians have worked tirelessly in helping repair the gym, solve the problems caused by snow, and readying the school for the students. If school were in session last week, Hastings probably would have been closed all week. A lot of water came into that school through the windows.

School Committee Member Announcements:

William Hurley: Last week he and Margaret Coppe attended a mini-summit to continue the work on identifying what to do regarding advancing the school building projects at Town Meeting. The full summit meeting is tomorrow night. He is grateful that all the people understand the complex options we are facing and he believes some headway has been made and the sequence narrowed.

Jessie Steigerwald: She thanked the committee for supporting Mock Town Meeting. She showed the Spring 2015 Town Meeting warrant so the public could see it. This Saturday night there is an exciting event at the high school, "Passport to China", to support the music students in raising money for their trip to China during April vacation. Election day is Monday and she hopes people will come out and vote.

Judith Crocker: She attended the LHS science fair and read a few titles from some of the students' work to highlight the breadth of projects undertaken. She complimented Dr. Kumar, a science teacher at LHS for her influence on the many students who presented work involving phylogeny. Thanks to all involved. She also thanked the Department of Public Works and the crews who have been clearing the streets and sidewalks. The street cleaning around bus stops has been a major job and is being done well with the added help of some MEMA equipment borrowed from other states. The Estabrook and Bridge traffic safety meetings are working on improving traffic safety around their schools. On March 2 at 7:00 pm the Prospect Hill sidewalk hearing will take place during the Sidewalk Committee meeting in the Selectmen's Meeting room. She mentioned that 10 Hayden synchronized skating teams are traveling to Rhode Island for nationals and wished them well.

Alessandro Alessandrini: He thanked Dr. Ash for writing a letter in support of the METCO program. He is also in the process of drafting a letter from this School Committee to send.

Jessie Steigerwald: She and Margaret Coppe enjoyed meeting with Carol Pilarski and Laura Lasa to discuss what is happening with curriculum at LHS. The Curriculum Subcommittee meeting will continue to meet throughout the year.

Agenda:

Vote to Authorize the Superintendent to Submit a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for the Hastings School

MOTION: "Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 24, 2015, the School Committee of the town of Lexington, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest dated February 24, 2015, for the Hastings Elementary School located at 7 Crosby Road, Lexington, Massachusetts, 02421 which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which the

Lexington Public Schools may be invited to apply to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

Priorities

2. Elimination of existing severe overcrowding.

5. Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility.

7. Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements.

And, hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School building Authority, or commits the Town of Lexington to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. (Steigerwald, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The motion will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen and they have to put same motion on their agenda. It can then go to the state.

Pre-K through Grade 8 School Space Construction Options

The committee commended Joe Pato, who put a lot of work into the consensus plan.

Members had a lengthy discussion on the schools and construction options. Topics discussed were: concerns about all the buildings being addressed at the same time; putting modulars at Fiske when it is a relatively new building; buffer zones; and possible redistricting. School construction and overcrowding is a complex issue. The committee has a common goal and it has taken a lot of discussion to come to a consensus.

Tom Martellone, Principal Fiske School: Mr. Martellone shared that he had reflected on the current and short-term future needs at Fiske. He presented a ranked order for three options, expressing his view of what was best for the school's needs. Mr. Martellone's option1: redistricting 25 students from the current 4th grade (who will be in grade 5 during the 2015-2016 academic year). Option 2: Pre-fabricated modulars. Option 3: Leasing standard modulars.

Reasons cited included: (Option 1) the redistricted students would be back together with their peers at Diamond one year later, (Option 2) prefabricated modulars have a longer lifespan, there is uncertainty around the other expansion projects as well as a question of whether Fiske will ever receive a brick and mortar addition. His comments on Option 3 were that he did not want to end up having Fiske rely on leased standard modulars for an extended period of years. If a brick and mortar addition did not come through for Fiske, he was concerned that the school would continue to need additional space for more than three years and the temporary leased standards would remain and become permanent space.

If Fiske does not get any additional space in the next year, there is a high probability that the school will need to use a dedicated art or music room for a classroom and then have art or music instruction take place in classrooms. Art could take place in the cafeteria but there is a significant impact to Lextended Day as well as the art program. Initial kindergarten numbers are 76 as of now. There is a 51-unit apartment complex coming online and other houses available near the school. If the number goes to 90, he would need to come and ask for another kindergarten. 10 students have moved into grade 4 this year. They now have 25 students in each classroom. Initially he was excited about standard modulars for a quick fix, but he does not know what would happen in 3 years. After taking into account the possibility of not getting any town meeting vote for funds, etc., his first recommendation for Fiske's overcrowding is redistricting one classroom.

Kate Colburn, 49 Forest Street: She was at the Capital Expenditures Committee meeting this morning. The addition of prefabs at Fiske was added at the last minute and does not address the need. It will be extremely hurtful to the community. She hopes the School Committee can focus on what Fiske needs.

Roland Defilippi, 1965 Mass Avenue: His son is in grade 4 and would be one of the kids possibly moved to Estabrook. What is the impact of an education when you go to 3 schools in 3 years? It is not a positive move. He is a licensed contractor and was an architect, and it would seem to him that the School Committee would have the power to have the 3 additional classrooms at Fiske. It is an emergency of overcrowding and it needs to be fixed. He does not understand why it would take until December to get the space needed. Somebody is missing something. It cannot be that hard to get basic modulars in by the end of August.

Mr. Hurley asked Mr. Goddard, Director of Facilities, to explain why standard modulars ordered at March Town Meeting would not be in place by August. Mr. Goddard explained state regulations govern the bidding process and that late November would be the more likely time.

Committee members discussed aspects of the current proposals for capital projects. Jessie Steigerwald asked Dr. Ash to supply more information about how each elementary school was currently using spaces that could be viewed as classrooms based on their size. She handed out a matrix called "Classroom Chart" and suggested it would help the committee communicate with other boards and committees if there were a clear way to show how space is currently used. Dr. Ash thought it would take principals a long time to assess their space use. Steigerwald also passed out a draft of an Operational Enrollment Work Group and asked her colleagues to consider asking Dr. Ash to work with a group of staff members to project the impact of rising enrollments on the next five years' operating budgets, and the feasibility of implementing "Buffer Zones" or other redistricting strategies.

Committee members also discussed the input received from Mr. Martellone including his redistricting proposal and the pros and cons of leasing standard modulars at Fiske. Ms. Crocker inquired about the incoming Kindergarten students who are first born children and how these current numbers may support the redistricting of one Kindergarten class. She also cautioned against assuming that the Manor condo project mentioned would be districted. The area is now assigned to attend Fiske but those students will be within walking distance to Harrington. Members did not take a formal position but raised concerns about redistricting 25 students from the current 4th grade. Members did not take a position on whether to decide definitively on whether Fiske modulars should be leased standards or prefabricated. Bill Hurley was in favor of prefabricated and shared the information learned at the mini-summit. Alessandro Alessandrini

was in favor of the standards to provide more immediate relief for the overcrowding at Fiske and to protect the art and music room for their specific intended instructional purposes.

MOTION to request Appropriation \$4,080,000.00 for concept, schematics, design development and construction documents for the following: Diamond brick and mortar and prefab, Clarke prefab, Bridge prefab, Bowman prefab, Hastings, Pre-K, Harrington and Fiske. (Hurley, Crocker)

The Motion was approved 5-0

Revisions to the Department of Public Facilities Capital and Operating Budgets

MOTION to approve the recommended revision memo to the Superintendent dated 2/24/15 regarding capital and operating budget revisions. (Hurley, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0

In order to balance the Department of Public Facilities (DPF) cash capital budget, but add the DPF Vehicle with aerial lift, Mr. Goddard recommended reducing the Interior Painting Program by \$24,169 (down to \$133,425), and withdrawing both the Diamond Middle School motors for backboards for \$25,300 and the LHS Bike racks and installation for \$31,531. This total reduction of \$81,000 can then supplement the \$27,500 already budgeted in the FY2016 Operating Budget to fund a budget of \$108,500 for the DPF vehicle with aerial lift. Members learned that bike racks have already been purchased and are being stored at two school locations. The bike racks only need to be installed. DPF will use available FY2015 operating funds (and FY2016 if necessary) to implement the backboard motors and bike rack before the end of August, 2015.

Phase 2 of Lexington High School Prefabricated Buildings – Transfer of funds from the Appropriations Committee

MOTION to request a transfer from the reserve fund in accordance with Chapter 40, Sec. 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws in the amount of \$150,000 to be transferred to Article 22 of the 2014 Annual Town Meeting. (Steigerwald, Crocker)

The Motion was approved 5-0

FY15 2nd Quarterly Financial Report

Mary Ellen Dunn reviewed the FY 2015 2nd Quarter Financial Report. Members had some questions and comments.

Dr. Ash is seeking the committee's permission to use some funds in the operating budget to make up for the cuts in the METCO program (9C cuts) \$88,180. There are 250 children in the METCO program and this transfer would avoid any impact to their program. There are sufficient funds that were set aside for out-of-district tuitions that are now available for another purpose as the students remained in Lexington Public Schools.

MOTION to request a transfer of \$77,243.00 from special education out-of-district tuition, to the appropriate salary accounts. (Steigerwald, Alessandrini)

Motion was approved 5-0.

Dr. Ash stated that attorney fees in special education figures for FY10 to 1/31/15 was provided to members.

Review and Approve in Form Policy

Jessie Steigerwald updated the committee that the Policy Subcommittee had received some questions about policy EBB First Aid at the last public School Committee discussion of Section E. Jill Gasperini supplied answers to the committee questions and Steigerwald and Judy Crocker incorporated Gasperini's comments and suggestions into a revised draft of the policy. If members agreed, the revised version could be approved in form tonight and then be placed with the rest of the policies in Section E (which were approved in form at a prior meeting).

MOTION to accept the changes changes in the policy EBB First Aid and to approve it in form. (Hurley, Alessandrini)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Consent Agenda

Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 20, 2015

Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 31, 2015

Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of February 3, 2015

MOTION to approve Consent Agenda (Steigerwald, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

Executive Session was cancelled due to the late hour.

MOTION to adjourn (Alessandrini, Hurley)

The Motion was approved 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; Copy of Town of Lexington Appropriation Committee request for transfer from the Reserve Fund; Authorization to Submit a Statement of Interest to the MSBA Regarding Hastings Elementary School; School Building Project Consensus Plan; FY2015 2nd Quarter Financial Report; First Aid Policy EBB; FY2016 Capital and Operative Budget Revisions Memo; School Committee Minutes from 1/20/15 and 1/31/15; Buffer Zones FAQ handout from Judith Crocker; Draft of Operational Enrollment Work Group handout from Jessie Steigerwald; Classroom chart handout from Jessie Steigerwald; Special Ed Attorney costs FY10 – 1/31/15 handout from Dr. Ash