

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 26, 2014
Cary Memorial Building, Estabrook Hall
1605 Massachusetts Avenue

PRESENT: Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Jessie Steigerwald, Judy Crocker and Mary Ann Stewart

ABSENT: Sam A. Lehn, Student Representative

The minutes were taken by Jean M. Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome

The Chair called the meeting to order and invited public comment.

Pam Hoffman, Precinct 7, thanked the Committee for their hard work and wished a good session with the new member and start of Town Meeting working cooperatively and collaboratively.

Dr. Ash shared that there will be an Enrollment Working Group (EWG) meeting tomorrow night with Patrick Goddard, Director Public Facilities and Philip Poinelli, former Chair of the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) who is volunteering his time to the EWG. The EWG meeting will explore construction (if any), what type and how to define capacity. EWG will also discuss developing a charge and scope of work. Dr. Ash to share periodic updates with the Committee.

There were questions and comments from the Committee (i) how much time did it take to come up with the last master plan; and (ii) with respect to Fiske there will be a June town meeting, what is happening before town meeting.

II. School Committee Member Announcements

Margaret Coppe shared (i) Saturday in Battin Hall there is going to be a symposium entitled *Balancing Stress & Success: An Asian American Perspective* from 9:00 am to Noon; (ii) the 10th annual Special Olympics will be held on April 30 at Lexington High School beginning at 9:00 am.

Judy Crocker shared that it is the 10th Anniversary of the Special Olympics in Lexington, it is also the 40th anniversary of the LABB. Committee members should plan on arriving at 8:45 am for the opening parade.

III. Agenda

1. School Committee Reorganization

Dr. Ash announced that this is the time of the year when the School Committee takes nominations for the position of Chair.

Motion to nominate Margaret Coppe for Chair (Stewart, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved** (4-0-1) Steigerwald abstained

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street inquired why there was no discussion among members of the Committee on the nomination and how each member came to their conclusion.

Alessandro Alessandrini shared that he has worked with Ms. Coppe over the past year on the Ad Hoc Committee for Youth at Risk and she attended all meetings and went before the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to push for Committee. Ms. Coppe also worked and pushed for the World Language Committee; and (iii) Ms. Coppe was instrumental in having a Special Education Director, along with Bonnie Brodner to recruiting a Special Education Director and those are his reasons for supporting Ms. Coppe as Chair.

Mary Ann Stewart agreed with Mr. Alessandrini and absent no other nominations no discussion was needed; she worked with Margaret Coppe for a number of years and feels she does an excellent job.

Alessandro Alessandrini shared one of the positions that has divided the Committee is the Vice-Chair position. The BOS does not have this position and would like to see this position eliminated.

Motion to Eliminate the Position of School Committee Vice Chair
(Alessandrini, Crocker).

The Committee engaged in further discussion of eliminating the Vice Chair position.

Motion to not vote for a Vice Chair (Alessandrini, Stewart) **The Motion was Approved** (5-0)

Jessie Steigerwald suggested adding the position of Correspondence Secretary who would handle the shared mailbox and return emails, stating that it might help the community to know the Committee's process. Ms. Steigerwald sees the Corresponding Secretary answering regular questions and forwarding others to the Chair to speak on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding the suggested position. It was decided that the Committee would be in a better position to respond after their scheduled retreat in June.

2. Discussion of Holiday Recognition for 2015-16 Academic Calendar

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding (i) interest by the community for a more diverse calendar; (ii) the federal, state and local holidays already in place; (iii) how to

incorporate more holidays into the school calendar; (iv) working the PTA/PTO President's Council (PPC) on developing a survey; (v) acknowledging the changing diversity in town; and (vi) teacher professional learning days.

Jessie Steigerwald shared the background on an email that she had sent to a select group of individuals and how that email had been forward and that the subject line was misleading. Ms. Steigerwald will perform more analysis and report back to the Committee.

Dr. Ash shared the required number of school days stating that he takes a secular view and suggests staying away from recognizing religious holidays. Dr. Ash suggested looking at enrollment to see if there are low attendance days.

The Chair invited public comment.

Peter Lee, 770 Waltham Street, President Chinese American Association of Lexington is grateful that this topic is being considered. Mr. Lee shared his thoughts on adding an Asian holiday to the school calendar and having a broader K-12 education to reflect the changing demographics in town. Mr. Lee feels that this would add value to the Lexington Public Schools graduates given the fact that the world is more global in nature. His is in favor of participating in that discussion moving forward and welcomes that opportunity.

Bonnie Brodner, Trotten Path, shared her thoughts on the holiday aspect. Ms. Brodner shared that when her family was looking for a community to move into, they chose Lexington because they celebrated Jewish holidays. Having a more diverse calendar might attract more diversity to town.

Katy Wipke, 53 Asbury Street, shared that she believes in separation of church and state and is not favor of adding additional religious holidays. Ms. Wipke believes that if people want to take the day off they should just take the day off.

Helen Cohen 32 Patterson Road shared that this is an exciting time for Lexington to deal with changing demographics and the Martin Luther King Service Day was a good time to make connections with others. Ms. Cohen believes there is a need to know what would need to be done to add religious holidays and having a committee to review these issues.

Tanya Morrisett, 21 Valleyfield Street wanted to know if any survey is conducted would it take into consideration staff and teachers. Tanya stated that she respects everyone religion and culture.

Chen Ho, 147 Shade Street commented on the survey using enrollment and stated that she never had her children miss school for the holiday.

3. School Committee Liaison Assignments

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding eliminating the following Committee Liaison Assignments: (i) Chamber of Commerce; (ii) Council on Aging, but keeping the

Human Services portion of this committee; (iii) Estabrook Advisory Council; and (iv) Health Benefits Committee.

The Committee discussed the following Committee Liaison Assignments: (i) Appropriation Committee; (ii) Board Selectmen; (iii) Capital Expenditures Committee; (iv) Ad Hoc Community Center Task Force; (v) Diversity Task Force; (vi) EDCO; (vii) Family and Community Engagement Subcommittee; (viii) Human Rights Committee; and (ix) Planning Board. The Committee agreed to discuss the remaining School Committee Liaison Assignments at the next Committee meeting.

4. Discussion of Town Meeting Articles

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding Article 30 and the Fenn Amendment.

Motion to Support Fenn Amendment (Steigerwald, Crocker)

The Committee engaged in further discussion.

Motion for School Committee to take a position on the Fenn Amendment (2-3)(Alessandrini, Coppe, Stewart) The Motion Failed

The School Committee will not take a position on the Fenn Amendment

Motion to Support Article 30 Amend Zoning By-Law – Medical Marijuana Treat Center as inserted by the Planning Board (Alessandrini)

The motion was not seconded.

The public meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm.

IV. The School Committee will remain in session and reconvene on Town Meeting floor, to adjourn when Town Meeting adjourns.

V. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:53 pm

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Monday, March 31, at 6:30 p.m. in the Cary Memorial Building, Estabrook Hall, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue.

Meeting Materials: Meeting Agenda; Proposed School Committee Liaison Assignments – March 2014 (Draft)

Voted by the School Committee May 13, 2014