

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

Cary Memorial Building

Ellen Stone Room and Cary Hall

1605 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Dr. Paul Ash, Superintendent, Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair; Members: Mary Ann Stewart (8:53 PM,) Bonnie Brodner and Jessie Steigerwald, and Sam Alpert, Student Representative

The Minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting Convened at 7:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order (Ellen Stone Room)

The Chair called the meeting to order and moved to go into Executive Session under Exemption 3 to discuss collective bargaining regarding the teacher's contract and to reconvene in open session. . Further, the chair declares that an open meeting discussion may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the School Committee.

A roll call vote was taken:

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| Margaret Coppe | “Aye” |
| Alessandro Alessandrini | “Aye” |
| Bonnie Brodner | “Aye” |
| Jessie Steigerwald | “Aye” |

Absent: Mary Ann Stewart

II. Executive Session (Ellen Stone Room)

III. Return to Public Session and Welcome

The Chair called the meeting back to open session at 7:45 p.m. and shared that due to scheduling conflicts Mary Ann Stewart would arrive later on in the meeting. She invited public comment.

Diane Biglow, Precinct 8, stated that she had requested copies of the Dr. Ash's Performance Reviews and all other documents related to his review that she could legally get under a public records request. She then questioned the Committee regarding written goals for Dr. Ash and how would the Committee measure those goals. Ms. Biglow is also going to post Dr. Ash's Performance Reviews on lex-wicki.org. Ms. Biglow sees a lack of communication with

the public, teachers and parents. Ms. Biglow would like Dr. Ash to meet with parents and PTA members once or twice a month.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, inquired of the Committee that since Dr. Ash's Evaluation is on the agenda tonight, would it make sense for the public to wait until the agenda item comes up before questioning and commenting. Ms. McKenna also wondered if the Committee would lay out what the evaluation process has been for Dr. Ash and were any executive sessions held.

Margaret Coppe replied that since there were multiple meetings in the spring and the public had a chance to comment then, that tonight's discussion would be among Committee members only and that it is the role of the School Committee to evaluate Dr. Ash.

Andrei Radulescu- Banu, 86 Cedar Street, requested a status update on the three families that came forward in September to report abuse. Mr. Radulescu-Banu also inquired if the policy would be updated to reflect that Lexington Public Schools no longer places children behind closed doors. He then requested that the practice be written down and made a public document.

Dr. Ash replied that he and Alessandro Alessandrini met with one of the families involved and that after that meeting everyone involved feels that they have reached a satisfactory conclusion to the matter. Two other families were referred to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for an investigation to determine if inappropriate actions were taken 4 and 6 years ago. An investigator from DCF has already met with people and reviewed documents in accordance with these cases. Dr. Ash is now awaiting the final report.

Margaret Coppe responded to Mr. Radulescu-Banu that it is more a practice than a policy and that there is currently nothing in writing on this practice.

Dr. Ash then stated that the policy was passed in 2003 and includes language from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) which defines seclusion rooms and time out spaces. The room that was being discussed in September doesn't exist anymore. The practice has changed.

IV. Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash announced that he has no announcements.

V. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Alessandro Alessandrini (i) reminded everyone that the Special Education Advisory Council Survey is due today and (ii) he shared that Mary Ann Stewart and himself would be meeting Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development along with two elementary school principals on December 11, 2012 to review what a typical elementary school day looks like.

Bonnie Brodner announced that the Ad hoc Cary Memorial Program Building Committee's public meeting for this evening has been cancelled and would be rescheduled for sometime in January.

Jessie Steigerwald announced that the Ad Hoc Master Facilities Subcommittee has been meeting regularly but she has missed most of the meetings due to travel, but did meet with Pat Goddard and there is no information at this time to put on an Agenda, but believes in January there will be information worth sharing and she will coordinate with the Chair and Dr. Ash to schedule that Agenda Item. She also stated that this subcommittee is exploring the idea of the town purchasing the Scottish Rite property.

Ms. Steigerwald then formally requested an Executive Session in order to discuss changes to prior Executive Session Minutes.

Margaret Coppe shared Mary Ann Stewart's comments that she would like to thank the Members of Town Meeting for approving the additional funding for the Estabrook Elementary School Building Project and that the bids will be open in a few weeks. Ms. Coppe then thanked Sam Alpert and his team for representing the Committee in the Trivia Bee and hoped he had a good time.

Sam Alpert made a suggestion to turn microphones off due to feedback. He also stated that Raffah Siddiqui and Geneva Kropper enjoyed themselves at the Trivia Bee.

VI. Agenda:

1. Vote to Approve Lexington High School Spanish Club Field Trip to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, April 11-18, 2013

Mary Alice Samii, Spanish Teacher at Lexington High School and advisor to the Spanish Club and Co-Presidents Jeannie Wooh and Eddie Gonsalez came forward to request permission to go on the Spanish Immersion and Community Service Trip to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, April 11-18, 2013. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Motion to Approve Lexington High School Spanish Club Field Trip to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, April 11-18, 2013 (Alessandrini, Brodner) The Motion was Approved (4-0). Stewart Absent.

2. Report by the Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Council

Linda Chase, Director of Student Services, introduced Holly Boker and Elaine Gabovitch, members of the Transition Subcommittee of the Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, which was formed to assess and report on the collective needs of the Lexington transition age youth (14-22) and focus on timely transition assessments, service and IEP transition goals to prepare students for adult life to present the Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Council Report on Transition to Lexington Public Schools 2012. The Report included an (1) overview of the needs of transition age youths receiving special education services through Lexington Public Schools (LPS); (2) the purpose of the needs assessment

survey to identify (i) how parents perceive transition assessment, planning and goal setting for their child, (ii) how they perceive their own family involvement in the transition process, (iii) what current student needs they have identified for their child and (iv) what recommendations can be made to respond to parent concerns; (3) methods used to compile the survey; (4) results of the Transition Needs Assessment Survey (i) student profile, (ii) transition planning/IEP process, (iii) family involvement in transition Planning,(iv) student transition needs; and (4) recommendations. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding transition challenges, partnerships with community groups and colleges, survey, task force, and strengthening relationships and collaborating with agencies.

Mary Ann Stewart jointed the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

3. 2012 MCAS Report

Thomas Plati, Director of Educational Technology & Assessment, presented the 2012 MCAS Report which included the results at major grade levels, the new ways educators and the public can access the MCAS data from the DESE website, the MCAS 2009-2012 comparison performances in all the different grades and subject, the MCAS Student Growth Model from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School Median Student Group Reports for 2012 for different grade levels, and MCAS Comparison performances 2009-2012 for our Grade 5, 8 and 10 special education students. Mr. Plati then concluded with recommendations going forward which included hiring good teachers, curriculum review, identifying what all students need to know and be able to do, key strategies, high quality professional development, embedded coaching, specialized intervention programs and flexible scheduling. His team is also looking at different kinds of data and ways to get all student data into one location for analysis. Mr. Plati also spoke to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) which are national standards focusing on Common Core math and English, mid-year diagnostics and end of year performance. The goal is for a 2015 roll-out, but he is concerned with state restrictions. He then congratulated all teachers, administrators, students and parents for all their hard work and dedication. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

Diane Biglow, Precinct 8, 15 Bellflower Street, heard member Jesse Steigerwald ask a question for data regarding the younger kids and what happened with them on MCAS She would like to hear from the chair when the data will be received .

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street, questioned whether other disciplines aside from math and English represent more efficient learning, not just taking more time taken away from foreign language and social studies. He then questioned how we measure progress in these other disciplines; for example are there other tests being conducted district wide to see year-to-year to check on progress. Would Mr. Plati please post his presentation on the website?

Carol Pilarski addressed Mr. Radulescu-Banu's concern regarding social studies and she responded that LPS is currently doing a social studies curriculum review and the state does not have a mandatory exam for social studies, so LPS follows the state mandates and makes assessments at each grade level using the state standards in subjects not tested by MCAS. Ms.

Pilarski also mentioned that thanks to the School Committee's support we were able to hire a Social Studies K-5 Coordinator and there is one Social Studies Department Head for both middle school and a Social Studies Department Head at the high school to ensure that curriculum is followed.

Margaret Coppe also responded to Mr. Radulescu-Banu's concerns for those subjects not on the MCAS, and that how LPS is doing year-to-year would depend on the school and teachers keeping records so that parents could compare year-to-year for their own child. Unfortunately, there is no way to compare to other districts.

4. FY 13 1st Quarterly Financial Report

Dr. Ash introduced Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance who presented the FY 2013 First Quarter Financial Report and reported that the end of year projected balance is \$297,836. Her presentation included (i) salaries and wages which are still being negotiated and noting that the Second Quarter Report will have more detail available for staffing fluctuations; (ii) expense budget which appears to be in balance; (iii) extraordinary expenses which includes the request for reimbursement for Bridge/Bowman Project in the amount of \$160,000 that were incurred due to project delays and approximately \$4,000 in expenses related to food loss and employee overtime during Hurricane Sandy; (iv) transportation (a) regular transportation, (b) homeless transportation, and (c) special education transportation; and (v) out-of-district tuition which currently includes 122 students ,an increase of 6 students over budget.

Ms. Dunn also provided an update on school bus ridership stating that there are a total of 24 buses running 58 individual routes with 2,641 children riding. The School Department will need to use \$285,365 of the \$316,000 Annual Town Meeting Article 17 subsidy to balance the service delivery model in place with a fee of \$300 and \$350 for the FlexPass. Last year parents paid 80% of the cost per seat and this year parents are paying 45% of the cost per seat. Ms. Dunn also reported on Fee Ridership, Collection Rate, After School Program Bus Option, FlexPass Option and the Capacity Report.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, had a couple of questions (i) there is \$22,000 uncollected funds, are they all for this school year or other school years and (ii) the Town does a good job anticipating out-of-district placements. Why doesn't the School Department set aside enough money for a worst case scenario, and (iii) if the School Department is anticipating a \$300,000 surplus, why is it asking the Town to provide \$285,000 transportation subsidiary. She also noted that she would like to see the bus fee eliminated altogether and also is not in favor subsidizing transportation to afterschool programs.

Ms. Dunn addressed Ms. McKenna's concerns replying that (i) the School Department has a policy for uncollected funds and letters are sent home to parents, principals are notified which students are not allowed to ride the bus to school and they also check for financial aid situations, (ii) with respect to out-of-district placements, at this point in the budget process it we have already paid on last June for out-of-district so we don't have the information, (iii) with respect to the surplus, this is a policy issue. The transportation budget will include these

amounts, but the afterschool transportation is a pilot program. Margaret Coppe also responded to Ms. McKenna stating that part of the transportation goal is to get vehicle traffic off of school grounds and this is not an expense being added.

Dr. Ash responded to Ms. McKenna's concerns regarding the surplus and stated Town Meeting took place after we passed the budget, and there was no way of knowing in March what the money would be in June.

5. Vote to Approve the Superintendent's Evaluation

Margaret Coppe explained how the School Committee arrived at Dr. Ash's Evaluation. It is supposed to be done in March. The Committee began the process in February by asking citizens to write comments, a survey was sent out to selected school and town personnel, boards and committees, site council members, principals and PTA Presidents. The survey did not go out to everyone. There is an evaluation document that is used by the Committee. Each School Committee members individually filled out the form and wrote a narrative. Then the Committee held public discussion where each member spoke publicly about their comments. The Chair then totaled and averaged the scores and wrote a composite narrative of all members' comments and this was put on as an agenda item. This fall has been very busy and we did not have any executive sessions on this matter and legal counsel advised members not to talk about individual evaluations.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, thanked the Committee and inquired if the individual evaluations made by members of the Committee will be made available for the public. She would also like to see who responded to the survey.

Margaret Coppe responded that Dr. Ash's evaluation is a composite of each individual Member's comments and that he has agreed to post it on the LPS website. No decision has been made about posting the individual evaluations.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street, stated that he is setting up a website called Lex-wicki.org and he will post both the composite and individual evaluations.

Dawn McKenna stated that if documents are to be posted, they should be made public.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower St., asked how SMART goals would be addressed.

At this point in time, the Chair announced that the Committee would have a discussion amongst themselves regarding Dr. Ash's evaluation narrative. There were questions and comments among the Committee.

Jessie Steigerwald responded to Ms. Biglow's concerns regarding the Chair creating SMART Goals for Dr. Ash and that any discussions for goals will have to be done by all members of the Committee. The Chair is not able to create the goals from each individual evaluation.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower Street questioned the Committee if those discussions would be held in public.

Margaret Coppe shared that there will be new DESE regulations coming out soon that will supersede current contracts and the Committee will learn what to do for future evaluations based on these new regulations. This will be the last time this current process will be followed.

Motion to Authorize the School Committee Chair to Sign the Amended Evaluation for the Superintendent and Place in His File (Stewart, Brodner). The Motion was Approved (5-0).

6. Review of School Committee Legal Counsel

Margaret Coppe shared that the Committee's review of the current counsel contract was five years ago. Ms. Coppe then invited member comments regarding whether to proceed with the current counsel and a second option would be to bring the current counsel either to open or Executive Session. The Committee had questions and concerns.

Jessie Steigerwald would like to have a review of the current counsel. Ms. Steigerwald moved to have a review of the current counsel.

Dr. Ash shared that the School Committee five years ago, decided to see if a change in counsel made sense. The Committee, working with Chair and Administration, identified three different law firms which were meritorious of interview. This was done by getting background references, and input from the public, there was a School Committee meeting held where each individual law firm was interviewed and voted counsel. We have law counsel for labor law, special education law and general administration law and we use two different law firms.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street shared her experience on the Board of Selectmen and how they invited people who were experts of various specialties of law and had a committee made up on them and they reviewed and had best practices and also looked at various financing models for billings. She found it informative. There are plenty of people that would be able to assist and gave them a broader view.

Motion to Review Of Legal Counsel (Steigerwald)

Jessie Steigerwald urged her members to second her motion. Ms. Steigerwald shared that she filed a formal complaint against this attorney for violating open meeting law. This is a constructive way to move forward. Wanted to know why no one would support her motion.

Dr. Ash shared that Stoneman, Chandler & Miller LLP (Stoneman) was the only law firm being used when he was hired. Today, Stoneman handles 100% of the Special Education law and some labor law issues and Morgan, Brown & Joy LLP, handle all collective bargaining for Unit A.

Bonnie Brodner shared her opinion for not seconding the motion due to the fact the Committee is currently involved in several major school projects such as two school building renovations, a new school building project, new DESE regulations and at this time does not feel a pressing need to move on this issue at this time.

Alessandro Alessandrini added to what Ms. Brodner shared that there are changes in special education laws, we are working on a foreign language implementation in the elementary school level and that is his focus right now. Yes, the Attorney General found that we violated open meeting law, but that does not negate all the other items we are currently working on.

Ms. Coppe responded that five years ago she was new to the Committee when the Legal Counsel voted in. She had just been elected to the School Committee.

Mary Ann Stewart spoke to the issue of legal counsel not being a priority issue for her and provided her thoughts on the Attorney General's Decision on the Open Meeting Complaint. She believes that the Committee has learned a lot from process.

Diane Bigelow, 15 Bellflower Street, shared her feelings regarding the Members statements that this was not a priority at this time and how the members were voted in to work for the school community and the community in general and she felt the member's actions tonight were inappropriate. At this point the Chair stated that Ms. Bigelow was out of order and then Ms. Bigelow began shouting over the Chair.

Alessandro Alessandrini stated when he was voted in and he has been pushing to have foreign language in elementary school reinstated, he has also advocated for special education and a safe environment so children and parents have good experiences. He has also experienced PCBs in schools and worked hard to have new a school built, made changes so that Bowman and Bridge would accept more children and he has worked on teacher morale. Finally stating that just because the Committee doesn't support one issue does not indicate they do not work hard for the school community. He found Ms. Bigelow's statements inappropriate.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower Street, was again upset that no member of the Committee would second Ms. Steigerwald's motion.

Margaret Coppe stated again that Ms. Bigelow was out of order.

Jessie Steigerwald continued to urge members to second her motion and explained her reasons behind the motion.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, shared as one of the people who filed the complaint, that she does not believe a review of an attorney should be done based on one opinion and that the Open Meeting Law is more about attitude and commended the Committee on how they handled things and it makes her feel her message was heard. Ms. McKenna also shared her concern about not reviewing the legal counsel. She also understands and hears the Committee

regarding the urgency and priority of this issue but urged them to make this part of a future discussion.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street, inquired how long this process would take.

Margaret Coppe announced the motion was not seconded and failed. She volunteered that she would obtain the documents from the Board of Selectmen and former members of the School Committee from six years ago and bring that information back to the Committee. This will not happen quickly. The Committee agreed that this will be a future agenda item.

7. Vote to Accept an Anonymous Donation of \$500 to the Lexington High School FIRST Robotics Team (2 minutes)

Motion to Accept an Anonymous Donation of \$500 to the Lexington High School FIRST Robotics Team (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

8. Vote to Accept a \$413.60 Donation from the “Box Tops for Education” Fundraiser to the Bridge School (2 minutes)

Motion to Accept a \$413.60 Donation from the “Box Tops for Education” Fundraiser to the Bridge School (Alessandrini, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

9. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of September 11, 2012 (2 minutes)

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of September 11, 2012, as amended (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

10. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of October 13, 2012 (2 minutes)

Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of October 13, 2012 (Steigerwald, Brodner) The Motion was Approved (5-0).

Motion to Adjourn (Steigerwald, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

Voted by the School Committee January 30, 2013