

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, January 30, 2013**  
**Harrington Elementary School, Cafeteria**  
**328 Lowell Street**

**Present: Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, Margaret Coppe, School Committee Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Vice Chair; Members Bonnie Brodner, Jessie Steigerwald, and Mary Ann Stewart; and**

**Absent: Dr. Paul Ash, Superintendent and Sam Alpert, Student Representative**

**The Meeting Minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary**

**The Meeting convened at 7:35 p.m.**

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

The Chair called the meeting to order and stated the reasons for tonight's two public hearings

**II. Public Hearing on The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Proposed Evaluation Standards and Indicators for Educators**

The Chair opened the public hearing and invited public comment.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street, requested background information on this agenda item before commenting.

Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Assessment provided an overview of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Evaluation Standards and Indicators for Educators on which the Superintendent, teachers and staff will be evaluated. Mrs. Pilarski explained the reason behind these new evaluation standards, the indicators, the rubrics, the four standards which are the same for all who are evaluated. Ms. Pilarski then explained the self-assessment that will be completed by everyone.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street shared her thoughts on the new evaluation standards and wondered what could be done to minimize stress this may be causing. Ms. McKenna also shared her own experience and felt that the assessment should also include input from parents as well as the ability to see what the Committee sees.

Carol Pilarski responded to Ms. McKenna's comments and stated that the four indicators at top of the page must stay the same and then the Committee will decide which ones the Superintendent will focus on and will then be agreed upon by the Superintendent and the

Committee. This will be the same process for teachers to decide which indicators to focus on.

Dawn McKenna questioned if the Leadership Standards were same.

Carol Pilarski reviewed the Rubrics and provided an example.

Dawn McKenna shared her concern over the past two years regarding the Superintendent's interaction with the community, teachers and staff. Ms. McKenna urged the Committee to share this concern and feels it is important for Dr. Ash to work on these issues. Ms. McKenna then shared that Dr. Ash and the Committee should work on building relationships with Town Meeting and Town Administration and the need for some sort of rubric talking about those relationships and to think how we interact with those parts of the community in order for funding to be successful.

**The Chair closed the public hearing at 7:47 p.m. and announced that this will be second on the Agenda at Saturday's public hearing.**

**III. Revised Transportation Proposal**

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance presented the Revised Transportation Proposal Fee. The fee proposed is reflective of a recommendation from the School Transportation and Safety Committee that included a discount for the fee based upon using the actual costs. Ms. Dunn shared that \$722 is the actual cost per student per seat and an effort has been made of reducing the bus fee from \$550 to \$300 this year but have had a few operational challenges. In October her office handled over 200 students who registered late and some of those students are perpetually late. Her office tries to accommodate new families before those that register late. The proposal reflects her office's recommendation, as well as the School Transportation and Safety Committee's recommendation and is looking for feedback on presenting this fee structure. Ms. Dunn shared that the fee structure is as follows: \$300 for families paid by May 11<sup>th</sup>, \$500 for families paid between May 12<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup> and no discount for families after the July 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Ms. Dunn shared the reasoning behind the fee structure. She then spoke about the increase in bus ridership due to the lower fee, the pilot afterschool program, and the flexpass. There were questions and comments from the Committee regarding the bus fee for new families, out-of-district placement transportation costs and bus wait listing.

**IV. Public Hearing on the Superintendent's Recommended FY14 Budget**

The Chair opened the public hearing on the Superintendent's Recommended FY14 Budget at 8:05 p.m. The total Recommended Budget is \$81,924,343 and has been posted online which is a 6.91% increase. The Chair invited public comment:

Ilene Benghiat, 5 Sunny Knoll Avenue, the President of the Backers of Lexington Debate (BOLD), thanked Laura Lasa, Principal, Lexington High School and Dr. Ash for putting the \$65,000 for the Debate Program into the recommended budget for the Debate

Program. She then thanked the Committee for returning it to the Lexington School Budget.

Janet Lane, 21 Hayward Avenue, shared that her son is a senior on the Debate Team and shared her personal story of financial sacrifice in order for her son to be in the Debate Program. Ms. Lane then shared her son's story and how, through the program, has grown in confidence, improved his research, organizational ability and patience in learning. She stated her son spends hours reading for the team and performing research for other team members in preparation for tournaments. Now, because of the funding for this program, students will have more time for learning.

Janet McMahan, 36 Muzzey Street shared that she relocated from Florida and chose Lexington because of the Debate Program. Ms. McMahan then shared her child's experience in the program but said that it is very expensive and also shared how the kids and parents spend hours volunteering and fundraising. It is a wonderful program and known throughout the country. She urged the Committee to support this program.

Susan Foster, 8 Longfellow Road shared that her son is a junior in the Debate Program. She shared her son's experience and how it has been an opportunity to challenge his competitive and intellectual ability. Bringing funding back into the community will place this program on equal level with the athletic departments.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street shared (i) she was very pleased to see this program placed back into the budget because for some students this is their athletics, (ii) the school bus fee and how she feels it is unrealistic for parents have to have a guaranteed seat paid by May 11<sup>th</sup> because that time of the year many parents are asked to fund other activities and urged the Committee to extend the date out to June 15<sup>th</sup> for a guaranteed seat and pay the fee by July 15<sup>th</sup>; and (iii) a public plea for the elementary foreign language program. Ms. McKenna has had discussions with Dr. Ash about a joint elementary school program with Lexington's sister city Antony, France. She suggested a single position that would work internally on a French language curriculum in the elementary school in order to strengthen this relationship. Ms. McKenna then shared that the Lexington Tourism Committee is holding "*A French A Faire*" on Sunday, February 10, 2013 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at The Depot, Lexington Center and invited anyone interested to attend.

William Moore, 83 Bertwell Road, shared that his family came from out of state. Lexington's Debate Program drew them to the town and then shared his son's experience as a freshman new to the community and thanked the Committee for putting the money back into the budget.

Ralph Clifford, 216 Lowell Street, Treasurer of BOLD, shared what an extraordinary financial hardship it is for students and parents. The cost is approximately \$800 per student and if families have more than one child in the program it doubles. Mr. Clifford then stated that on top of the \$800 there is Debate Camp, computer equipment and other requisites that make it cost prohibitive for a lot of families. He then went on to share how

these students grow to be leaders in society and how it has a positive impact on higher education success.

Monisha Reginald, 25 Blossom Street and Fundraising Captain of the LHS Debate Team, shared that other students around the country must pay their own fees at each tournament, but at Lexington High School, travel decisions are based on merit and work and once you sign up for a tournament, all expenses are paid because of donations and fundraising. Ms. Reginald also shared that some students have to drop out because of the time commitment and financial constraints. She shared that she loves debate but fundraising is a struggle and time consuming which takes away from preparation for debate and believes that these additional funds will allow everyone to focus on debating.

Ryan Zhang, 204 Woburn Street, member of the High School Debate Team for four years, shared his experience being in the Debate Program over the past four years. Mr. Zhang also shared he has seen kids drop out of the program due to financial hardship and is pleased that Dr. Ash and the Committee are funding a portion of this program and that it will ease the stress of students.

Giddeon Moore, 83 Bertwell Road shared that he is a second year policy debater. He moved here two years ago and he did not know anyone in school and now the majority of his friends are from the Policy Debate Program, debate camp and other debaters from around the country. He shared that the program has shaped his high school career and through the program, he and his classmates are able to speak articulately and strongly the way you are seeing here this evening

Louis Lee, 339 Massachusetts Avenue shared that his son is on the Debate Team and their family moved from Andover to Lexington because of the Debate Program. His son now wants to study philosophy because of debate.

Zach Schnall, 143 Cedar Street, shared that Debate is his sport and even though he is just a freshman, he feels part of the debate community and they have become his family. He shared how much work everyone puts into it and they learn a lot and he is very proud to be a debater.

Andrei Radulescu-Banu, 86 Cedar Street shared that he is impressed by the kids speaking up tonight and feels debate is a great program, and because there is a set number of seats inquired if it is possible to expand the number of seats. Mr. Radulescu-Banu also spoke to the 6.9% increase in the budget, the increase in special education budget, enrollment increases and Lexington Patch's article which stated that Lexington spends most per capita of all schools in the surrounding area. He also wanted to know if this increase is sustainable. Mr. Radulescu-Banu also suggested longer school days and/or add more school days, add mega math after school program and foreign language in the elementary schools. Mr. Radulescu-Banu handed the Chair a copy of the Lexington Patch Article.

Sara Sanchez, Director of Debate at Lexington High School, shared how she moved from Utah for this program and thanked Dr. Ash and Committee for funding this program

which has had a huge impact on students and parents. She publically thanked Robert Collins, Social Studies Coordinator, Lexington High School and Laura Laso, LHS Principal and Dr. Ash and the BOLD members.

Risa Lavelle, 194 Waltham Street, parent of Debate Team member. She read her daughter Brianna's experiences on being part of the Debate Program.

Margaret Coppe thanked everyone for coming out tonight to share their thoughts on the public school budget. Ms. Coppe closed the public hearing at 8:45 p.m., announced that the next public hearing on this issue will take place this Saturday, February 2 at 10:00 a.m. at Battin Hall at Cary Hall.

#### **V. Public Comment**

Elizabeth O'Neil, 370 Lincoln Street shared her outrage and disappointment in the actions of Naomi Martin, Athletic Director, Lexington High School and shared that because of Ms. Martin's misuse of her leadership at the high school, she has lost confidence in her leadership position and is not comfortable going to Ms. Martin with a concern in the future and believes that the consequences to her actions have been inadequate. She stated that the children are paying attention to this issue. Ms. O'Neil would like to see Lexington take a leadership role in how this is being handled for all people paying attention to this issue. Ms. O'Neil shared her feelings that the consequences to Katherine Robb personally have been extremely unfortunate. Ms. O'Neil then read from the LHS Student/Parent Handbook regarding when a parent brings attention to the director or official. Ms. O'Neil felt that the parent used the appropriate form and method and was mishandled and had serious consequences to that parent.

John Igoe, 20 Parker Street, stated that he sent a letter to the School Committee and Dr. Ash regarding his concerns about how the Athletic Director, Naomi Martin has damaged the Lexington public schools and more parents are not here tonight because they fear retribution. He wants the Committee follow the code of conduct. He has been a resident for 30 years and his daughter played four years on the basketball team and was captain of the team; we should not use retribution, lies, falsification of records and the use of deceit to meet goals. He looks forward to future discussions with the Committee on this matter.

**The Chair ended Public Comment at 9:00 pm**

#### **IV. Superintendent's Announcements**

Carol Pilarski spoke about visiting second and third year teachers and has seen some amazing teaching. Ms. Pilarski shared she was able to view a mock town meeting in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. She shared that we are working closely with Matthew Mehler, Social Studies Department Head, Jonas Clarke Middle School, David Horton, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 8, Nancy Adler, and Town Meeting Member, Precinct 1, Jessie Steigerwald, School Committee and other town meeting members on the Mock Town Meeting program.

Ms. Pilarski then shared that the Boston Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards were announced and out of the 60 Lexington students entered, 35 students were awarded Gold Key Awards and Silver Key Awards and honorable mention. She also attended a debate class and they were absolutely passionate and schooled in what they were doing and well prepared for the Emory College and Columbia University debate this weekend.

#### **VI. Members' Reports/Members' Concerns**

Jessie Steigerwald announced that this Saturday there will be public hearing at 9:00 a.m. at Cary Hall with the Facilities Master Planning Committee, a committee created by the Board of Selectmen of which she is a member representing the interests of the schools. In preparation for Saturday's meeting, the consultants made a list of all facility projects on the horizon and asked individuals to complete a survey on the individual projects. Louise Lipsitz, Principal, Hastings Elementary School completed the survey on the Hastings. Ms. Steigerwald worked with Laura Lasa, Principal, Lexington High School and Patrick Goddard, Director of Public Facilities to complete the survey on the high school. She wanted her fellow Committee members to have a copy to review and provide comment on before Saturday's hearing. Ms. Steigerwald also wanted to bring up some comments and questions from the last meeting about how the School Committee establishes its 10 year plan for the schools, why the high school was on that list, and the urgency of plans for the projects. Peter Kelly, member of BOS had a number of comments and questions about enrollment projections. She has forwarded to Mr. Kelley and the entire committee all the enrollment figures. Ms. Lipsitz invited her to tour the facility, which she did. Ms. Lipsitz asked Ms. Steigerwald to extend the invitation to other Committee member or any member on the long range planning.

Margaret Coppe asked Ms. Steigerwald if she sent the Enrollment Report to those that wanted a copy.

Jessie Steigerwald stated that with the help of Miriam Sousa, Executive Assistant to Dr. Ash and Pat Goddard, the Enrollment Report as well as the Superintendent's PowerPoint Presentation was sent to all members of the committee and to all liaisons. There are about 12-15 liaisons and they each represent one particular project so they are thinking about their own facilities.

Alessandro Alessandrini announced that yesterday he attended the community wide discussion entitled "AP Courses and What Colleges Really Want" which was held at Cary Hall. One of the reasons we are having the meeting in this space tonight is because the Chair gave our space at Battin Hall away for this event and it was a good thing because every seat was filled. There were five Deans of Admission from UMass Amherst, Boston University, MIT, Harvard and Tufts. It was wonderful discussion and it was sponsored by many groups including the LHS PTSA, Collaborative to Reduce Student Stress, and the Lexington School Health Advisory Council. It was taped and will be on LexMedia on demand.

Mary Ann Stewart updated the Committee on the legislative activity happening at the state house. January 18<sup>th</sup> was the last day to file bills to be brought in by legislatures and this Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup> is the day for legislatures to co-sponsors bills and then the next step is to assign bill numbers to them. She wanted to reiterate the eight priorities of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and mentioned five of them (i) a regulatory and compliance reduction bill; (ii) fully funding the circuit breaker; (iii) health insurance coverage for medically necessary school supply services; (iv) a request for approvals of school improvement plans by school committees; and (v) identification of the Educator Evaluation System as an unfunded mandate subject to additional appropriations . Two other bills of interest are a media literacy bill filed by State Senator Katherine Clark and an Act to Invest in our Communities, a revenue reform bill.

Margaret Coppe had four items she wanted to bring forward (i) MASC has developed a position paper on school safety following the Newtown shootings and has sent us a model resolution that we might want to consider signing and passing along to our Congressman. She would like the Committee to consider discussing this at the February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting; (ii) Ms. Coppe spoke with Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of MASC who offered to come to Lexington to hold a workshop with the School Committee on the new Superintendent Evaluation and inquired if members were interested in this workshop, if so, she would contact him to set up a date; (iii) Ms. Coppe has been doing some preliminary work on how to go about hiring legal representation since our long time counsel Bob Fraser has retired and she has taken the liberty of talking to Glenn Koocher and Carl Valente, Town Manager regarding the same and she proposes that she and Alessandro Alessandrini as vice chair draw up a plan on pursuing this; and (iv) there will be a School Committee meeting on Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, unfortunately, the League of Woman Voters will be doing their presentation on climate change the same evening. There were questions and comments from the Committee.

## **VI. Agenda**

### **1. School Committee Discussion of FY14 Budget**

Margaret Coppe stated she was glad to see Ilene Benghiat and Sara Sanchez here this evening and asked them if it would be possible for them to provide a summary of the budget item for debate and the impact on individual parent fundraising as well as individual student fundraising. Ms. Benghiat stated that she would provide that information.

The Committee discussed the budget which included (i) Mr. Radulescu-Banu's suggestion of possibly expanding the debate program; (ii) Ms. McKenna's suggestion of adding a facilitator for a joint foreign language program with Antony, France; (iii) the number of teacher aids and large class sizes; (iv) the Technical Director at the high school; (v) concerns and sustainability of keeping the bus fee at \$300; (vi) bus sign up dates and fees and what happens to new families that move into the community; (vii) after-school bus program and how it worked out and any long range plans; (viii) working collaboratively with the town on school fees; (ix) bringing back science laboratories and funding foreign language at the elementary school level; and (x) teacher workload.

Mary Ellen Dunn answered questions about bus sign up dates and fees and the impact these dates have on scheduling and planning routes. She then spoke to how her office handles new families and how much and when to sign up for the bus. Ms. Dunn stated that she would check with her staff on allowing multiple payments.

2. **Vote to Accept a \$795 Donation to the Bridge School Gift Account from the Intel Volunteer Grant Program**

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$795 Donation to the Bridge School Gift Account from the Intel Volunteer Grant Program (Alessandrini, Stewart) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

3. **Vote to Accept a \$1,500 Donation from Cubist Pharmaceuticals in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair**

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$1,500 Donation from Cubist Pharmaceuticals in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair, (Brodner, Alessandrini)**

Bonnie Brodner inquired if some sort of fundraising was going on the with respect to the 2013 LHS Science Fair because of the number of donations.

Margaret Coppe responded that fundraising letters had gone out from the Chairman of the Science Department

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$1,500 Donation from Cubist Pharmaceuticals in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair (Brodner, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

4. **Vote to Accept A \$300 Donation from the Lexington Lions Club in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair**

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$300 Donation from the Lexington Lions Club in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair (Alessandrini, Brodner) Motion approved (5-0)**

5. **Vote to Accept a \$300 Donation from June Hsiao and Kevin Oye in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair**

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$300 Donation from June Hsiao and Kevin Oye in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair (Steigerwald, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

6. **Vote to Accept a \$250 Donation from Hongbin Luo and Wenjie Cheng in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair**

**Motion to Accept with Gratitude a \$250 Donation from Hongbin Luo and Wenjie Cheng in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair (Stewart, Steigerwald) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

7. **Vote School Committee Minutes of October 11, 2012**

**Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of October 11, 2012, (Brodner, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

8. **Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of November 27, 2012**

**Motion to Approve School Committee Minutes of November 27, 2012, as amended (Alessandrini, Brodner) The Motion was Approved (5-0)**

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

**The Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 p.m.**

*Documents: Meeting Agenda; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Rubrics At-A-Glance; Letter dated January 4, 2013 from Whitney Hagins, LHS Science Dept. Head from Amy Reilly, Director, Employees Communications & Philanthropy regarding a \$1,500 Donation in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair; Letter dated January 22, 2013 from The Lions Club of Lexington, Inc. to Lexington School Committee regarding a \$300 Donation in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair; Letter dated January 14, 2013 from Kevin Oye and June Hsiao to the Lexington School Committee regarding a \$300 Donation in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair; Letter dated January 14, 2013 from Hongbin Luo and Wenjie Cheng to the Lexington School Committee regarding a \$250 Donation in Support of the 2013 LHS Science and Engineering Fair; Lexington School Committee Meeting Minutes dated October 11, 2012; Lexington School Committee Meeting Minutes dated November 27, 2012; School District Administration FY 14 Transportation Fee Proposal; Lexington Patch Article entitled "Per Capita Education Spending: How Does Lexington Compare" dated August 27, 2012*

Voted by the School Committee March 12, 2013