

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Saturday, January 31, 2015**  
**Diamond Middle School Auditorium**  
**99 Hancock Street**

**PRESENT: Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash, Chair Margaret Coppe, School Committee  
Members Jessie Steigerwald, Judith Crocker**

**Members absent: Alessandro Alessandrini**

**The minutes were taken by Christine Ashness, Recording Secretary**

**The meeting convened at 9:07am**

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

**Public Comments:**

None

**Superintendent's Announcements:**

The School Committee meeting for February 10 is the night a vote on the budget is scheduled. A second public hearing will be scheduled as an agenda item that night. Members agreed and it will be at the beginning of that meeting.

**School Committee Member Announcements:**

Margaret Coppe: There are 2 Action Items. One is the transition for the new Superintendent. The other is Special Town Meeting (STM) with the School Committee item. STM will be on March 23. Until Town Meeting is totally adjourned there is no mechanism for contracts or RFPs to go forward. If approved, the Fiske modulars contract cannot go out until Town Meeting is adjourned. Most members have been in contact with Dr. Czajkowski. It has been decided that a couple of members will be working with her. Members will discuss later in today's meeting.

William Hurley arrived at 9:12am

Jessie Steigerwald: There was a retirement celebration for Captain Joe O'Leary. She wanted to say a special thank you because he has been a great role model for the town. He showed a remarkable level of professionalism when the Westboro Baptist church demonstrated at LHS. The Site Based Council roundtable on assessment was great. The next one will be February 25 from 7:00-8:30 PM at Central Office.

Judith Crocker: Last Thursday was the last Ad hoc School Master Plan Committee meeting. The group will present its report on February 10 to the School Committee. Thanks to members John Himmel, Carl Oldenberg, Pat Goddard, Peter Kelley, and Dr. Ash, and liaisons Rod Cole, Alan Levine, Mollie Goldberg, and David Kanter.

William Hurley: He and Judy made a presentation to the Town Meeting Members Association Executive Board. They had a good dialogue. It was very helpful to hear their questions to help the School Committee be successful as we move forward. He also echoed Joe O'Leary being very helpful. He has been terrific.

Judith Crocker: She attended the Capital Expenditures Committee meeting. They are coming to grips with the presentations and what the wording will be for Town Meeting. They are looking to the School Committee to take this complex problem and explain the difference and urgency between capacity and needs, and how it will work into the master plan.

Margaret Coppe: She reminded members that 12 sets of minutes were sent out to them. Please look through them, correct/make edits and get them back to her by the February 4. There will be an Executive Session on Tuesday February 3 at 6:30pm, at Central Office. Corrections on Executive minutes will also be done that night.

### **Agenda:**

#### **School Committee Policies**

##### **Review and Approve in Form Section G of Policy Manual: Personnel**

##### **Review and Approve in Form Section H of Policy Manual: Negotiations**

Jessie Steigerwald explained that there has been input from Dr. Ash and Bob Harris, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. One policy, GBGB is missing some of Mr. Harris' edits. We will be going through each policy so the public can hear the changes. They will be approved in form and we will finish the edits. In June we will approve the final versions.

Dr. Ash has had a practice to not hire immediate family members in the same building. Members discussed the family members working together and would like to look into it more and get more clarifications. That item will be pulled.

Regarding gifts: There is a question on what the calendar year is. It will be looked into. Question on receipts. Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Operations, responded that it is in conflict to a statute. Teachers should not be keeping them and managing them personally. It puts them in a position where the perception can be it is personal rather than school related. Work with the principal and school system. Teachers should disclose if they receive a gift card or supplies for the classroom. Regarding checks/cash: It is best for the employee to turn it over to the school principal. It will eventually land in the business office.

Regarding tobacco use: Policy includes everyone.

GBGB staff personal security and safety: Judith Crocker read what was omitted. Dr. Ash agreed, but not with having the ALICE program listed in there. Committing to a specific approach is a problem in the long term. Mary Ellen Dunn added that REMS is listed and used in two different ways. Need to be extremely careful with this acronym and should take that out. The district is required to have emergency planning, response and training.

GBI: Employees should not use school facilities, equipment, technology or supplies.

GCA: Dr. Ash questioned if the last sentence of the first paragraph is correct. Item was pulled for more clarification from counsel.

GCBA: Administrator's salary – if collective bargaining is in place, he pays attention to what salaries are in neighboring communities. Sometimes the employee brings salary information to the Superintendent. It could be annually or on a periodic basis. In general it is increased parallel to union employees. Once salary is set fairly, it is increased like others in the district unless there is a gap with other communities. K-8 principals have a salary range with steps. There is not a step schedule for the high school principal. This policy will be pulled.

GCQF: Dr. Ash recommends we do not get into a case where we have to state reasons for dismissal for a teacher within the first 3 years. The employee is not entitled to a reason for dismissal for the first 3 years as their job is on an annual basis.

GCRD: Tutoring. Phyllis Neufeld asked that the committee hold this section until the LEA can review it.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower Street: She asked if the school will pay for tutoring for a child and if a teacher can recommend tutoring for a child.

The meeting was paused for the public hearing.

### **Public Hearing on the Superintendent's FY16 Recommended Budget**

Phyllis Neufeld: president of LEA: All educators need a reduction of their teaching load to better serve children and reduce stress. She came here to focus on the high school. In 2009 the recommendations from the Teaching Load Committee was presented to the School Committee. The goal was and is to improve the educational experience for students and teachers. The towns we compare ourselves to only teach 4 classes. This reduction will give special education teachers more availability to meet with teachers and guidance counselors. The budget in 2009 could not serve that reduction in caseload. The quality of education, a reduced load phased in over a period of years, would improve the academic and social needs of our students. Thank you for hearing our voices.

Andrew Baker, LHS English Teacher: In the English Department we are teaching 4 classes, and have approximately 100 students. It allows us to meet more readily with students and plan curriculum. He wants to speak directly about his History colleagues. They are constantly on the move going from class to class. Some days they teach straight through until 2:25pm. It is tough to find time for one on one student interaction. There should be no workload inequity between departments. It makes sense to equalize the workload by reducing the load to 4 classes, which is good for educators and students. Support us to be aware of stress in the students. It was his understanding the budget would allow it, and isn't now the time?

Maureen Haviland, LHS Latin teacher: She has been teaching Latin for 12 years. She loves her job, students and colleagues. While teaching 5 classes she is constantly overwhelmed. What slips through the cracks for her students, is that it is hard to innovate and differentiate for her learners. She does not have time to implement the new ideas that she has. This year she started creating online homework, which allows for spot checks before class meets. It took her a year and a half to implement it because she does not have the time. There are always going to be superstar students, but the students in the middle are falling through the cracks. When on hiring committees, it is hard to attract top tier candidates because of the 5 class workload. She saw first hand the outstanding colleagues who left because of teaching 5 classes. They went to districts where 4 classes are full time. Their quality of life and bettering their teaching is better. Help us teach as well as possible, not as much as possible.

Rina Farber-Mazor, LHS French Teacher: This is her eighth year teaching French at LHS. She was completely overwhelmed when she first started teaching. 3 months into working, she saw a doctor and was prescribed anti-anxiety meds, which she is still on today. She vowed she would not be a teacher who got burned out. She says no to chaperoning, advising clubs, attending games, etc. She has focused on working smarter, not harder. She stopped offering individual help and instead had group sessions. The pressure started mounting, PLCs took up free blocks, technology learning takes up time, the 3-year curriculum review required her serving, new supervision system, recommendations, she had twins, etc. Upping her meds has not helped. She does not start her schoolwork until her kids go to bed. She only gets a few hours of sleep. We are making strides in helping the kids with their stress; shouldn't we do the same for teachers? A year ago her husband asked her to find another job to save her life and family.

Erin Barrett, LHS History Teacher: She lives and teaches in Lexington, has a son in grade 5 and a daughter in grade 9. She teaches World History and Media Studies. Her nephew at LHS has 29 students in a classroom. After last year's School Committee meeting a concerned parent started emailing with Dr. Ash about class loads. On 2/2/14 Dr. Ash agreed, but does not agree that high school teachers have more demand on their time. Dr. Ash's statement does not reflect our reality. Teaching a different level of a course is not the same. We have moved away from pullout sections and moved into the inclusion model. Their needs - ADD, ADHD, etc. are needs that regular classroom teachers are addressing. Emotional/social needs are now the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Students come to us with a variety of strengths/concerns. There is no such thing as a homogenous class.

Walter Richardson, LHS Math Teacher: He has been at LHS since 2001. He's not here today because he wants to do less, but because he wants to do more. He knows he can do more because in 2002 they went to the same load that the English Teachers currently have. They formed PLCs 6 years before they were asked to. They did some amazing lessons, tiered interventions, and evidenced-based self-evaluation, all before being asked to. They developed academic and intellectual momentum. That momentum has turned into some amazing things, and they have closed the achievement gap. Last year 92 percent tested advanced on the math MCAS. None failed. We are good, even under the load. Imagine what we can do for you tomorrow. We at LHS, at Lexington Public Schools, are the brightest star in the sky. Let us shine.

Dawn McKenna, 9 Hancock Street: She wants to put on record that you should put an elementary Foreign Language coordinator in so someone is really advocating for the program. This is her 30<sup>th</sup> year watching School Committee meetings. She remembers the years we held the line, made do with less. We are in a different boat now after a few years of great success. The new town manager has put us in good financial shape. Why are we struggling? She was shocked at the amount of money they're looking to put into the capital fund. She agrees with building reserves, but we have so much that we aren't doing, or the balancing we used to do. She understands the School Committee is in a difficult position now and she supports a Hastings rebuild. Putting money aside that voters voted to pay isn't a good balance. She urges the committee to talk about advocating more on the operating line. She came to talk specifically on Elementary Foreign Language, but also the budget in general. It's been a disturbing trend the last few years. You have a public hearing, listen, but then put forward the budget that was presented. Do not accept it as it is written. She knows you struggle, but it is all right to make some meaningful changes in this budget that will help all of our kids all of the time. A lot of

capital has been put in the last few years. Please take this seriously and make some changes before it goes to town meeting.

Jessica Goodstone, LHS History Teacher: She read a letter from Heidi Floerke, LHS teacher. She finds it imperative to hear all of our voices on teaching 4 rather than 5 classes. We need more time to do a job we are still proud of at the end of day. She could use Smart board and iPad technology more regularly. She would have more time to attend classes to learn it. That time is borrowed from somewhere else. She could present herself as a lifelong learner and less stressed educator. Students often feel sorry when they have a special request. It shouldn't be that way. We should be a resource to them, not a burden.

Diane Bigelow, 15 Bellflower Street, Precinct 8: We have to do something for these teachers. We do not want them on meds to teach because they're doing so much. These teachers work harder than 99.9 percent of most of us.

Wendy Cordero, LHS Math Teacher: She read a letter from Beckie Bray, LHS French Teacher. She would have more time for students, collaborating with other teachers. Principal Laura Lasa has done a great job modeling what we can actually get done. Teachers have found their groove but the hours are unhealthy. Our work gets pushed to our home to do list. We are working 9-12 hours at school and then go home to do more. She got married in October and after the wedding her husband said it was the most stressful time in his life. Do we have a great teacher with no life or an OK teacher with a life? Time is needed for many things. The current 5-block workload doesn't allow for everything. There is less time to be innovative and creative. She needs to choose between efficient and effective feedback. LHS teachers are engaged in the school and put in vast amount of effort. Please consider reducing our course load.

Wendy Cordero: She wanted to add that she teaches math and has 3 completely differently preps for each of the classes.

Margaret Coppe read a letter from Sue Offner, LHS teacher, in favor of lighter teaching loads.

Margaret Coppe read a letter from Erin Patterson, LHS teacher, in favor of reducing the teaching load from 5 to 4 from a visual arts perspective.

11:00am the Public Hearing is closed.

## **Agenda continued**

### **FY16 Budget Discussion**

Judy Crocker asked Dr. Ash about an email regarding the bid for the second phase of modulars at the high school. Dr. Ash responded that it is significantly higher than the first phase. They had anticipated it to be under budget, and the low bid is now \$500,000 higher than the first phase. They could go back out to bid but it would add time and Pat Goddard is evaluating if that makes sense. The second option is to engage with the architect and low bidder to maybe reduce the scope of the project. The third option would be to seek an additional appropriation. We need to get information on all of this as soon as possible. It is possible we could need a supplemental appropriation. We need information quickly so at the February 10 meeting we have the whole picture.

Jessie Steigerwald: Everything the teachers at LHS have explained today has been heard. Stress levels are too high and there is a price people are paying. You spoke to finding ways of finding

creativity. One of our district goals was to address social issues. You have done a fantastic job explaining it. She would like the budget to reflect more to address it. Need to find a way to find funds to reduce course loads. Parents are saying their kids do not get homework/feedback back. Teachers say they do not have time to do it. These are all specific things that need to be addressed. She fully hears what the teachers are saying. In the fall she did say she wanted to look forward about reducing the course loads. She would like to look into phasing it in, looking into strategies possibly expanding the school day, etc. She had asked Dr. Ash on the cost of implementing it at one time (1.2 million he said). If we could change the policy on homework, you could follow it. You have her support and we need to find a way to meet in the middle.

William Hurley: He certainly feels your pain and everything said is right on target. Clearly if we do move to make some adjustments, some things in the budget would have to go. He asked Dr. Ash on the input people had in putting together the budget.

Dr. Ash: Thanked the teachers who came out, they are extraordinary. Thanked them for their stories. He has no doubt that that with more time all teachers K-12 would be able to do more great things. We need a comprehensive approach for all teachers. There needs to be a process for this going forward. We are ready to have that conversation and there are important issues to be addressed. The increase in staff for next year is all necessary, some legally for IEPs, etc. He met with teachers department by department to see what the needs were with increased enrollment.

William Hurley asked if we are on track now, 7 months into the budget year in terms of the operating side. Dr. Ash explained there is a deficit but he did not have information today. The reason we had a deficit in the first quarter was due to Special Education costs. The second quarter fiscal report will be ready on February 10 or 24.

Judy Crocker explained that the committee has also learned about the potential over enrollment for some special education and ELL programs, and also aware of Pre-K over enrollment. She appreciates the LHS staff coming here today. Going toward 21<sup>st</sup> Century education she would really hope moving forward that we would have a different form of dialogue. We have talked about the teacher load, science labs, when we touched on our guidelines in the fall. The standard way of approaching things may not be the best fit. Maybe form a task force to try to make this a more proactive group rather than just raising it as a red flag.

Jessie Steigerwald wants to put some money in FY16 if possible to alleviate some of the 5 sections and moving to 4 and also asked about adding another guidance counselor. William Hurley agreed and stated that if we were to do that, some things on budget would have to go.

Dr. Ash explained that he cannot recreate a budget by next Tuesday. There isn't enough time to do this. He is concerned that we need \$980,000 for the Fiske modulars, and a \$500,000 overage for modulars at LHS. It's likely there will not be enough money. This topic (teaching load) is a complicated issue. He does think there are many demands.

William Hurley asked to do a department at a time, and eventually do the others and asked him to please do a "what if" scenario for the budget. Dr. Ash stated that we have to vote on the budget by February 10th at the latest.

Phyllis Neufeld: Asked to look at the money going into the stabilization fund. Dr. Ash and Margaret Coppe explained that the Board of Selectmen put money into the stabilization fund. The 1.3 million is available for the town to use for capital. There are very serious financial

issues coming up in the next 4-5 years. To fully implement across the district, up to 7 million in costs. Jessie Steigerwald requested we not schedule hearings when we have to vote so soon. The purpose of the hearing does not work. Members agreed that moving forward we need to change our operating norms as a committee. In May/June we need to set up a calendar for this and have a conversation.

Dawn McKenna: She feels it is important that the people need to know that the only people that can vote a budget is town meeting. Over the years we have developed a process that has worked very well when people get together in a summit. You are the policy makers and can make changes to the budget. If the School Committee has issues, they can do things to change. Any budgeting that has been done up until the summit, the School Committee can then come back with changes. She wants people to know what the school committee can do. She is increasingly frustrated when hearings are held, and she's extremely concerned that the Superintendent will not find the information. You owe it to the citizens who are interested in these programs. Do not ignore it because you think you do not have enough time. If people are interested enough, sometimes a town meeting member can advocate change.

Diane Bigelow: What more do you have to hear about what these teachers are going through? We've heard it for years. Act now.

Members want the following: look into \$300,000 per department; have Val Viscosi speak to the counselor load; identify some things that could be cut to make the \$300,000.

Margaret Coppe exited the meeting at 11:52am

The committee finished the policy work:

GBD: pulled

GDD: remove vacation schedule info. Pulled

***MOTION to approve Policy Sections GBEA, GBEEC, EEC, GCA, GCBA, GCRD, GDB, GDD pulled out, GDO deleted. (Hurley, Crocker)***

***The Motion on the Section being voted on was approved 3-0.***

***MOTION to approve Policy Section G as amended. (Crocker, Hurley)***

***The Motion was approved 3-0.***

### **First reading of the mission/vision statement**

Jessie Steigerwald suggested we add this item to the February 10th agenda so that Alessandro Alessandrini can make his comments. William Hurley read the statement. Judith Crocker read the Guiding Principals of the statement.

Dr. Ash endorses the document that was read. He asked that the following be added to the guiding principals: providing all students with necessary and timely instructional interventions and extensions to enhance their learning.

A second reading will be February 10th.

Judy Crocker volunteered to begin for special town meeting preparation and be the point person. Jessie Steigerwald will help. This work cannot wait and philosophies on how to address this going forward.

Regarding getting all the paperwork together for the next summit: The document Margaret Coppe had can be further shared. There is an additional document Mr. Himmel and Mr. Goddard have which lays things out more clearly. Dr. Ash will ask Mr. Goddard and Mr. Valente. They have 3 documents for the summit. Dr. Ash thought if possible to get the documents to the people by mid-week and they can see if they need more.

***MOTION to adjourn (Steigerwald, Crocker)***

***The Motion was approved 3-0.***

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda; letter from Sue Offner; Letter from Erin Patterson: Policy Section G; Policy Section H; Mission/Vision Statement

Voted Approved by the School Committee 1.19.16