

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, September 24, 2013
Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room
1625 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Dr. Paul Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, Chair; Bonnie Brodner, Vice-Chair; Members Alessandro Alessandrini, Jessie Steigerwald, Mary Ann Stewart and Sam A. Lehn, Student Representative

The Minutes were taken by Jean Curran, Recording Secretary

The meeting convened at 7:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome:

The Chair called the meeting to order and held a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the Navy Yard shootings.

The Chair invited public comment. There were no public comments.

II. Superintendent's Announcements:

Dr. Ash announced Dr. Michael Fiveash passed away. Dr. Fiveash was a teacher at Lexington High School (LHS) for 37 years and will be deeply missed by students and community members. Dr. Ash publically thanked Dr. Fiveash for his years of service and all he had contributed to Lexington Public Schools (LPS).

Dr. Ash announced the work of 24 LHS fall team captains representing football, soccer, field hockey, girls' swimming, cross country, golf, volleyball, hockey, and cheerleading who provided a significant service to Cradles to Crayons, an organization that provides basics including clothing, school supplies, and toys. Over a three week period in August, their collection filled up more than a half of a school bus filled with supplies, toys and gently used items.

Anna Monaco, Principal, Jonas Clarke Middle School, announced that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan this week recognized Jonas Clarke Middle School as one of 286 schools in the 2013 cohort of National Blue Ribbon Schools, based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in improving student academic achievement. Ms. Monaco recognized all of the staff members, students, parents and administrators both past and present that have worked to make Clarke an exceptional school and learning community.

Ms. Monaco shared Armand Ghayspoor's persuasive essay about the wonders of Fenway Park that was published in the Red Sox Magazine. In addition, Larry Lucino, President of the Boston Red Sox wrote Armand a letter congratulating him on his essay. Ms. Monaco thanked Patricia Kaskac, English teacher at Clarke who worked with Armand to have this piece of writing published.

III. School Committee Member Announcements

Margaret Coppe announced the LEF Trivia Bee will be held on November 6 at Cary Hall. The School Committee has entered a team, The Twelve O'Clock Scholars and has asked Sam Lehn, Student Representative, to organize the team.

Ms. Coppe announced that on October 10 at 7:30 p.m. at LHS there will be a Community Forum on the Awareness of the Effects of Violent Media.

Ms. Coppe announced that last night the Committee went to the Board of Selectmen and asked them to support modulars at LHS. The Board of Selectmen laid out models for financing. The Capital Expenditures Committee received it this morning and the Appropriations Committee will receive it tomorrow.

Jessie Steigerwald announced that the Lexington time capsules were sealed on Saturday and the Committee added enrollment figures for the capsule. Ms. Steigerwald thanked Dr. Ash for providing those figures.

Alessandro Alessandrini announced the visiting hours for Dr. Michael Fiveash would be held at Faggas Funeral Home in Watertown on Thursday, October 26 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and a funeral mass will be held on Friday, October 27 at St. Athanasius the Great Church in Arlington at noon. Mr. Alessandrini noted that Dr. Fiveash's passing has made this world a little less bright.

IV. Agenda

1. Financial Support for Academic Foreign Travel for Students

Dr. Ash shared that last year the Committee asked if there should be a maximum cost per student for student trips outside the country and, further, should Lexington Public Schools (LPS) include funds in its budget in order to provide financial assistance to families when the cost of the field trip would be a financial hardship. Dr. Ash shared the financial data on all field trips with the Committee and asked the Committee for their direction on how he should proceed.

The Committee engaged in a discussion and shared their views about (i) the possibility of adopting a policy for when to approve or not approve trips; (ii) should public money be spent on overnight trips; (iii) financial aid; (iv) would children be discriminated against because of financial hardship; (v) should the Committee fund international trips for students; (vi) do overseas trips provide academic value or are they enrichment programs; (viii) what types of financial aid are available in the LPS; and (ix) does everyone who applies for financial aid receive it.

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance shared that there is a financial assistance application on the District's website and encouraged families to seek out that site. Ms. Dunn shared that it would be helpful to have some funds available to help provide students with financial support for field trips when they are found to be eligible for other subsidiaries. The Committee, six years ago, set a tiered structure assistance based on the federal poverty guidelines. Ms. Dunn shared that her office receives approximately 260 applications a year and would be able to provide more information in December or January. Ms. Dunn shared the process for those applicants, school discretionary accounts and how PTAs fund financial assistance for curriculum based field trips.

2. Summer Work on Curriculum Development and Professional Learning

Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development and Len Swanton, K-12 Professional Development Coordinator presented the Professional Learning Report on Summer Workshops and Courses. The professional learning program has become more aligned with the needs of LPS educators and school/district goals. The presentation included discussions on (i) summer workshop highlights and catalog courses; (ii) Convergent Learning; and (iii) District-wide Professional Learning Committee. Ms. Pilarski noted that the largest number of staff participated in LPS history. Ms. Pilarski and Mr. Swanton shared that there were 19 courses and 68 workshops offered over the summer and the feedback from teachers and staff was positive.

Kathleen McCarthy, K-5 Department Head – Literacy spoke to the Teachers College, Columbia University Writing Institute which she attended this past summer. This week long program taught Lexington educators and literacy specialists about the very latest research-based methods for literacy instruction.

Karen McCarthy, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator – Science spoke to the course entitled “*Connecting Literacy and Inquiry Science: Talking Writing and Reading as Tools of Science*” with expert consultants Jeff Winokur and Martha Heller-Winokur. Subsequently, a team of seven teachers and the K-5 Science Coordinator met in a summer workshop to scaffold science writing strategies for the three science units at their respective grade levels. Ms. Winokur is also working with summer participants to model lessons in their classrooms this fall and coach teachers in best practices as they implement their new skills.

Ellen Sugita, Director of Special Education spoke to the Lindamood Bell Phoneme Sequencing LiPS Training. The Special Education Department proposed this course which provided training using a research-based program that develops phoneme awareness, symbol imagery and concept mastery.

Ms. Pilarski and Mr. Swanton, on behalf of entire teaching staff and administrative staff, shared that they were grateful and appreciative for the Committee’s support and for the LPS Professional Learning Committee.

The Committee had questions and comments (i) are special education teachers and general education teachers able to work together; (ii) what the DESE cap on RETELL training; (iii) does lack of training encourage clustering of ELL students; (iv) are there some individuals who take five courses and some who take no courses; (v) how are courses proposed and is there a way for a teacher to submit an idea for a course; (vi) what is Responsive Classroom; (vii) what kind of evidence is used to evaluate the effect of professional development on student learning; (viii) how do you evaluate student learning as a result of professional development; (ix) can modifications be made to these courses; (x) what metrics are used to ensure Professional Learning programming is becoming more aligned to the needs expressed; (xi) what factors contribute to the growth of these programs; (xii) what non-remedial (technology) courses and assisted technology courses offered; and (xiii) how can the Committee support your work?

3. Superintendent’s Professional Practice and Student Learning Goals

Margaret Coppe announced Dr. Ash will review his goals on October 8. The Committee will then vote on his goals and they will become part of his evaluation.

Dr. Ash presented the (i) Superintendent’s Student Learning Goal and the six key action steps; and (ii) Superintendent’s Professional Practice Goal and the seven key action steps. These goals meet Lexington standards and are measured by Lexington metrics.

There were comments and questions from the Committee (i) think student goal is great and wonders if the words “nearly 100%” and not 100%; (ii) as instructional leader of Lexington your goal is to support learning for all students and not identified students; would like more clarification; (iii) support principal goals or administrator goals; (iv) what is meant by forums; (v) how will superintendent goals be measured and shared with the Committee; (vi) would want to see pilot programs that integrate art and science and go beyond the core standards; would like to see unique goals on what kind of programs we can start in Lexington; (vii) would like a pilot program as a goal; (viii) committee gave feedback on student learning goals (ix) are principals impacted that this “is one other thing they have to do”; (x) will this impact teachers and does this piggyback on how teachers are evaluated; (xi) will instructional rounds be extra evaluations; (xii) would like to see more about Dr. Ash rather than about principals and schools; (xiii) Committee member felt that collaboration across all Lexington schools should be included; (xiv) add a

personal goal “to advance student learning and improve superintendent practice of collaboration;; and (xv) take feedback and develop the goal that best meets the needs of the district.

Andrei Radulescu Banu, 86 Cedar Street, provided his thought on superintendent goals.

The Chair called for a break in the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

Sam Lehn left the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 9:58 p.m.

4. Transportation Report

Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance presented the school bus transportation preliminary update. Ms. Dunn shared that the School Bus Transportation Program has experienced its highest registration at the start of school since 2006 with 2,847 students riding on 61 runs provided by 25 busses. Ms. Dunn reviewed the reason for the successful start and reviewed (i) Flexpass and Ride After Programs, (ii) safety; and (iii) financial update.

Ms. Dunn expressed her support for keeping bus fee at \$300 and continuing to being creative on registration. Ms. Dunn thanked the community for registering for the bus and thanked her staff and C & W Transportation for their hard work.

Margaret Coppe commented on drivers who are passing stopped school busses with their lights flashing. She sees how often this happens and wondered if there were initiatives to help curb this dangerous practice.

Mary Ellen Dunn thanked the Safety Committee and shared that in the November tax bills, taxpayers will receive a flyer on bus and bike safety. The Committee is interested in sending letters to drivers who are identified as passing busses stopped for the loading or unloading of students. The transportation department, working with the bus company, is looking into placing cameras on busses that automatically turn on when the bus is stopped.

5. Traffic Safety and Mitigation Study

Mary Ellen Dunn presented the Traffic & Transportation Mitigation Study dated July 2013 and revised September 2013. The Department of Public Works is conducting a separate project to evaluate signage and pavement markings in school zones along roadways under the jurisdiction of the Town of Lexington and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Ms. Dunn reviewed the methodology and general recommendations for each of the nine public schools.

There were questions and comments from the Committee (i) clarification of cost of a better study at each of the schools; (ii) police enforcement of traffic rules on school grounds; (iii) impact on town budget for police enforcement at school property; (iv) student behavior on school busses being affected by wait times; (v) how many committees are working on traffic and safety; (vi) what are the two violations of developers placing signs on access to school property; (vii) problem with staff not wearing safety vests while directing traffic on school property; (viii) school staff parking illegally; (ix) are driver’s education cars being parked at the high school; (x) do all schools have bus fences; (xi) signage is the schools biggest problem; and (xii) school websites have no consistency.

Judy Crocker, School Transportation Safety Study Committee (STS) member spoke to the work of their committee.

Mary Ellen Dunn acknowledged the STS committee members in the meeting tonight, Craig Weeks, Judy Crocker, Sharon Kendall and Bridge PTA Representative Rebecca Moore.

6. Student Stress Committee – Update by School Committee Members

Margaret Coppe announced that she and Alessandro Alessandrini working with Bill Blout and BJ Rudman have gone before the Board of Selectman (BOS) twice and the Human Services Committee. They have come to the conclusion the School Committee will have to move alone on this issue. Mr. Alessandrini thanked Ms. Coppe for fighting for the youths of this town. A vote will be taken at the next Committee meeting.

V. Consent Agenda

1. School Committee Member Reports:

- a. Public Hearing on Potential Zoning Regulations for Medical Marijuana Dispensaries. Bonnie Brodner requested that this item placed on a future agenda. The Planning Board would like to review the Youths at Risk Survey. There was further discussion by the Committee.
- b. Liaison Report – Lexington Education Foundation

2. Homelessness Policy – Third Reading

3. Standards for Acceptable Use of Technology Policy – Third Reading

Jessie Steigerwald noted that the last reading for the Standards for Acceptable Use of Technology Policy – Third Reading was last year. Ms. Steigerwald recommended that the Committee review the policy language and postpone the vote until the next School Committee meeting.

Bonnie Brodner stated that she reviewed the Second Reading on this policy and she thought there weren't as many differences from the Second to Third Readings and recommended postponing the vote until the next meeting.

Ms. Steigerwald asked Ms. Coppe and Ms. Brodner, who are on the Policy Subcommittee, if they were going to meet as they had not met for the past year. Ms. Steigerwald said she could send edits.

Phyllis Neufeld, Lexington Education President shared her concerns regarding the Technology Policy and felt that this was an item that Thomas Plati, Director Education, Technology and Assessment should assess.

4. Vote to Approve Clarke Middle School 8th Grade French Field Trip to Québec City, Canada, June 4 through June 6, 2014

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda Items 1, 2 and 4 Above and postpone Item 3 - Standards for Acceptable Use of Technology Policy – Third Reading (Stewart, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved (5-0)

VI. Adjourn

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

The Meeting adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8, 2013, at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Offices Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room, 1625 Massachusetts Avenue.

Materials: Meeting Agenda; Memo to School Committee from Dr. Ash dated September 18, 2013 re Options to Fund Student Out-of-State and Foreign Travel; Memo from Carol Pilarski to Dr. Ash dated September 24, 2014 re Professional Learning Report Summer Workshops and Courses; Dr. Ash Goal Setting Form; Memo from Mary Ellen Dunn to Dr. Ash dated September 20, 2013 re School Bus Transportation Preliminary Work; Traffic Safety and Mitigation Study; Summary of Planning Board Meeting held on September 9, 2013 re Public Hearing on potential zoning regulations for medical marijuana dispensaries; Memo from Margaret Coppe to School Committee dated September 17, 2013 re LEF; Lexington School Committee Policy re Homelessness – Third Reading; Lexington School Committee Policy re Standards for Acceptable Use of Technology in the Lexington Public Schools – Third Reading; Lexington Public Schools Field Trip Request Form from Jonas Clarke MS re 8th grade field trip to Quebec

Voted by the School Committee December 19, 2013