

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**Saturday, March 17, 2007
Clarke Middle School Auditorium
17 Stedman Road**

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee Members, Helen Cohen, Margaret Coppe, Tom Griffiths and Ravi Sakhuja.

The meeting was convened at 9:54 a.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Griffiths):

[Tom Diaz was detained because he went to pick up Helen Cohen who was snowed in!]

II. Superintendent's Report:

Yesterday we did an early release from all schools. Dec 9th, 2005 was the worst 2 hour snow storm in years so I am sensitized to what can happen. I was checking the report but it was not clear when the storm would hit with fury. We decided to do an early release though it hadn't been done in years; in the elementary schools we did a double bus run. We released all children an hour early whose parents could be reached. Children whose parents couldn't be reached went home at the regular time. At Hastings they reached all the parents. Two schools have the automatic phone systems, which makes this kind of situation much easier. I received no emails either way. The weather got really bad around 3:30. The goal was the children's safety. I would do the same thing again. Crossing guards had to do an extra hour and buses had to do an extra run.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Ravi Sakhuja: I am in touch with Paul on electricity and oil budgets.

Paul Ash: We have electricity, natural gas and oil locked in for fiscal '08.

Ravi Sakhuja: We need to make sure the numbers are the right numbers, and also check until when our contract rates are valid.

Tom Griffiths: I went to *Metamorphoses*. It was a marvelous performance with wonderful staging.

Paul Ash: In self-financing, will we pay debt directly out of the operating budget or will the money be transferred from the capital budget?

Tom Griffiths: Transferred from operating to debt financing. We will use very little in FY 08. The difference will be useful.

Paul Ash: The operating budget has been reduced by \$120K.

Tom Griffiths: The moneys will come from the energy budget. We don't yet know how they'll be distributed among oil, gas, and electricity.

IV. Discussion Items:

A. Public Hearing on the FY08 Budget (60 minutes)

Betty Rae (library volunteer at Harrington, then aide at Estabrook, now teacher at Estabrook): The librarian promotes literacy awareness for students. As a first grade teacher, I consider the librarian a member of the first grade team. The library is an extension of the classroom, she helps me find professional materials. She knows our collection and also how to find things we don't have. Without a trained librarian our collections are at risk. The librarians maintain the integrity of the literacy programs. Questions: who will select the books, who will catalogue the books? This should not be at risk.

Paul Ash: Good Questions. Classroom teachers under the guidance of the principals will buy the books. I don't know who would catalogue the books. I will look into that.

Ravi Sakhuja: How much time does each class spend in the library?

Karen Werlin (Bridge School librarian): In Bridge each class comes for a half hour every two weeks. At Harrington they come 45 minutes a week. They have book selection. Before school kids can select books or get research help, sometimes after school too.

Lucy Lockwood: I am speaking for the custodians. The custodian issue is troubling. We will get more thefts if we have part-timers. The custodians do a lot more than clean; they clean the in-focus filter, they do the things the teachers ask; there won't be that direct relationship, that personal touch with part-time people. They work really hard. I rarely see them sitting down and taking a break. One is one year away from his 10 year pension and I get teary eyed thinking he would lose his job. He is # 17 on the list.

Karen Werlin: (Bridge School librarian): The elementary library page for 10 years has been providing a valuable and safe Internet resource to students and teachers. It allows students and teachers to access to the World Book encyclopedia. Both students and teachers would lose this resource. Last year Syracuse University evaluated this resource very favorably. A 4th grade teacher at Bridge asked students to write a persuasive letter on any topic. One child wrote about the librarians. I am giving you all a copy of her letter.

Kate Cremens-Basbas: Thanks for commitment of time to listen to all this feedback. On Thursday I was asked to tell the difference between phys ed and athletics in 25 words or less. I wondered if the question was how can we use athletics to supplant phys ed. Phys ed is broad; it is a means to help students acquire skills, and attitudes. Athletics is extracurricular. Phys ed is transitioning to a wellness model, and it is beyond selective and elite, it encompasses social, emotional, spiritual, occupational,

intellectual and vocational aspects of the person. In phys ed everyone takes these lessons from educators who have been to college and grad school. Athletics can't supplant phys ed. Public education cannot include everyone in their athletic programs. Why is phys ed considered diff than other areas? Why aren't other areas able to have other things substitute for graduation requirements? Athletics cannot be substituted for phys ed.

A discussion ensued in which Tom Diaz clarified that his remarks about using athletics for phys ed credit had been in the context of eliminating fees for athletics altogether. Kate Cremens-Basbas agreed that she is against fees for athletics and is in favor of physical activity to be limited only by facilities and by money. She said that phys ed teachers teach phys ed and coaches coach teams and there is a difference in philosophies, goals and agendas.

B. FY 08 Budget (60 minutes)

Tom Griffiths: Regarding self-financing: We will have some non-recurring revenues so we can apply that to non recurring expenses...maybe \$175K from the year offset between financing and first paying debt service. I was called by a constituent who pointed that out.

Projects that we have financed by their own energy savings will have a \$355K worth of savings in their first year if the projects are completed by September 1. We agreed to book \$120K as recurring revenue and we can book \$170K as nonrecurring revenue.

Ravi Sakhuja: Suggested using unused funds in this year's capital budget to get a jump start on these energy saving projects. Paul Ash will look into that.

Tom Griffiths: Waiting to hear from Jeanne Krieger as to whether the snow removal budget has been used up.

The high cost of energy use at Harrington was discussed. It was hoped that a lot could be attributed to air conditioning.

V. Motion to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation and collective bargaining, not to return to public session. (Griffiths, Cohen) Cohen-aye; Coppe-aye; Diaz-aye; Griffiths-aye and Sakhuja-aye.

The next scheduled meetings of the School Committee are as follows:

- Monday, March 19 — 7:30 p.m. at Clarke Middle School Auditorium, 17 Stedman Road
- Tuesday, March 20 — 7:30 p.m. at Cary Hall Auditorium, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue