

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Lexington High School, Library Media Center

251 Waltham Street

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee Members Helen Cohen, Tom Griffiths, Olga Gutttag and Ravi Sakhuja and Student Representative Toni Maeck. Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

I. Executive Session 7:00 p.m.

II. Call to Order and Welcome 8:03p.m.

III. Public Comment

Leora Tec (precinct 1): I have some comments concerning the ELL program (I used to be an ELL tutor). I share Olga Gutttag and perhaps Tom Griffith's concerns about changing the director's position from .5 to 1.0. Part of what the DOE requires in terms of compliance has to do with the direct service to students every day. It is the kids that will suffer.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns

Olga Gutttag: This is guidance appreciation week. Thanks to the guidance counselors for the support they provide our students.

Tom Diaz: There is a legislative initiative from the METCO office. The School Committee should write a letter to the governor on our behalf to support this increase in METCO aid. The School Committee should sign it.

Olga Gutttag: Can we send it to our legislators, to the same group of legislators we did last year (the METCO committees, on ways and means, etc.)? We can vote on it tonight.

Motion to accept the letter as proposed and send to Governor Patrick and legislators on the same list as last year who have the most say on METCO funding (Gutttag, Griffiths). **The motion passed 5-0.**

V. Discussion Items:

1. FY08 Budget Discussion
 - a. Middle School Budget Subcommittee Report

Report by Helen Cohen (with Tom Griffiths). They are requesting a 3% increase in expenses and a 1.8 FTE staff increase at Clarke and a .05 FTE increase at Diamond.

The ensuing discussion included: Dr. Guttag's question of, given the current class sizes at Clarke, which are at or below recommended sizes, whether we could run an equally efficient school without the additional staffing. Dr. Ash gave an affirmative response and said we should add the .05 at both schools to address electives. Mandarin will require \$2000 worth of materials and, possibly some additional health benefits.

Dawn McKenna: (precinct 6): Every time we have made a change in language instruction there has been a more open process and a policy vote. I don't think adding Mandarin should be part of the budget process. I think foreign language should be a fundamental core part of the curriculum.

Tom Griffiths: Last year, the School Committee resisted the use of greater parent fees as a means to save foreign language in elementary school. We have an increasing number of Asian people in our town and increasing business with China. The idea of no Chinese in our schools seems peculiar.

Ravi Sakhuja: Mandarin is being introduced as an experiment.

Tom Griffiths: We are not increasing FTEs. The only risk is a benefit risk.

Olga Guttag: We should have a debate with the community about the wisdom of doing this. I also will strongly advocate for doing so. Because of the benefit costs it may be wise to list this in the supplemental request.

b. Student Services Budget Subcommittee Report

Report by Tom Diaz. Mr. Diaz went through the various areas of this department and their requirements.

Out of district tuition is one of the largest items in the budget.

Mary Ellen Dunn recommends a more aggressive estimation of circuit breaker income basing it on FY08 expenses.

System wide the department is requesting new positions to create or expand SPED programs that were approved by the School Committee on November 28, in the expectation that these programs would reduce out of district placements: 3.0 teachers, 11.0 instructional assistants, .8 speech and language personnel, 2.0 social workers and .7 occupational therapists.

Overall there is a \$1 million dollar increase in salary and a \$500,000 increase in health benefits for new employees not including the \$1.3 million increase in out-of-district tuitions and other OOD costs.

The discussion about the SPED presentation included benefits and costs of the programs approved on Nov 28th. Also how many kids are moving out, graduating, etc., in FY07. The question of collaborating with other communities for SPED programs came up as well as the idea of surveying the parents about our in-house programs. Dr. Gutttag, Dr. Ash and Tom Diaz discussed the idea of putting the Clarke DLP instructional assistant into the same-service budget as the services are mandated for already identified students. It is currently in the supplemental budget. Mr. Diaz agreed with Dr. Gutttag that we should commit to these new resources for developmentally delayed students, but with the proviso that we might not be able to finance this and other special ed expenses at the expense of regular education programs. Dr. Gutttag asked about the reintroduction of a parental survey about their satisfaction with the IEP process, to see if we can get more data about in-district services.

Health and K-8 Guidance (Departments of the Student Services Department)
Reported by Dr. Helen Cohen

No increase in staffing is requested. A 3% increase in supplies is requested. An aged vision screening machine at Hastings and \$1000 for professional development are requested.

Olga Gutttag: We have not done an analysis of METCO. Someone should look at it given the budget, and I am willing to do it, though it will be political suicide. I am not convinced we are delivering the services those kids need.

Ravi Sakhuja and Helen Cohen will review Dr Ash's administration budget.

2. FY07 Budget Projection (20 minutes)

Mary Ellen Dunn presented her report.

Paul Ash: We may freeze some expenditures; we can't freeze all of them.

The Committee discussed her report and how encumbrances and expenses will be reported.

VI. Action Items:

1. Vote to Approve FY08 Capital Request (30 minutes)

Bill Hartigan presented the capital projects.

Motion to accept capital budget as presented with the following added instructions for the superintendent:

1). Move items at priorities 2&3 to priorities 3&4 respectively and

2). Split the \$4,485,000 worth of items currently at priority 1 into two priority levels with the items staying at priority 1 amounting to approximately \$2,050,000 and the remaining items moving to priority 2.

(Griffiths, Cohen).

The discussion included concern over whether there would be time before Thursday to meet with the necessary parties.

Ravi Sakhuja objected to the motion and, after discussion, Tom Griffiths withdrew the motion with Helen Cohen's permission.

The discussion of capital projects and their financing continued.

2. Vote to Approve Donation to Lexington Debate Program
3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of June 20, 2006
4. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of July 26, 2006
5. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of November 28, 2006
6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 10, 2007
7. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 16, 2007
8. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 17, 2007

Motion to approve the donation to the Lexington Debate Program with gratitude (Gutttag, Griffiths) The motion was approved 5-0.

Motion to approve the minutes of June 20, 2006, July 26, 2006, November 28, 2006, January 10, 2007, January 16 2007 and January 17, 2007 (Griffiths, Cohen).

June 20, 2006 The motion passed 4-0, Ravi Sakhuja abstaining.

July 26, 2006 The motion passed 4-0, Tom Diaz abstaining,

Nov 28, 2006 The motion passed 5-0.

Jan 10, 2007 The motion passed 3-0, Ravi Sakhuja and Helen Cohen abstaining.

Jan 16, 2007 The motion passed 5-0.

Jan 17, 2007 The motion passed 4-0, Ravi Sakhuja abstaining.

Motion to go into executive session for the purposes of collective bargaining and pending litigation not to return to public session. (Gutttag, Cohen). Cohen-aye; Diaz-aye; Griffiths-aye; Gutttag-aye; Sakhuja-aye.

The Committee went into Executive Session at 11:45 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Monday, February 12, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at Clarke Middle School Auditorium, 17 Stedman Road.