

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, August 26, 2014**  
**Lexington Town Office Building, Selectmen's Meeting Room**  
**1625 Massachusetts Avenue**

**Present:** Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Judy Crocker, Jessie Steigerwald, and Abigail Schwartz, Student Representative

The Minutes were taken by Jean M. 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 introduced Abigail Schwartz as the new Student Representative to the School Committee. Ms. Coppe also announced that she had accepted the resignation of Jean Curran, as the School Committee Recording Secretary and the position will be posted online and in the Minuteman newspaper.

Abby shared that she is starting her junior year and is very excited to be here and to give input on her perspective and the perspectives of the students in the public schools.

The Chair opened the meeting for public comment.

Gilbert Benghiat, 5 Sunny Knoll Avenue, has children in the Lexington Public Schools and he came this evening to propose a change in the homework policy. Mr. Benghiat would like a portion of the policy changed from “provide appropriate and timely response to assignments” to “provide appropriate feedback on all homework assignments, tests and quizzes within five (5) school days.” Mr. Benghiat feels timely feedback is essential in helping children learn. Mr. Benghiat had two questions for the Committee (i) can this be done this school year; and (ii) can he help.

The Chair suggested that Mr. Benghiat work with the Policy Manual Subcommittee by sending his suggestions to them electronically.

Jessie Steigerwald suggested to Mr. Benghiat that he stay for the first agenda item this evening which is the policy manual.

Abbey Schwartz shared that slow turnaround time on feedback has been a problem and she has gone a whole quarter without receiving any feedback from one teacher. However, Abbey feels that 5 school days may be too quick but having a deadline would be very important and helpful.

Ilene Benghiat, 5 Sunny Knoll Avenue, made a request regarding the addition of another level of courses in high school. Mrs. Benghiat would like to see a course in between a Level One Course and an AP Course because some students are not challenged in a Level One but AP may be too much.

The Chair stated that the Ad Hoc Youth Stress Committee will be taking up this issue, but it may be a year before something is decided.

## **II. Superintendent's Announcements:**

### **1. School Opening**

Dr. Ash welcomed Abby to the School Committee and shared that he is looking forward to working with her this coming year. Dr. Ash announced that he heard from all nine principals and is happy to report that opening day went very smoothly. Dr. Ash requested that Mary Ellen Dunn, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance provide a brief presentation.

Mary Ellen Dunn reported that two schools, the Jonas Clarke Middle School and the Estabrook Elementary School, have new traffic patterns and things went smoothly and were well organized. The principals should be commended for their efforts to make it work. There are over 3,000 students riding the bus this year. There were 144 students wait listed for the bus and 32 students have already been taken off the list and the Transportation department is working diligently to find space for the rest of these students. Bus passes were distributed in the classroom and some more will be distributed tomorrow. Ms. Dunn would like the community and parents to make sure to review with their children the dismissal plan for the end of the day. There are 64 bus routes and there are 700 high school students riding the bus.

Abby Schwartz commented that bus routes have changed and the website does not list the estimated time of arrival or drop off time.

Mary Ellen Dunn responded that the arrival and dismissal times are not put online at the beginning of the school year because it takes about two weeks for the busses to settle into a routine. After about two weeks the bus drivers have a better sense of timing and will communicate that to her office and the website will be updated with those times.

Dr. Ash provided an update on the Estabrook Elementary School project. Dr. Ash had spoken with Pat Goddard, Director of Public Facilities who stated that the project is 99% complete. The project is in the punch list phase. Sod will be placed this week on the athletic field and within two weeks Shawmut Construction will be off the site and the project will be completed. The ribbon cutting date will be October 6 at 10:30 a.m. and the public is welcome to attend.

Dr. Ash reported that the High School Modular Project, Phase I, modular classrooms have been completed. The modulars will last approximately 10 years. 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers are in the modulars. Also the Intensive Learning Program (ILP) for students on the autism spectrum has moved into their classrooms. A year from now, two more classrooms will be built. This project is complete except for punch list items and the work the Landscaping Committee will do to beautify the grounds. Pat Goddard will work with Landscape Committee to complete the landscaping within the budget.

Dr. Ash commented on X Block which was previously held on Wednesday morning but had to be dropped due to state regulations. This means that the blocks are longer on Wednesday. Laura Lasas, Principal, Lexington High School, informed Dr. Ash that she will be forming a committee

that will be looking at the impact of the change and any other alternatives to bring back the best of X Block and still be in compliance with the State Time and Learning Regulations.

Dr. Ash spoke to enrollment numbers and handed out three pages. The first page is the enrollment for 2014-2015 as of today, the second document is projected vs actual enrollments as of today and the third is last year's enrollment. The Enrollment Working Group will make a presentation to the Committee at the next meeting.

Dr. Ash announced that there are 3,022 students at the elementary level. Last year there were 2,938 students. There were 35 more students district-wide than had been projected. The kindergarten had a difference of 34 students which was the largest variance in any grade level. The Bowman, Bridge and Fiske elementary schools are overcrowded. The Clarke Middle School is overcapacity and the Committee will see a graphic of that when Mr. Poinelli from SMMA presents the architectural report at the September 17 School Committee meeting. The High School is not overcrowded because of the new modulars.

Alessandro Alessandrini shared his concern with the overcrowding at the Bridge and Bowman Elementary Schools. Mr. Alessandrini requested that Dr. Ash keep an eye out on the enrollment and any impacts that this causes to the programs. Mr. Alessandrini would like an update on the K-12 curriculum review process for art and music.

Meg Collela, Principal, Bridge Elementary School responded that grades 1-5 have been able to have art room in an art room but the kindergarten has it in their classroom.

## **2. Introduction of New LPS Administrators**

Dr. Ash introduced three of thirteen new administrators (i) HeeJean Parry-Cruwys, new ABA Coordinator, (ii) Karen Slusser, new Assistant Director of Special Education; (iii) Dr. Michelle Welsh, new Evaluation Team Supervisor at Hastings Elementary School.

## **III. School Committee Member Announcements:**

Margaret Coppe announced that Mary Ann Stewart was appointed by Governor Deval Patrick to the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This meant that she had to resign from the School Committee and she wishes her well. There will be one School Committee position open to be voted at the November 4 general election to finish out Ms. Stewart's term until March.

## **IV. Agenda:**

1. School Committee Policy Manual Revision Process – Presentation by Jim Hardy, MASC

Jessie Steigerwald announced that she and Ms. Crocker are working on a Policy Manual Subcommittee and the School Committee has employed Jim Hardy of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to assist them in their goal to review all policies between now and June. After that time, the Policy Manual Subcommittee would review one-third every year.

Jim Hardy, Massachusetts Association of School Committees was contracted by the Lexington Public Schools to help review the revision of the Lexington Public School Policy Manual. Mr.

Hardy found that it was not user friendly and not kept up to date. When this task is completed all existing documents and policies will be updated with current legal information and will reflect recent court decisions.

He stated that he has no authority to remove any Lexington policies. The work being done by the Policy Manual Subcommittee is step one. The next step is for a full committee review. He recommends that the Committee approve each section "in form". After all 12 sections have been approved in form, the entire policy manual will be accepted by the School Committee through a formal vote, and all previous versions will be rescinded. A hard copy of the manual along with an electronic copy will be provided. The Superintendent's Office will have a word version and everyone else will receive a PDF copy. The Policy Manual Subcommittee has completed their initial review of four sections. By September 2, Sections E and F will be reviewed and that means six sections completed. These will each then be forwarded to the full School Committee for further review. Mr. Hardy recommended moving through two sections per review meeting.

Jessie Steigerwald shared that the Committee's goal for the September 23 meeting would be to review Sections A&B and then review Sections C&D in October and Sections E&F in November. The full School Committee could then take a break in December and pick up again in January with G & H, and February for I & J. Comments on Sections A & B by Committee members should be submitted to Ms. Steigerwald and Mr. Hardy by September 16. The Committee is also reviewing with Mr. Hardy the existing policy requiring three readings on each policy. The Committee will continue to take up individual policies as they always have and this will be in tandem with this full Policy Manual review with Mr. Hardy.

Jim Hardy shared that the Homework Policy would be initially reviewed in October.

Margaret Coppe suggested that the Ad Hoc Youth Stress Committee be included in the Homework Policy discussions. Ms. Coppe inquired about where the Master Copy of the Manual will be housed. Mr. Hardy said it would reside in the Superintendent's office, where it currently resides.

## 2. Approval of the Bridge School PTA Fund Raising Project

Rebecca Moore and Justine Wirtanen, members of the Bridge School PTA presented the Legacy Brick Project. Bricks were sold to fund the building of a patio which will be located just outside the kindergarten classroom. There will also be a bench, along with a tree that was donated by last year's fifth grade class. The new brick walkway will be lined with custom, engraved bricks etched with personal messages from families of current and past Bridge students, alums, teachers, staff, community, business and other organizations. Ms. Moore and Ms. Wirtanen thanked Shawn Newell of the Public Facilities Department and Collins Architects for donating their services.

Shawn Newell shared there will be 2,200 bricks used for the entire project and 220 have been sold to date. It will take approximately a month to a month and a half to get contractors onto the site to begin construction.

The Committee had questions and comments.

**Motion to Accept the Bridge Elementary School PTA Legacy Brick Project**  
(Steigerwald, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved (4-0)**

3. Vote to Approve the Textile Recycling Program

Dr. Ash requested that Mary Ellen Dunn and Shawn Newell explain to the committee the request this evening. Ms. Dunn shared that they were approached by Bay State Textiles to institute a recycling program at all nine public schools. This has been a collaborative effort by the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Public Facilities Department (DFP) and principals of all nine schools in obtaining permissions from them to have boxes placed on school property. Ms. Dunn provided background on waste stream and passive fundraiser for the principals. Proceeds will go into school accounts to use for financial assistance for local, national and international field trips, or professional learning for teachers.

Parents and community members will place their textiles into the bins which will be collected once a week. Bay State will be responsible for keeping the area neat. Mr. Newell met with each of the principals to decide on site locations..

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding Bay State Textile exporting to third world countries and the effects it has on those countries, recycling and importing back into the United States, other environmental and public issues, and use of the funds raised.

The committee discussed, and eventually dismissed, using the funds raised for professional learning. Ms. Steigerwald voiced concern about overlapping with existing collection programs in the schools.

**Motion to authorize the Superintendent to place the use of recycling receptacles on school property by Bay State Textile, Inc.** (Alessandrini, Crocker) **The Motion was Approved (3-0-1) Steigerwald abstained**

**Motion to approve the logo used on the receptacles, graphics similar to Lexington Public Schools** (Crocker, Alessandrini) **The Motion was Approved (3-0-1) Steigerwald abstained**

**Motion to approve funds be placed into School Gift Accounts as reported by Bay State Textiles, Inc.** (Alessandrini, Crocker) **The Motion was Approved (4-0)**

**Motion to authorize use of funds for all local, state or out of state or international field trips and unfunded educational expenses** (Alessandrini, Crocker) **The Motion was Approved (4-0)**

4. Superintendent Search Process

Margaret Coppe shared that on August 11, 2014 the Committee met with consultants John Connolly and Gary Burton of Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (“HYA”), to review segments of the search procedure manual from HYA. The consultants made recommendations specific to Lexington’s search. It was agreed that the Search Committee will comprise between

9 and 12 individuals and will be discussed in more detail by the School Committee before October 1.

Margaret Coppe also shared an update from the August 11 meeting with HYA. There will be two community wide opportunities for input (i) a survey open to the public will run from September 8 to 25 with the results compiled by HYA; (ii) approximately 30 focus groups will meet on September 22 and 23 with two community wide focus group meetings to be held at Clarke Middle School the evening of September 22 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. and on the morning of September 23 from 10:00 a.m. – Noon, facilitated by HYA personnel; (iii) on October 7, HYA will come to the School Committee meeting to present the leadership profile for Committee approval. Advertising for the position will go out by mid-October.

Ms. Coppe also shared that there has been no determination yet on the size and criteria of the Search Committee.

There were questions and comments from the Committee (i) how will students be chosen and would it be possible for the students to meet during non-school hours; (ii) would the Chair post the search committee information online through a dedicated webpage for the superintendent search; (iv) is there a separate charge for doing a social media search or should that be included in background search; and (v) would it be okay with Dr. Ash if school wide list be used.

5. Suggested School Committee Dates for September and October

The Committee engaged in discussion regarding future School Committee meeting dates. The next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting will be held on September 16.

6. Vote to Appoint School Committee Member to the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee

Margaret Coppe noted that the Committee needs to appoint a new member to the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee after the resignation of Mary Ann Stewart. The Committee engaged in discussion regarding this appointment.

**Motion to Appoint Jessie Steigerwald to the Ad Hoc School Master Planning Committee (Crocker, Alessandrini) The Motion was Approved 4-0**

Notice will be sent to Miriam Sousa to be posted on the school website.

7. Update School Committee Liaison List

Alessandro Alessandrini noted that he should be listed as the SEPAC liaison

Phyllis Neufeld, President, Lexington Education Association would like to start bargaining for permanent evaluation language. Ms. Neufeld inquired if an appointment could be made this evening.

The Chair requested that no vote be taken this evening in order to allow Members discussion time.

8. FY16 Budget Guidelines and Timetable

Dr. Ash updated the Committee on the FY16 Recommended Budget Guidelines. Each year the School Committee discusses and votes the guidelines. The discussion process began this evening and Dr. Ash looked for direction from the School Committee on what they want in the budget.

Dr. Ash recommended 7 budget guidelines (i) all legal mandates met; (ii) sufficient operating funds and have identified (a) maintain level service (b) projected enrollment groups; and (c) facility needs (may need an additional town meeting, or money in capital or operating budget); (iii) continued commitment to move community forward in technology, and ensure professional staffing guidelines met; (iv) long term commitment needed to maintain capital assets; (v) continue to identify alternatives that might be cost effective (to meet same set of goals in a more cost effective manner) (vi) Superintendent to identify ways to reduce costs; and (vii) identify small number of high level of new programs.

The Committee had comments and questions regarding (i) academic improvements; (ii) ensuring professional staffing guidelines are met; (iii) art and music spaces and what effects it will have on children; (iv) it would be helpful to know what programs are running in each school; (v) how are programs being delivered if schools run out of space; (vi) need to do a better job registering students and perhaps it is time to have it done at the Central Office instead of at each school; (vii) increases for materials and supplies and reduce reliance on core supplies by parent fundraisers; (viii) discuss ways to have all academic students have the same opportunities for enrichment programs; (ix) teacher workload; (x) traffic mitigation; and (xi) per pupil expenditure.

Dr. Ash to redraft FY16 Budget Guidelines and Timetable and bring them back to the next School Committee meeting on September 16.

Abigail Schwartz left meeting.

**V. Consent Agenda:**

1. School Committee Member Liaison Report – Curriculum Work Group
2. Vote to Accept a Donation to Fiske School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$597.49
3. Vote to Accept a Donation to Maria Hastings School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$1,956.54
4. Vote to Accept a Donation to the William Diamond Middle School from Stop and Shop's A+ Program in the Amount of \$2,171.50
5. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of August 11, 2014, 12:00 Noon
6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of August 11, 2014, 6:00 p.m.
7. Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of July 21, 2014
8. Vote to Approve and Not Release School Committee Executive Session Minutes of August 11, 2014

**Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Items 1-8 above (Steigerwald, Crocker) The Motion was Approved 4-0**

**VI. School Committee Member Announcements:**

Margaret Coppe announced there will be a community program entitled “Raising Resilient Children & Adolescents - An Evening with Dr. Robert Brooks” to be held on October 8 at the Lexington Depot. Registration can be done online on the Lexington Community Education website.

Ms. Coppe also announced that Munroe Saturday Nights will be holding a performance entitled "Break the Silence", on Sept. 27 at Jonas Clarke Middle School at 7:30 pm. This program explores relationship violence: what it feels like, what it looks like, what it sounds like. Anyone interested may register online at the Munroe Center website.

Judy Crocker inquired if it would be appropriate for the Committee to discuss the possibility of differentiated math classes at the elementary level. The Committee felt that as this was not a School Committee agenda this evening, she could speak with Carol Pilarski.

Jessie Steigerwald thanked everyone for a great start of the school year.

**Motion to Adjourn (Alessandrini, Crocker) The Motion was Approved 4-0**

**The Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.**

Next regular School Committee meeting will be held on September 16, 2014.

*Meeting Materials: Meeting Agenda; Letter dated August 21, 2014 to Dr. Ash from Justine Wirtanen and Rebecca Moore, Co-Chairs of the Bridge School PTA Brick Legacy Committee; Memorandum dated August 8, 2014 from Mary Ellen Dunn to Dr. Paul Ash regarding Textile Recycling Initiative and Source of Passive Fund Raising; Lexington School Committee Superintendent Search Planning Meeting Minutes dated August 11, 2014, 12:00 Noon; Suggested September and October School Committee Dates and Agendas dated August 22, 2014; School Committee Liaison Assignments 2014-2015; Lexington Public Schools Recommended FY 2016 Budget Guidelines; Curriculum Work Group Meeting Minutes dated June 3, 2014, 9:00 a.m.; Letter dated June 2014 to School Principals from A+ School Rewards Program by Stop & Shop attaching School Rewards check; Letter dated July 30, 2014 to School Committee from Louise P. Lipsitz, Principal, Hastings Elementary School regarding Stop & Shop A+ Program check in the amount of \$1,956.54; Letter dated July 23, 2014 to Dr. Ash from Anne Carothers, Principal, Diamond Middle School regarding Stop & Shop A+ Program check*

Voted by the School Committee October 21, 2014