

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, April 23, 2007
School Administration Building, Conference Room
1577 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee members Helen Cohen, Margaret Coppe, Tom Griffiths, and Ravi Sakhuja. Minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 6:36 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)

II. Superintendent's Report

- A. June 21st will be the last day of school for the 2006-2007 school year. It will be a half day at elementary school.
- B. There is a planet party tonight at the Bowman School; 100-200 kids with telescopes will look at the stars and the planets.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Helen Cohen: On the 25th at Town Meeting there will be a presentation of the Sharyn Wong Chan and Sara Harrington Diversity award.

IV. Action Items:

- 1. Vote to Appoint Linda Chase as Director of Student Services (5 minutes)
Paul Ash: I recommend the appointment of Linda Chase as the Director of Student Services as of July 1st. I know her from Westwood where I worked with her for 3 years and I enthusiastically recommend her. She is a first rate educator. She works collaboratively. She knows SPED laws, she is tenacious about following regulations, well-liked, has been innovative in her districts and has reduced costs through programs she has developed. She makes decisions when she has to and can say no when she has to but looks for places to say yes. She has also been the incident management coordinator in two districts and has worked with police and fire departments. I recommend her with enthusiasm.

Ravi Sakhuja: This is a very important position. This is an appointment by the School Committee. We had good choices. I support Dr.Ash's opinion.

Helen Cohen: I was the other School Committee representative on the committee. We unanimously recommended her; she is low key. She knows what she is talking about. This is a very complicated area.

Motion to approve the appointment of Linda Chase as director of Special Services. (Sakhuja, Cohen). **The motion passed 5-0.**

Tom Griffiths: I want to express my thanks to Mary Sullivan Kelly. I was impressed with her report. One of the results is bringing services in house.

Helen Cohen (to Mary Sullivan Kelly): I've enjoyed working with you. You've done a good job.

V. Discussion Items:

1. FY08 Budget

Patrick Mehr proposed a reduction of over 1.2 million dollars in order to increase the possibility of the override passing. There was a discussion of various aspects of his proposal including: reducing out of district SPED transportation; reduction in custodial overtime (Tom Griffiths responding that this could be accomplished by closing schools); reducing math and literacy support because, according to Mr. Mehr, we are among the highest in this area among comparable schools; and hiring teachers at a lower pay scale.

Helen Cohen: Regarding custodial overtime: there is not any padding in it. Because they are covering certain events they are not doing as much cleaning as we would want. I appreciate your concern and the work you have been doing. What education is about is not reflected in the proposals that you make. I can't make a judgment about what level the teachers should be at, we might want to hire a teacher at a really high level. The one thing that seems clear is that the small class size makes a difference. Someone said on TMMA list that teachers won't mind another 2-3 kids. That is not true. Kids are of a wide variety of abilities. It's very different from when we all sat in rows. We need to improve in literacy and math. We have heard from so many people about the value of the librarians in terms of bringing people together. It would be hard for me to support cutting these kinds of positions. These are necessary in view of what education is in 2007.

Ravi Sakhuja: I have spent lots of time since the budget was proposed...it's wrong to say only class size matters. In literacy we are close to the highest...we are very competitive. If we take the literacy and math specialists and they take kids out there will be fewer kids in the classes. Let's use different models.

Tom Diaz: Please flesh that out in writing.

Tom Diaz: We expect enrollment to grow by 30 elementary kids and classes are too big.

Ravi Sakhuja: Last year we added four custodians with the premise that we would reduce overtime and we didn't, we increased the overtime.

Helen Cohen: Two were administrative positions.

2. FY07 Unpaid Bills

Mary Ellen Dunn: One new item: There was an agreement that School Department would pay for half the police officer in the high school. I am requesting \$625,538 total.

Motion to approve revised projected deficit of \$625,538 (Griffiths, Coppe). The motion passed 5-0.

Ravi Sakhuja: Electricity: Harrington ran at 69 degrees last summer and there were kids to fill half the school. We peaked in May. I am assuming there is no plan for summer school in Fiske.

Tom Griffiths: Energy report. PBC and BOS wanted an energy report on Harrington school. Tom discussed the power point that was handed out. Stakeholders should be kept involved during construction. I would like the Committee to accept the report.

Motion to accept the energy report (Coppe, Cohen). The motion passed 4-1 (Sakhuja)

Ravi Sakhuja: It is not fair to compare costs if two schools are heated with different systems. If the heat pumps work right...we could get this down to 750 we could control a block of rooms...

VI. Motion to adjourn (Cohen, Coppe). The motion passed 5-0.