

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Saturday, April 7, 2007
Lexington High School, Library Media Center
251 Waltham Street

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

I. Motion to go into executive session for purposes of collective bargaining to return in approximately 10 minutes (Cohen, Griffiths). Griffiths-aye; Sakhuja-aye; Coppe-aye; Cohen-aye and Diaz-aye.

II. Call to Order and Welcome 9:49 am (Tom Diaz)

III. Motion to remove \$640K from our at-risk list to put in protected budget using revenue to be found or making other cuts (Griffiths, Cohen).

Tom Diaz: There is a \$340K hunk and a \$300K hunk.

Helen Cohen: This is the added local aid from the state.

Tom Griffiths: There is no assurance that we get it or that the Selectman will allow us to use the entire amount. We are saying we will prepare a budget assuming that we have the amount.

The motion passed 5-0.

IV. FY08 Budget

Mary Ellen Dunn went over the memo that she distributed to the Committee and to those present. Among other things teaching positions are assumed to average in salary a Masters 5 level, the operating budget will be reduced by 1.2 million (Appendix B), the shared expense column is being adjusted, the energy budget is being reduced by 18K and reductions under section A on the at-risk list have been folded into the individual line items. She needs to have further discussions with Rob Addelson regarding the benefits budget, specifically unemployment insurance, in the event of an override failing. She has put a number of positions, including overmax aides and SPED subs that did not have specific line items into the budget. Additional help for the print shop was incorrectly treated as subs. The custodial overtime is under-funded. She is adding \$85K to that. We budget \$85K but typically spend \$200-265K on it.

There was a discussion on the issue of custodial overtime and the fact that Bill Hartigan and Carol Gregory are aware of it and that discussions with the union are underway to change the contract language to reduce overtime. We took on two floaters last year to reduce overtime costs in this department. They have reduced it but not enough.

Mary Ellen Dunn went on to explain a recommendation of the financial review committee and the superintendent for a budget analyst to work with her that would cost \$60K including benefits. This person would do tracking, calculating and budget control. The position would be responsible for ongoing projections, accounts payable and day to day issues with procurement rules, as well as assisting and training the AP staff. Paul Ash indicated that the last two Finance Directors left due to high workload and that the same will happen to Mary Ellen Dunn if this position is not put into place.

The new operating budget would be \$68,914,407.

Mary Ellen Dunn explained revolving funds and the fact that they put the burden of funding a program on the program itself. For athletics, one third of funds come from fees. For transportation you need to comply with state statute. For that, 7 buses are required. We need to determine who is riding the buses early enough to design efficient routes.

Mary Ellen Dunn stated that regarding the energy budget she had to draw a line in the sand somewhere so she is using the last number presented to the Committee. She does not want to cut the budget so finely that it is not able to respond to demands, penalty charges, etc...She also stated that she is committed to the ongoing review of the energy budget and does not view the issues and concerns regarding the School Department's budget as a closed issue. Dr. Sakhuja and Mr. Mehr's questions will be answered over the next couple of months, at which time the School Committee will be able to revisit the energy budget and determine its adequacy.

At-risk list

Dr. Ash presented his recommendations for \$640K worth of items to be removed from the at-risk list based on money received from the state. The items were divided into two lists of priority one (\$340K) and priority two (\$300K). Dr. Ash indicated that his priorities were based on discussions with principals and Central Office administrators and emphasized that his is an educational and not a political list.

Priority I:

\$340K:

- Reduce custodial savings item from \$223,200 to \$111,600
- Hire one K-5 librarian because with one librarian we have a chance of maintaining the system.
- 2.5 middle school department chairs—otherwise there would be no one to support curriculum review and support young teachers and there would be no forward progress.
- An additional K-5 teacher and .15 specialist to go with her (this means we will have 128 teachers, up from 126 this year)

Priority II:

\$300K:

- .5 Science Coordinator
- 1.0 middle school teacher (reducing middle school cut from 2 to 1)
- .2 chorus teacher at Diamond (to reduce 200 to 1 teacher student ratio)
- .005 Diamond Social studies teacher
- FTE K-5 literacy coach (leaving 3.0 literacy teachers and .5 reading coaches on the at-risk list)
- .7 K-5 math teacher (leaves .5 on the at-risk list)
- 1.0 unallocated high school teacher (3.0 current high school teachers remain on the at-risk list)

Discussion: Paul Ash asked Michael Jones which of the at-risk teachers he would save if he could save one and Dr. Jones said PE so Dr. Ash removed that position from the at-risk list prior to the School Committee meeting. Also debate in high school is now listed under social studies but there is no cost implication to this. The Committee discussed the importance of class size. Dr. Sakhujia questioned whether class size was really more important than the science coordinator. Dr. Ash answered that the principals were consistent about class size being a priority. Barbara Manfredi gave the perspective of an elementary school principal through an example of a 5th grade class that has 17 children whose first language is not English, 8 kids with IEPs and several with medical issues. Tom Diaz pointed out that when you add an extra teacher to a situation with three overcrowded classrooms you improve the situation of the children in all three crowded classrooms.

Ravi Sakhujia proposed moving the science coordinator and the chorus teacher up to tier one and the extra classroom teacher to tier two. When Mr. Diaz asked him if he would then support the budget if such a change were to be made, he replied that he would not.

Motion to accept Dr. Ash's recommended adjustments to the at-risk list (Griffiths, Cohen). The motion passed 5-0.

Then a discussion commenced regarding Tom Diaz's proposal to remove \$91K worth of PD and curriculum review items from the budget with the expectation that LEF would be a more reliable source of funding for them. LEF does not fund substitutes. The Committee decided to remove the PD items that LEF already funded this year but not the curriculum review items.

Motion to remove professional development items in the amount of \$62,737 from the budget. (Sakhuja,Griffiths). The motion passed 4-1 (Coppe).

Dr. Sakhuja suggested reducing the custodial budget by \$111K, reducing the aides budget by \$345K so that if the override passes they will only work 74 hours, limiting the number of teachers to 128, deleting the LHS floating positions, using the training and tech specialist at Fiske at all schools and having only three full time librarians plus aides even if the override passes. He also suggested the ELL director go to .25 and that we reduce the supply budget.

Motion to go into executive session for purposes of collective bargaining (Griffiths, Cohen). Griffiths-aye; Sakhuja-aye; Coppe-aye; Cohen-aye and Diaz-aye.

After the break (1:52 pm)

Motion to reduce the supply budget by 1% (Sakhuja, Griffiths)

The discussion included the fact, pointed out by Mr. Diaz, that the Committee has already discussed this. Ms.Coppe pointed out that when supplies run out instruction runs out. Dr. Sakhuja said he is not sure the baseline is correct. Dr. Ash says he is sure. Dr. Cohen pointed out that PTA and teachers both have had to contribute funds.

The motion failed 1-4 (Sakhuja).

Motion to reduce the budget by \$450K by various negotiations in the areas of maintenance and elementary support (Sakhuja). No second.

Tom Griffiths: I am not seconding because it is premature, not because I don't support it.

Motion to reduce LHS floating positions by 2 teachers (Sakhuja). No second.

After an explanation by the superintendent on the importance of these positions for reducing class sizes, Dr. Sakhuja withdrew his motion.

Motion to fund two additional elementary librarians and replace the other three with part-time aides. (Sakhuja, Griffiths). **The motion failed 1-4** (Sakhuja).

Motion to approve the operating budget of \$68,851,670 (Griffiths, Cohen). **The motion passed 4-1** (Sakhuja).

Ashley McKenna: It comes down to what will make the lives of every student in this district good: how many kids in the classroom, how many kids can get the resources they need, I have watched service after service be lost. What if you were to lose the override? Is the budget without the at-risk really level service? I would like to propose reinstating Spanish in the elementary schools. I am concerned about adding a new language in the middle schools when we can't support the languages we already have.

Dawn McKenna: We share the concern that we need to pass the override. There is one item that is a red flag. It is of great concern to me that we are putting 5 custodial positions at risk after passing the maintenance question last year. How can you put user fees at risk? They should not be in the budget if they are in the revolving fund.

Paul Ash: User fees only covers one third of the sports budget. The two things are still linked.

Kate Cremens-Basbas: Thank you for the time you have given us. Thank you for recognizing the need for students to have phys ed and wellness in their day. The health ed in the high school has been reduced. They have taken hits in terms of staffing and scheduling. I want to be clear on what will happen with the health curriculum. I hear it is subject to negotiations. I can email the reasons to you. The students lost the peer component.

Tom Diaz: This relates to the increase in the number of students that will be taught by each teacher.

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