

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

**Jonas Clarke Middle School Auditorium
17 Stedman Road**

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee Members: Tom Griffiths and Olga Guttag. Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:37 p.m.

7:30 p.m. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz):

Public Comment

Nancy Nolan (Lexington Global Warming Action Commission): We have launched the Lexington High School Solar Panel Challenge. We have been raising awareness in town. We are asking every household to compute CO2 emissions. If 150 families make carbon offset contributions to The New England Wind Fund we will get a free solar panel for LHS. We have over 30 families so far.

Elizabeth Donahue (Bowman parent): Class sizes at Bowman in some grades are too large . We need two additional teachers at Bowman next year, just having the space but no teachers does not solve the problem.

7:40 p.m. Superintendent's Report:

Congratulations to Coach Bob Farias for his 500th career victory against the Reading Rockets. Thank you.

7:45 p.m. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Tom Diaz: On Sunday 1/14 at 2 p.m. there is a unity walk and presentations with keynote speaker Charles Martin and Cheryl Prescott-Walden in commemoration of Martin Luther King Day. On Jan 8th Carl Valente made an initial presentation of the budget. On January 18th there is a budget summit. The budget gap is already almost 1 million dollars without the school budget. Mr. Griffiths and I will meet on January 19 with Jeanne Krieger and Paul Ash to discuss facilities unification.

Tom Griffiths: Olga and I jointly attended the capital expenditures committee meeting at 7:30am Monday morning. They began presentation of the school capital budget and will continue it on Thursday the 11th. There is an intense interest in addressing the Clarke energy problems. We also attended the PBC meeting. The pumps don't work properly in the geothermal heating system at Fiske. If the contractor has no role in the solution to the problem, we will soon have ownership of the building complete with the pump problem and the other usual costs of operating a building. It appears as though the contingency budget contains 85K and that will soon be reduced to approximately \$50K by change orders. The margin is now razor thin.

Olga Gutttag: PBC—(cont.) I was asked to design the Fiske playground and I have been checking it. It will be great. The sidewalk committee is concerned over access to the school from both the north and the south sides. The steps on the outdoor path prevent bikers and mothers with strollers from approaching the school by these paths. Thursday night there was a SPEDPAC meeting with Mary Sullivan Kelly, Lynne Sarasin and Stephanie Grimaldi about literacy. I learned a lot. Prevention is preferable to dealing with problems later.

8:00 p.m. Discussion Items:

1. Presentation of Revised K-5 District Lines (45 minutes)

The public hearing on redistricting will take place on Wednesday, January 17th at 7:00, location to be determined. The redistricting email address still works but Olga will be away from email for four days.

Paul Ash: Thank you because tonight's recommendation is a vastly better plan than the original one I recommended. The dominant criteria were: matching school enrollment with capacity; maintaining neighborhoods; impacting a minimum number of students; having a minimum number of kids change middle schools; balancing diversity of people in apartments in different schools. Of course we could not meet all criteria 100%. You don't make any friends by changing district lines, but I had to do it. There is no such thing as a perfect plan. The members of the committee really listened to the comments and considered them. This plan is a sign of healthy government. Change can happen as a result of public input.

Power Point Presentation: Architect first determined school capacities and has based future planning on the new Harrington school. Paul Ash went over details of the Optimal Educational Capacity of each school. He showed what schools would look like if there were to be no redistricting. New redistricting lines result in all schools being in the 400s, spare student capacity range is much smaller than it would've been without redistricting. He showed a map of recommended redistricting lines, which will be on the LPS website tomorrow. Dr. Ash described details of the changes of the redistricting. He showed a slide of school by school enrollments of FY07 and FY08.

Dr. Ash recommends to the committee that fourth graders be allowed to stay in their schools as 5th graders. These numbers don't take this into account. There is little effect on middle school numbers from redistricting.

Some Repeated Q&As from before.

1. Kids who are in out of district schools in 4th grade this year will be allowed to stay in that school.
2. Transfers between middle schools are not allowed if redistricting causes you to change middle schools.

Q&A

Linda Bordman (?) Is this cost neutral?

Paul Ash: Yes. We need 130 teachers and based on this plan we need 129-130 teachers.

Jenny Richland: How many children are moving middle schools with new proposal?

Paul Ash: Three in the group of sixteen going from Harrington to Fiske.

Jenny Richlin: Can the proposed redistricting cause siblings to attend 2 different elementary schools?

Paul Ash: Yes, if you grandfather the older sibling.

Annie McQuilken: There are families within a half mile of Fiske that are being bused to Estabrook when you have a neighborhood (Ledgelawn, Liberty) that could be put into Fiske.

2. Revised Administrative Procedures for K-5 Transfers (15 minutes)

Paul Ash: We needed administrative procedures for this policy. One element is the maximum class size allowable for a child to be allowed to move in. First, applications of children already in the school will be considered. Only then, children who are not yet in the school will be considered. The parents will receive the decision by Aug 1 (so we can allow for influx in the summer). If the principals of both schools decide a child needs to move based on the child's need that can happen; for example in a bullying situation.

Olga Gutttag: This could solve the bubble problem.

Tom Griffiths: I support this policy.

Jaqcy Fiore (parent): Who is going to make sure that families stay in the schools they are supposed to stay in?

Paul Ash: The Central Office will send lists of students who reside in that district and others will need to apply for out of district placement.

Debbie Strod (precinct3): Do the voluntary bubble reduction people have to re-apply each year?

Paul Ash: The process makes no exception in this case.

Debbie Strod: The 5th grade kids who are redistricted from Harrington to Fiske have to go to Diamond?

Paul Ash: Yes, unless you have a sibling at Clarke.

Debbie Strod: Before you said otherwise.

Paul Ash: Ok I'm agreeable.

Annie McQuilken: Thank you for incorporating parent feedback. Can you say as soon as possible instead of by August 1st? If a class is not over capacity why kick a child out? If people are moving to solve a bubble problem they want assurance that they won't be kicked out.

Terry Sharon: It's not fair that it's not a permanent transfer.

Paul Ash: The problem is you do get in-migration and over a few years you may get classes that are over capacity. Should students who don't live in that district be allowed to stay and cause classes to be too big? I think not. But perhaps there should be a distinction of at vs. over-capacity.

Olga Guttag: We have neighborhood not magnet schools. There is a difference between applying every year (neighborhood) and applying once and staying in the school (magnet schools) . There are trade-offs.

Jesse Steigerwald: I hope you won't encourage parents to come to alleviate bubble problems. Either you embrace a child as part of a community or you don't.

9:00 p.m. Action Items:

1. Vote to Support the Legislative Proposals by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (15 minutes)

Tom Diaz: This is an attempt to increase the state's contribution for education to 50% by FY11. We would get 10 million dollars instead of 5.8 million dollars in state aid. We would get \$672 per student. The foundation budget would be increased so as to more realistically reflect the real cost of education. The circuit breaker would be increased, include transportation, and would be computed based on three times the foundation instead of four times the foundation.

Motion to endorse this legislative proposal by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (Guttag, Griffiths) 3-0

The members present agreed to allow the Secretary to show this as the unanimous vote of all members of the Committee if the missing members assent.

The public should show support. Contact your legislators.

2. Vote to Approve the Formation of a Committee to Review Financial Operations (10 minutes)

Tom Griffiths: This draft changes from the preceding one in phasing the Committee's work, giving priority to points iii and iv:

- iii) whether the school system employs and enforces adequate controls to guard against unexpected expenses and whether the system should make some provision for handling system and vendor errors discovered after books are closed for the fiscal year;
- iv) whether the school system has adequate mechanisms in place for projecting budget needs when budgets are developed and, later, to allow the Superintendent and School Committee to assess expenses, encumbrances, and projected expenses against budgeted amounts on a timely, continuing basis;

The Committee will be expected to develop a schedule for addressing the rest of the tasks in the charge.

The committee will include two School Committee members, and two Lexington residents with substantial financial management backgrounds.

We must institute the committee and we must people it.

Olga Gutttag: How are we seeking the committee applicants?

Tom Griffiths: I announced it at School Committee; I asked people; I asked Carl Valente. Carl Valente's recommendations agreed to serve and you have their resumes in your packet.

Olga Gutttag: We could put a call on the TMMA list and then next week go with the names.

Tom Diaz: Let's accept the charge. We can wait until next meeting to people it. I don't know about putting it on the TMMA list. Give input to Mr. Griffiths.

Motion to accept charge of the committee (OG, TG)

Discussion:

David Kanter: (Appropriation Committee proposed liaison to this committee): Point iii is most important. Budget aspect is most important and must be done by Town Meeting.

Tom Griffiths: We also want to be able to track our budget and point iv relates to that. I believe we want to handle that as early as possible.

Tom Diaz: It is the intention of the town manager, the town moderator, etc., that the town budget be discussed fairly early in Town Meeting this year.

Olga Gutttag: [To Paul Ash] Will you be ready for early April?

Paul Ash: It will be ready. I am presenting same service, supplemental and at-risk budgets. I worry the committee won't have enough time.

Passed 3-0.

3. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of June 6, 2006
4. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of August 24, 2006

5. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of September 14, 2006
6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of September 26, 2006
7. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of October 3, 2006
8. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of October 24, 2006
9. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of November 14, 2006

Motion to approve minutes of June 6, 2006, August 24, 2006, September 14th, 2006, September 26th 2006, October 3rd 2006, October 24th 2006 and November 14th, 2006 (Griffiths, Guttag)
Passed 3-0. With the addition of “p.m.” where it was omitted in the convening time.

Motion to adjourn (Griffiths, Guttag). **The motion passed 3-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at Cary Hall, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue.