

## LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

Cary Hall

1605 Massachusetts Avenue

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

### **I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)**

### **II. Public Comment**

**Masha Traber:** About redistricting, I want to reassure parents that switching middle schools is not a horrible thing.

### **III. Superintendent's Report:**

Honoring Arjun Ramamurti — Third Place Award Winner in the National Siemens Competition in Math, Science, and Technology—the most prestigious competition in the United States. Arjun placed third in the United States.

### **IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:**

**Helen Cohen:** The forms for the Sara Harrington Sharyn Wong Chan Diversity Award will be out soon.

**Tom Griffiths:** I participated in a negotiation with Jeanne Krieger concerning joint facilities.

**Olga Guttag:** I want the community to remember our honoring this fine student and our fine department. I attended a PTA presidents meeting where Robin DiGiammarino discussed the fundraising policy that we are working on. The redistricting committee is trying to reconcile public input. Current 5<sup>th</sup> graders will be allowed to go to the middle school they would be going to without redistricting. There will be redistricting. If the plan is different there will be another public hearing. Reimbursement on secondary projects is good news.

**Tom Diaz:** Thanks to the redistricting committee.

**Ravi Sakhuja:** I admire the work of the redistricting committee. We have a projection of a reduced number of kids. This is an opportunity to optimize our costs.

## **V. Discussion Items:**

- A. Phasing Out the Weighted GPA, Improving Instruction and Creating a Fairer Assessment Process at the High School: Presented by Dr. Michael Jones.

**Dr. Ash:** Even as a candidate I was aware of the issue of weighted GPA. Dr. Jones wanted to take the time to properly research the issue. I deeply respect the quality of the faculty of the high school. What is a fair evaluation system? Where did weighted GPA come from? Years ago students were tracked. Some students went to vocational school for example. Today it is illegal to track students. We also don't have rank in class. Is it a fair system? If a student drops a level or goes up a level what happens to his or her grade? There is a complete swing of three grades in both directions. There is no correlation between the weighting system and the grade that the student gets. Colleges recompute based on the criteria they are looking for. We want academic excellence, rigorous courses, clear standards for a course and grading rubrics.

Dr. Jones and other staff members made a presentation on the phasing out of the weighted GPA and the creation of fair and equitable assessment tools.

There was discussion from the Committee on the rubrics and the phasing out of the weighted GPA. Dr. Ash believes this will improve the quality of the teaching.

- B. Status of the White House and the Old Harrington

The Committee will probably prefer to use the Old Harrington rather than the White House for the Central Administration. Town officials are walking through the Old Harrington to put together an estimate for the costs of a temporary use. The PBC has not yet seen Mr. Finney's full report.

There was a discussion of this including how it affects a potential senior center, the implications of putting facilities on the ground floor of the Old Harrington and the Committee releasing the White House for another use.

**Motion to notify the Selectmen that contingent upon the approval of the PBC and on passing the necessary capital article at Town Meeting, the School Committee is ready to release the White House sometime in fiscal '08. (Cohen, Griffiths). The motion passed 5-0.**

Then the Committee discussed possible uses for the Old Harrington: facilities department, swing space, senior center.

**Jim Goell:** Thank you for what you did this evening (releasing the White House).

## **VI. Action Items:**

- A. Vote to Accept \$100.00 Donation from Lueders Environmental, Inc.

**Motion to accept the \$100 donation from Lueders Environmental, Inc. with gratitude (Gutttag, Griffiths). The motion passed 5-0.**

- B. Vote to Approve LHS French Exchange Trip to France

Maureen Murphy, Chair of Foreign Language Department of Lexington High School and Ms. Girondel.

The Committee discussed the trip including student drinking and gender of chaperones.

**Motion to approve the 2007 French exchange (Cohen, Gutttag). The motion passed 5-0.**

- C. Vote to Approve the Formation of a School Committee Subcommittee to Review Financial Operations

This will be taken up at a subsequent meeting. Tom Griffiths handed out a resume of a potential candidate to the committee. Olga Gutttag asked if a process for finding members had been defined. Tom Griffiths replied in the negative. The School Committee agreed that they would like two members from the public on the financial review committee.

## **VII. Motion to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining and potential litigation not to return to public session (Gutttag, Cohen). Gutttag-aye; Sakhuja-aye; Griffiths-aye; Cohen-aye; Diaz-aye.**