

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 23, 2011
Clarke Middle School Auditorium
17 Stedman Road

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Mary Ann Stewart, School Committee Members Sandro Alessandrini, Bonnie Brodner, Margaret Coppe and Jessie Steigerwald and student representative Noah Coolidge . The minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

Town Counsel Kevin Batt and Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations Mary Ellen Dunn also sat with the School Committee.

The Meeting was convened at 6:15 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Chair Mary Ann Stewart)

Chair Stewart outlined the guidelines of the meeting including the order of speakers. She explained that priority would be given to representatives of all the programs who submitted bids through the RFP process (Lextended Day, Bowman Extended Day, Fiske Extended Day, Harrington Extended Day, Springboard, and Champions). Ms. Stewart explained that there would not be enough time to hear everyone and suggested that people who don't get an opportunity to be heard at the microphone tonight to please submit their comments in writing.

II. Discussion

1. Public Meeting and Discussion of the Selection Criteria for Extended Day After School Child Care.

Chair Stewart introduced Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash. Dr. Ash said the afterschool extended day programs in our elementary schools are outstanding. He announced that the period to make a recommendation on which provider would win the bid would be extended from April 9 to May 10 in order to take into account all points of view. Dr. Ash outlined the process for reviewing bids, saying that the selection process is not based on price. He clarified that the bids would first be judged on their level of quality, not price. Only if everything is equal would price be considered. Dr. Ash said he was interested in whether programs can be improved upon. He said the six elementary school principals are involved and that this will be a thoughtful process. Dr. Ash invited Town Counsel Mr. Kevin Batt to explain why Lexington Public Schools (LPS) is legally obligated to go out to bid.

The Chair introduced Mr. Batt who explained that the RFP process became necessary in 2007. In that year, the School Committee elected to structure extended day programs by means of a long-term lease. One-year licenses, in use at the time, could have been revoked with short-notice. A lease creates a long-term obligation between parties. The extended day programs wanted stability—thus the School Committee entered into agreements which legally obligated it to use the RFP process.

Students from Clarke Middle School and Harrington Elementary School presented a petition with over 200 signatures of former Harrington Extended Day (HED) students and parents. Several students also commented on their various HED experiences.

Steve Monks of Waltham Street spoke on behalf of all school-based extended day Board members of the Town's after-school programs. His comments related to the strengths of Lexington's various after-school programs.

Jeff Crampton, a Bowman parent and Site Council member, questioned the preference for a singular provider for all six schools. In particular, he commented on the strength of personal relationships at the core of the Bowman Extended Day program.

Daniel Abramson, a Fiske Extended Day representative, said his older son had been at Bowman Extended Day. He spoke to the importance of local control of parent-run after-school programs.

Kim Jennings, a representative from Champions of Colorado with an office in Foxboro, Massachusetts, sympathized with the audience and said she understood their anxiety. She also commented that high quality is important.

Odell Kennedy, Partnership Development Director for Champions, echoed Ms. Jennings' sentiments, adding that Champions is not a cookie cutter organization. He asked the Committee to do what is best for Lexington's children.

Brett Prilik, Head of Springboard programming in five states, spoke to the academic strengths of Springboard's program.

Carolyn Fiore- Bridge parent and Lextended Day representative, stated that her family has used Lextended Day for 15 years. She felt the RFP creates a bias against existing programs and that parents were not involved. She urged the Committee to choose Lextended Day, as the program provides financial stability, flexibility, high quality staff and strong parental community support and is also inclusive of all students, particularly those with special needs.

Dan Losen of Hillcrest Drive and an HED representative, expressed concern about the bidding process giving preference to the two outside programs. In particular, he questioned using Champions, a division of Knowledge Universe, whose founder is Michael Milken, a convicted felon. As for Springboard, Mr. Losen said their focus was on core academics and questioned the "fit" for Lexington students.

III. The meeting was recessed at 7:08 p.m. to reconvene on the floor of Town Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Documents: *Meeting agenda; letter from Tamara Halstead Jessiman in support of Lextended Day; letter from Benjamin Staines in support of Lextended Day; letter from Gretchen Segars in support of Lextended Day; letter from Wayne Wylaski in support of Lextended Day; letter from Daniel Losen against an extended day provider for all six schools; two petitions from Clarke and Harrington students in support of HED and one letter from a Harrington student in support of HED.*