

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, July 26, 2006
School Administration Building
1557 Massachusetts Avenue

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

The Meeting was convened at 1:07 pm

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Griffiths): Tom Diaz is away in Africa.

II. Public Comment: none

III. Superintendent's Report:

1. METCO Funding Update: The Senate overrode the Governor's veto on METCO funding so 2 million dollars will be added for METCO, that is \$345 per child or just under \$90,000 for Lexington in FY07. The dollars are not restricted. Thanks to Jay Kaufman and other legislators who worked hard. This is long overdue.
2. OPIS will be providing substitute teachers instead of Kelly Services for \$40K less than Kelly Services.
3. Chartwells will be the food services vendor again. This is a turnkey operation. Their fee is deducted from the revenue we bring in. This offsets custodial and electrical costs. We were losing money when the lunch price was \$1.50. Last year it was raised to \$2.50 and \$2.75. This year it has been raised again.
4. The PBC this week interviewed five architectural firms to produce a master plan for the elementary schools, the Central Office and the old Harrington, to tell us the least expensive ways to modernize. Each district is required to do a master plan. One of the five companies put on a brilliant presentation; I am not at liberty to say which one yet. They will be on board within two weeks to assess the situation. By end of October they will submit a comprehensive master plan to figure out the right solutions.

Paul Ash: The plan for the Central Office included space for part of the facilities department, but not for the whole department.

Bill Hartigan: Hopefully one building will include room for the DPW and school facilities. This would be more efficient.

Olga Gutttag: We will ask for appropriation for a new DPW facility in the fall, so we need master plan ASAP.

Paul Ash: We can't speed up this process beyond end of October. Let's make residents aware of the time table.

Olga Guttag: District lines won't be in place by the time the master study is completed.

Paul Ash: The 2 work together.

Olga Guttag: I am concerned about rushing the redistricting lines.

5. I regret that Ann Giombetti will resign for personal reasons. I want to express my regret and my thanks. She has been very supportive. She will be leaving, we don't have a date yet. The search is on.

Tom Griffiths: Thank you, Ann, for all the work you have done in creating a more transparent budget. The School Committee appreciates the time you have put in.

(Standing ovation)

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Olga Guttag: We will miss Ann's 24/7 work ethic

Helen Cohen: Thanks to Ann

V. Discussion Items:

1. Personnel Update
 - a. Personnel Changes Due to the Loss of Questions 1 and 2

Carol Gregory, the Director of Human Resources gave a personnel update: there were 32.04 FTE reductions, which translated into 51 people. Eleven teachers were reassigned to vacant positions.

- b. New Hires
 1. Administrators: High quality professionals.
 2. Teachers

Carol Gregory: There were 91.5 FTE vacancies. We've been active in helping people become licensed. We helped people find employment.

Ravi Sakhuja: 32 positions are eliminated?

Carol Gregory: Yes.

Ravi Sakhuja: What is the impact on benefits?

Paul Ash: \$8600 per FTE is typically saved, though it depends on whether they take benefits.

Olga Guttag: Thank you for a very comprehensive report. Can you put in savings on unemployment that we did not have to spend?

Ravi Sakhuja: Are the 32 positions eliminated because of failure of Question 1?

Carol Gregory: Yes.

Paul Ash: Some positions were added too. Also some people retired or resigned. We did not have to fire 32 people, but we lost 32 FTEs.

2. FY06 Financial Update:

Paul Ash: We put many systems into place. Town Meeting also gave us money in November. 1.3 million was our projected deficit for FY06. We provided monthly budget reports to the School Committee and converted from line item to program budget. You need to go thru one cycle before you know what is missing so we held back \$300K from principals and department heads to be used for unanticipated costs. We will need to get a supplemental appropriation to pay late bills. The number changes every day so I can't tell you the exact number. The magnitude of the problem is smaller than last year. We are working with Carl Valente to get it as small as possible.

Tom Griffiths: It is well below \$500K.

Paul Ash: Carl Valente and Rob Addelson have been terrific, Ann Giombetti and I have been working harmoniously with them. There are three problem areas: SPED; FY06 costs that weren't funded; and mistakes.

1. SPED: costs in tuition and transportation continued to go up. Two very expensive cases are moving in. We are in the process of putting together methods of projection but the consultant working on it got sick. The May projection was understated. We will need to use the circuit breaker money that we got.
2. End of the year costs that should've been funded in FY 06 but weren't: if the Instructional Assistants don't use personal days they can cash them out according to their contract—this was underfunded by 30K, mentors, and athletic coaching positions were also underfunded. Now we know these things, though we didn't know them when we built the budget.
3. Errors: For example we had a low oil price as of June 30th and topped off the oil tanks. We thought we had the money to pay for it.

The \$260K for the 07 SPED budget has already been used up so we are already in deficit in this account. Eventually we will have to get money from external sources (the four step process described in

a previous meeting). We have picked up money from salary differentials. I am very cautious regarding FY07.

Tom Griffiths: I would like to bring up two points on behalf of Tom Diaz. First, he proposes an audit committee with experienced members. Second, he questions the size of the finance director's job: do we need a deputy finance director as well?

Ravi Sakhuja: I would like a presentation regarding Lexington SPED costs as compared to other communities in terms of costs and structure. Also, how are we organized in terms of giving notice to finance people? I would like a position paper. The audit should be with a School Committee member on it. And we should look at other systems and how they audit.

Olga Gutttag: Do we anticipate getting state reimbursement for SPED again?

Mary Sullivan Kelly: For this year yes, not sure for FY07.

Paul Ash: The full audit will take place by September. There is a chance that we will lose the \$262K if they decide we are not qualified. Circuit breaker money is only for tuition.

Olga Gutttag: Regarding the audit committee: we need one. It needs to be a subcommittee of the School Committee where we choose the additional members. We could each propose someone to be on it. It is good to have people with different agendas on it. Then the confidence of the public in the School Committee will be restored.

Tom Griffiths: We would want it to represent financial accuracy rather than representing every constituency in town. Our credibility has to be good, I don't want people to lose sight of this great school system.

3. Facilities Update: **Bill Hartigan, Director of Facilities**

a. **Capital:** (handout): Capital project list: Roofing at LHS and Diamond are proceeding well. The LHS auditorium project has been awarded. It will be almost all done by the beginning of school except the painting of walls will be done in the fall. We have a three year program and are even doing some year two things too. There will be payback on the Diamond building control system. The telephone intercom systems in Bowman and Bridge are 95% completed.

Olga Gutttag: What about the science building ventilation upgrade?

Bill Hartigan: We will have some immediate safeguards but upgrade won't be in place yet. I have been disappointed in the response to the bids.

Ravi Sakhuja: What is responsibility of the custodian director?

Bill Hartigan: To be the day to day director. We have failed to provide the equipment and the leadership to enable custodians to succeed. This is a non-union job.

b. **Preventive Maintenance:** 11 items. I would rather plan the expenditure before spending. I would like input on this. I want to focus on Harrington, Clarke, Diamond and LHS. It's not good to invest preventive maintenance money on obsolete equipment. This does not replace custodial and maintenance programs: we still fix things as they break in the four old elementary schools. Only half of LHS square footing was addressed in modernization so the preventive maintenance will be proportionate to that. Costs are estimated. Some numbers may come in lower than these.

c. **New Energy Saving Initiatives:** Modernization of the Clarke building control system went ahead well. It looks like a 25% reduction in electric consumption since Jan/Feb. We have continued to streamline the system. We are working with the selectmen energy committee doing data collection. We are using the NSTAR benchmarking program, which is a tracking system for each individual building. There is at least \$250K of equipment at Clarke that is defunct, before buying more equipment we should look at converting to oil or natural gas, we have had NSTAR and outside consultants at the table and we'll have info to share within the next 2 weeks.

More discussion ensued on these initiatives.

d. **New Positions:** Bob Martin (formerly of Diamond) will be the new Assistant Director of Facilities. Paul Gentile deserves kudos; he is becoming our new licensed electrician, and his replacement has accepted his position. We are interviewing eight qualified candidates for the Director of Facilities for Technical Services. By Labor Day we hope to be fully staffed.

VI. Action Items:

1. Vote to Accept \$100.00 Donation to the Clarke Gift Account

Motion to accept this donation with gratitude (Sakhuja, Gutttag). **The motion passed 4-0.**

2. Vote to Accept \$3,430.00 in Donations to the Lexington Children's Place

Motion to accept these donations with gratitude (Gutttag, Sakhuja). **The motion passed 4-0.**

Motion to adjourn (Cohen, Sakhuja). **The motion passed 4-0.**

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Thursday, August 24, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.