

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, October 26, 2010

Cary Hall Auditorium

1605 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Rod Cole, School Committee Members Sandro Alessandrini, Margaret Coppe, Jessie Steigerwald and Mary Ann Stewart. Minutes were taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:38 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Rod Cole)

II. Discussion Item

Update on Estabrook Environmental Issues:

Introductory presentation by Pat Goddard, Director of Public Facilities.

Mr. Goddard outlined three options for placement of Estabrook classrooms: 1). Twenty-six modular classrooms placed in the area of the recreation fields; 2). Twenty modular classrooms placed by the playgrounds and 3). The old Harrington School as a swing space. He detailed the ramifications of each option, including cost, space considerations and pitfalls and benefits of each. The second option is the most cost-effective would take approximately 28 weeks to implement.

There were questions from the Committee.

Bin He (Estabrook parent): Has the PCB level at the old Harrington been tested? Is it possible to move the children to the new DPW building?

Hemina KrishnaBachia (Estabrook parent): Will Robinson Road have to be expanded if modulars are installed? Perhaps we could reduce the number of modular's even further. It is preferable not to spend too much money on a short-term solution because we want a new school. I am not in favor of the Old Harrington option; I would prefer Lextended at Fiske if we have to move it.

Pamela Tames (Estabrook parent): I really appreciate the time you have put into thinking about this and putting together the options.

Presentation by Dr. David MacIntosh of EH&E: Dr. MacIntosh gave an update on the results of testing of indoor air that have been done in the Estabrook School. He described the procedures that were conducted and the results of the air samples from October 18 and 19, 2010. Preliminary results show that we have ways of mitigating higher concentrations that occur in the winter when the rooms are being heated. Some of the results are not back yet, but as soon as they are EH&E will prepare a report on them. Dr. MacIntosh is confident that we can keep

the levels below 300 in the whole school. A site-specific assessment was put out last Wednesday. In that assessment EH&E estimates that our airborne levels of PCBs could be higher than the generic EPA recommendation and still meet the underlying safe level requirements. This is due to our specific background PCB profile and our specific mixture of PCBs but we can achieve the lower generic threshold level.

There were questions from the Committee. They were answered by Pat Goddard and David MacIntosh.

Public Hearing:

The Committee members shared their thoughts on the situation. Rod Cole stated that he is sorry that this situation exists at all. He acknowledged the emotional difficulty of the situation. The EPA is the only authority we have and that is what we should use for our benchmark. It looks like we can be below the very conservative numbers (100/300) provided by the EPA.

Jing Li (Estabrook kindergarten Parent): Asked about temperature and ventilation and their relationship to PCB levels.

Betsy Sarles (parent and Estabrook PTA president): In Lexington we strive to go above and beyond the benchmarks, why not with this issue? Our kids deserve the best and safest environment just like children in every other school. We need a new building as soon as possible as well.

A large group of parents has met together and we have some comments: 1). We should beat the EPA guidelines, have it be 100 everywhere so everyone feels safe in the school and it is the same as all schools in town. Parents should get information in a timely fashion so they can voice their concerns in a timely fashion. Try to identify all the PCBs. There is a concern regarding the averaging. Can we revisit the decision tree we saw in September? May we compare results with another lab? Is the SOI on track?

Dr. Ash responded that the Board of Selectmen voted to authorize the emergency SOI so it will be completed by November 5.

Meg Landers (Estabrook parent): We have had problems with traffic patterns and things being in disrepair for years. What do the acceptable levels distill down to; what would a classroom look like? What is the timeline for getting us a new school? We have been dealing with a lot of stuff for years with this school.

Jessie Steigerwald outlined the various scenarios and how much time each option would take (getting the emergency SOI, the normal SOI process and asking the Town to pay for it).

Our kids are missing out on regular library and gym experiences. Moving the kids to Fiske would be helpful. Harrington is far.

Ari Mozes (Estabrook parent): In the winter might the levels not increase considerably? Does the entire Committee feel comfortable with the 100/300 levels as a goal? These kids have been exposed to higher levels in years past.

Susan Bottan (Estabrook parent): I would like the assurance of the Committee that all children will receive instruction in safe, fully functioning and appropriate spaces as per the EPA guidelines. Our children are beginning to feel disconnected and insecure. It is time for the Committee to pledge to make sure that the teaching and learning in our school meets the high standards that exist in all other Lexington schools.

Sarah Kuli (Estabrook parent): Please identify yourself if you pass out a handout. Estabrook has severe limitations: no library, gym or area for all school meetings. My kindergarten son's class meets in the hallway; there is a chair, a rug and an easel. The children are split into three groups. Kids are resilient but they also need routines and consistency.

Kamala Soparkar (Estabrook parent): The whole school should be mitigated to 100 or below. All kids should be treated equally. What does remediation look like with kids in the classroom?

Christian Boutwell (Estabrook parent): Which things require funding from Town Meeting? How do the levels of PCBs relate to occupying the school for at least four years? Could the modulars serve as swing space and serve Estabrook for 4 years?

Harold Payson (Estabrook parent): The numbers from the latest tests are encouraging. We are not yet at 100/300. Turning on the heat increases the numbers. There are uncertainties. How long will the various mitigations work? Can we do more to encapsulate the exterior wall? The 3-5th graders have been in the school the longest so they should have reduced numbers.

Estabrook Principal Sandra Trach described the plan she came up with in consultation with Dr. Ash and the Estabrook teachers regarding which classrooms the students would be placed in.

Beth Sager (Estabrook parent): Is there a deadline for getting to these levels? I don't feel like we really know what the levels are today, nor do we know the effect of the heat. We should test the whole school. The modulars do not make sense with building a new Estabrook.

Sheri Mahoney (Estabrook parent): I am encouraged by the round seven results. Do as much as you can to anticipate worst-case winter conditions and test for those.

Jennifer Breen (Estabrook parent): Concern with a particular classroom change that the principal announced. Kim from the EPA has a question regarding whether the encapsulation that was done in August or September might be breaking down.

Dawn McKenna (precinct 6): I am confused about where you are from a process standpoint. The School Committee members are the policy makers. You are elected to make policy. I hope to hear from you that this is a priority; once you make a decision everyone else will fall into line and help you build a new school. If you are going to make a decision to build a new school then you need to discuss a transition phase—and that cannot wait. Many people are upset that there is not a Warrant Article for the Special Town Meeting about this decision. I hope there will be a Warrant Article on the Spring Town Meeting.

Elaine Keefe (former Estabrook parent): My daughter is in 6th grade and has cancer. Not having gym or library is not as important as kids being healthy. I will do anything possible to fix this situation. This will be the most important thing you ever do in your careers.

Angela Gharabegian (Estabrook parent): The unknown is scary. We should not make a big shift until we know what the numbers are.

Peter Everin (Estabrook parent): Which option would you recommend if cost were not an issue? If it were an issue?

Pat Goddard stated that staying in Estabrook and continuing mitigation and pursuing a new school is the best option in either case.

Motion that we accept the superintendent's recommendation to move the Estabrook students into regular classrooms as of November 9 (Coppe, Alessandrini). **The motion passed 5-0.**

Motion to direct the superintendent, in conjunction with the Department of Public Facilities, to test each educational space in Estabrook for the presence of PCBs and to report back to us as soon as practicable to allow for the Department of Public Facilities to oversee the remediation steps we were presented with tonight and to continue to identify sources of PCBs and present to us the options for ongoing remediation (Steigerwald, Stewart). The motion passed 5-0.

Motion that the School Committee supports building a new Estabrook School as soon as possible (Stewart, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

Margaret Coppe suggested that next week the Committee change its meeting place to the Harrington School because of election day.

III. Motion to Adjourn (Stewart, Alessandrini). The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

Documents: Meeting agenda; Department of Public Facilities: Estabrook Space Options; Memo from David MacIntosh of EH&E to Pat Goddard, Paul Ash and Estabrook Advisory Committee, re: All Samples Collected on October 18 and 19, 2010, Estabrook Elementary School; "7 Questions for Dr. Paul Ash and The School Committee" (prepared by Peter Everin, the document states that the questions were prepared by an Estabrook parent and the answers were provided by Dr. Ash); "Ballot Question #3 and a New Estabrook School" (document of unknown provenance).