

**Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – April 6, 2005
Central Office Administration Building**

Members present were Tom Griffiths, Tom Diaz, Scott Burson, Helen Cohen, Olga Gutttag and Interim Superintendent William Hurley.

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

None.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Olga Gutttag had a meeting today at the Clarke Middle School with the energy group. They expect to have some kind of report acceptable to capital in time for May 2nd.

Discussion Items

There were no discussion items.

Action Items

Tom Griffiths announced that he is resigning from the Chairmanship from the School Committee to take effect at the end of town meeting. The Committee needs to appoint a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Bill asks if anyone would like to make a motion to this effect.

Olga Gutttag said she is very sorry that Tom is resigning. She has been thinking about the reorganization and wondering if the Committee should be doing anything differently given the arrival of a new Superintendent. The Superintendent and Chair of the School Committee is critical to the school system. There will also be a new Town Manager starting in July as well. It is her sense that the Chair should not revolve annually as there is a learning curve to becoming the School Committee Chair. If it is only a one-year term, then you are spending a lot of time learning and a small percentage of time perfecting the style. The School Committee should consider having a Chairmanship for at least two years. Her concern is having members going for re-election and also serving as Chair. If that member loses the election, then they lose their seat and there is no Chair. It is important to set up the Chairmanship so it does not fall in sync with re-election. She

hopes that Mr. Griffiths would be willing to serve for another year and asked him to reconsider his resignation. If not, she hopes that Scott Burson would be willing to take it over with Helen Cohen as Vice-Chair.

Tom Griffiths said he enjoyed being the Chairman. His goal is to make sure that the members of the School Committee support the new Chairman. He felt he had no problem with the learning curve but there were things that were different such as being the interface to counsel and dealing with selectmen on a one-to-one basis in budget planning meetings. He feels it is time for him to give up the Chairmanship so we can promote it for other School Committee members. He wanted to clarify that his decision is not based on a health issue but feels it is the best for the School Committee to have new Chair.

Mr. Hurley asked if there was an interest in further discussion or comments.

Tom Diaz said as a one-year Veteran, he does not feel up to speed about doing all the duties of a Chair. He believes that as a committee, we are generally a junior committee and has reservations about rotating the chair every year. He wishes Mr. Griffiths' would continue but respects his decision.

Helen Cohen stated as a potential nominee for this position, she thinks these are valid arguments and is interested in people's thoughts about having a new Chair with a new Superintendent. She understands she would have a steep learning curve and would count on Tom Griffiths and Scott Burson to help her through that.

Bill Hurley thinks everyone on the Committee is capable of chairing the School Committee. One of the most important roles of the Chair as it relates to the Superintendent is the way that he/she conducts the meetings themselves. These meetings are a public-forum and there are important issues that come up. It is important that the Chair knows how to function as a mediator and leader of the group. If there were no other comments, he would entertain a nominee.

Tom Griffiths nominated Helen Cohen. Olga Gutttag nominated Scott Burson.

Scott Burson commented that he has already had his opportunity to be Chair. He would be willing to do it again but does not see any reason why Helen is not fully capable of being Chair. His preference is to defer this role to Helen. He agrees with Tom Diaz that we cannot let an abstract expectation stand in the way of a functioning committee. He will not decline but if Helen is willing to serve he feels the Committee should let her.

Tom Griffiths moved to close the nominations.

A vote was taken for those in favor of Helen Cohen being Chair; 4-1; Olga Gutttag disagreed.

Olga Gutttag nominated Tom Diaz for Vice-Chair.

Tom Griffiths moved to close the nominations. A vote was taken in favor of Tom Diaz as Vice-Chair; 5-0 all in favor.

School Choice

Mr. Hurley wanted to confirm that it is School Committee practice to do a first hearing on this and then vote at a subsequent meeting. It is Mr. Hurley's recommendation that the School Committee not allow Lexington to participate in school choice.

Tom Diaz thinks school choice sounds better than what it actually is. It is his intention to vote against it. Scott Burson said Lexington School Committee has unanimously voted against this policy in past years. He is also going to vote against it. Olga Gutttag is on the same page as everyone else. Superintendent Hurley explained that school choice is an act of the state Legislature that enables students from other towns to attend school in a district whose school committee has voted to participate in the school choice program.

The School Committee will make a formal vote on this issue at the next School Committee meeting.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the November 30, 2004 School Committee meeting as amended. (Diaz – Gutttag; 5-0)

All other minutes have been deferred until the next School Committee meeting.

A motion was made at 6:40 p.m. to go into Executive Session for the purpose of collective bargaining discussions and not return to public session. (Diaz – Gutttag; roll call vote unanimous 5-0)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

cc: William Hurley
Tom Griffiths
Helen Cohen
Scott Burson
Olga Gutttag
Tom Diaz