

Lexington School Committee meeting, April 26, 2004

This meeting was held at 7:00 p.m. at Clarke Middle School, room 107 , Monday April 26, 2004.

Present were chairman Tom Griffiths and members Tom Díaz, Helen Cohen, Scott Burson, and Olga Guttag, along with Superintendent Joanne Benton.

Opening Remarks

There were no opening remarks.

Superintendent's Comments

Ms. Benton thanked the Lexington Rotarians for their donation of defibrillation devices.

Members Reports and Concerns

Ms. Cohen said we would be deciding in the next few days who are the finalists for the interim Superintendent position. A meeting on Thursday (April 29) was to be held for public interviews of the finalists, with the selection of the Superintendent expected early the first week of May. Mr. Griffiths and other members fixed the dates and agendas for upcoming meetings related to the Superintendent search, to best accommodate school staff interested in attending. The committee also decided to have an executive session on May 3, for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining.

Article 18A, Capital Expenditures

Charles Lamb explained that the Capital Expenditures Committee would propose an amendment concerning the "capital envelope" including the \$25,000 for study of the School Administration building. The committee and Superintendent discussed past and current studies under way and possible along with possible alternate locations for the school administration.

Mr. Burson made a motion regarding the proposed Capital Expenditures amendment: "I support this precisely because this is a town asset, precisely because I don't think long term the existing Central Office space is tenable as a central office for our school system. I think Town Meeting has to hear that. I think Town Meeting has to hear that in the short term we will be looking for other space and the town is going to have to come to grips with what to do with that building." This motion was seconded by Ms. Cohen and passed by a 5-0 vote of the School Committee.

Article 13, Concerning "Met State"

Mr. Michael Roberts was present from the developer, Avalon Bay. Mr. Roberts explained a revised unit mix, reducing the number of 2- and 3-bedroom units, to further attempt to achieve "fiscal neutrality." Mr. Díaz and Ms. Guttag were to present majority and minority reports on this article, to Town Meeting, later in the week of April 26. Further discussion was put on the agenda for April 28 after these two members would

have studied Mr. Roberts' data. Mr. Roberts also explained recent improvements to their proposed \$750,000 escrow fund to compensate for higher than projected numbers of school-age children.

FY05 Budget

At the last Summit Meeting the School Committee had agreed to the proposal to allocate funds to the Stabilization fund. This necessitated a new vote on the total budget amount.

Mr. Burson made a motion: "I move the School Committee approve the Superintendent's recommended FY05 budget of \$66,357,468." Seconded by Mr. Díaz.

During discussion of Mr. Burson's motion, Ms. Gutttag discussed the \$100,000 METCO item on the override at-risk list, arguing that the new proposed State budget appeared to include enough funds to make these expenses unnecessary and that there appeared to be enough votes to override a Governor's veto. She proposed either reducing the override amount by \$100,000 or using the \$100,000 to restore services that were cut from the FY05 budget (and were not funded by the override amount either).

Ms. Cohen, Mr. Díaz, Mr. Burson, and Ms. Benton expressed the need to protect the METCO money until it was definitely there.

Ms. Gutttag offered an amendment to the motion to the effect that "if METCO is not funded by the State, use it for METCO, if it is funded by the State, put it in Free Cash." Ms. Susan Botton, in the audience, clarified that money is not actually allocated to Free Cash but transfers there automatically if unspent at year end. Ms. Benton expressed concern that if the override failed, but the State budget did pass, Ms. Gutttag's idea might prevent us from using the \$100,000 for other purposes. Ms. Gutttag's amendment was not seconded.

On the main motion, Mr. Burson's the vote was 4-1 in favor, with Ms. Gutttag voting no.

Calendar

Ms. Benton raised the question of the school calendar, for a subsequent meeting, and pointed out the ending date could go as late as June 30. She mentioned the possibility of a couple of closing days for Fiske and Harrington Schools, to accommodate the packing and moving to different buildings.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Díaz, seconded by Mr. Burson.