

Lexington School Committee meeting, Tuesday, August 10, 2004

Central Office large conference room

Present: Superintendent Bill Hurley. Members Tom Griffiths, Tom Díaz, Helen Cohen, and Scott Burson; Ms. Gutttag was absent at the beginning due to a Permanent Building Committee meeting.

Agenda

Public Comment - (Written comments to be presented to the School Committee; oral presentations not to exceed three minutes.)

Superintendent's Report
Information Technology Report - William Hurley
Personnel Update - William Hurley

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns:

Discussion items:

1. Information Technology Structure
2. Secretary to School Committee
3. Superintendent Search
4. 20/20 Committee

Action Items:

1. Technology Positions
2. Secretary to School Committee

Public and Superintendent's Comments

Mr. Griffiths welcomed the public to the first School Committee meeting held in several weeks.

Mr. Mike Lockwood and Ms. Lucy Lockwood expressed concern about class sizes in the elementary schools in the fall and asked how the three unallocated teachers that were funded by the override would be allocated. Mr. Hurley answered that the administration was meeting that week to decide on these allocations.

Superintendent's Comments

Mr. Hurley said that Representative Jay Kaufman invited us to co-sponsor a six-week series on public education, as part of his usual regular public forums. Ms. Cohen moved "that the School Committee and Superintendent support Jay Kaufman for his series on public education in his Open House forums." Seconded by Mr. Burson. Approved 5-0.

At Mr. Hurley's request, Ms. Kelly McCausland, Human Resources director, gave a brief update on hiring. She said they were focused on most critical positions and had been able to promote from within in some cases. Ms. Gutttag expressed concern that the web site was not up to date and showed the school system as having no openings. Mr. Díaz asked whether the new hires were as senior as the people being replaced. Ms. McCausland said there was no general trend yet because they were only halfway through hiring. Ms. Gutttag asked what effect new teachers would have on our ability and budget to mentor new teachers.

Mr. Hurley introduced Michael Jones, principal of Lexington High School and the new Director of Education, Andre Ravenelle.

Mr. Hurley reported on the preliminary report by the consultant on municipal and school technology staffing. He expressed the need for an overall IT administrator on his staff. He recommended that the School Committee expand the charter of its Technology Review subcommittee to subsume personnel and organizational issues such as discussed in the RFP report. Ms. Carol Pilarski, assistant to the Superintendent, Ms. McCausland, and Ms. Susan Bottan, Business and Finance director, agreed.

Ms. Gutttag discussed the need to get technology facilitators in place in order to get the school systems up for the beginning of the school year. Mr. Hurley suggested contractors in the short term.

Mr. Díaz suggested he, Mr. Hurley, and Ms. Gutttag meet separately to discuss the revision needed to the charter of the Technology Review subcommittee. Mr. Díaz made a motion: "I move that we authorize the Superintendent to fill the position tentatively titled Director of Information Technology to provide leadership and coordination in the use of technology include all administrative and academic functions and additional duties that the Superintendent might designate from time to time." The motion was seconded by Ms. Cohen.

Mr. Griffiths said he was a little troubled by having the technology integrators (curriculum developers) report to this new position. Mr. Hurley said the current director of curriculum in this area was not being eliminated and might report to this new person depending on how the actual personalities worked out. Ms. Mary Ann Boswell spoke from the audience and expressed support for the plan. Ms. Gutttag expressed support for the plan. Mr. Griffiths expressed the desire to continue integration of technology at all levels of the curriculum. Ms. Marianne McKenna, a school employee, expressed support for this change.

The motion by Mr. Díaz was adopted by a 5-0 vote.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Ms. Gutttag asked that we try to schedule our meetings to avoid conflict with the Permanent Building Committee meetings, because of the importance to her and others of attending both. There was general agreement.

Mr. Díaz expressed the need to publish at least some information about our plans to fund the salary increase for teachers, and he agreed to work on a draft description with Mr. Hurley. Ms. Cohen said she would like to get this kind of information in the *Minuteman* as well as on the web site. The consensus was to try to make this information available in early September.

Ms. Marianne McKenna, school employee, suggested the School Committee consider creating its own web site under its own control. Ms. Gutttag suggested, as a temporary measure, that she take the initiative to make sure material approved by the School Committee get on the school web site in a timely way. Mr. Griffiths asked to be sure that the Town web site have a link directly to the School web site for our agenda. Ms. Gutttag agreed to take on that task as well.

Ms. Gutttag reported completing the “On Board” training for new School Committee members. She also reminded the community that August 14 is a tax-free day in Massachusetts and a good time for expensive back-to-school purchases. She reported progress in discussions with NSTAR both on damaged equipment from last fall and on energy-saving recommendations. From the PBC meeting still in progress, she reported Harrington on schedule and on budget. She expects to be in right after Thanksgiving. She also reported there were discussions with Fiske abutters regarding the access road in the new design. She suggested another joint meeting with the PBC in the near future. Mr. Griffiths complimented Ms. Gutttag on her hard work on facilities subjects.

Ms. Cohen reported work on the Youth Service Coordinator position that she has been looking into with Elaine Sterzin.

Secretary to the School Committee

Mr. Hurley recommended a stipended position (a certain dollar amount per meeting), separate from his own administrator, to take minutes at Committee meetings and type them up. Ms. Bottan agreed with Mr. Hurley that this position could be accommodated in the budget.

Mr. Griffiths bemoaned the lack of administrative support for the School Committee in recent times, particularly since the early retirement initiative in FY04. Ms. Susan Elberger spoke from the audience and said there are times when a summary must be fairly detailed.

Superintendent Search

Ms. Cohen and Mr. Díaz summarized the status of the search.

Ms. Cohen reported we have hired Future Management Systems as a consultant and have met with the two people from FMS to consult on a salary range, advertising, and other details of the search. She expressed the opinion that the recent issues with the Town Manager would increase the need to present a positive image of the town to candidates. She also reported the recommendation that we advertise in the *New York Times* and

Education Week but probably not the *Boston Globe*, since a national search and the usual habits of candidates meant that most candidates would see the opening in one of those publications.

Mr. Díaz explained the proposed timeline for the search and conducted an interactive discussion with the School Committee and audience. He expressed the fact that there are several ways for the community to provide input: focus groups, participation on the search committee, and comments at School Committee meetings. A report on focus groups would be published in October. Focus groups would include School Committee, administrators (building and central office); community and parents; teachers and other employees; possibly students. The focus groups and other community input are input to a structured profile—a job description—for the candidates. Mr. Griffiths suggested the information might also be input to a descriptive brochure given to candidates.

We hope for a single search committee of reasonable size. Its purpose is to review applications and then interview selected semifinalists for the position. We desire to have finalist interviews take place in the month of January and site visits late that month. If we have too many volunteers for a single committee we may delegate the writing of the structured profile to a second committee. Ms. Elberger emphasized the need to state the criteria for this committee before asking for volunteers and also to accept more volunteers than can actually serve, since some will drop out after training.

The group discussed whether to have an application deadline. All applications must be reviewed by the same search committee.

The group discussed how the search will work compared with the simultaneous search by Arlington.

Mr. Díaz agreed to produce an updated description of the process.

20/20 Committee

The School Committee heard a report on the 20/20 Committee's new plans.

Action Items

1. Technology Positions. Resolved above. Superintendent was authorized to fill a director position.
2. Secretary to School Committee. Discussed above.

Motion to Go into Executive Session

Mr. Burson: "I move that we go into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation, not to return to public session." Mr. Burson: Aye. Ms. Gutttag: Aye. Mr. Griffiths: Aye. Ms. Cohen: Aye. Mr. Díaz: Aye.