

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, February 14, 2006
Jonas Clarke Middle School Auditorium
17 Stedman Road

The meeting was convened at 7:39 p.m.

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash; School Committee Helen Cohen - Chair, Scott Burson, Tom Diaz, Tom Griffiths, Olga Gutttag; Student representative Toni Maeck; Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Helen Cohen)

II. Public Comment: none

III. Superintendent's Report: none

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Tom Diaz: Attended the No Place for Hate steering committee meeting with Olga Gutttag. Coming up on Feb. 26th at 2:30 at Cary Memorial Library will be a lecture by Charlie Martin, speaking on a family history of his ancestors who began in slavery.

Olga Gutttag: Thirty letters to legislators will be sent by email and regular mail. Sample letter will be posted on our website. Hope citizens will help us lobby for more local aid. We are way behind schedule on the evaluation of the superintendent. Tom Griffiths and I attended a meeting with PBC Chair, the construction management team, Bill Hartigan, Paul Ash and Carl Valente related to school construction management, progress reports, and information flow procedures. At the four-board summit where overall financial picture of the town was discussed I requested a 2-year financial outlook. I am serving on negotiating teams with custodial and secretarial unions, and am pleased to report that negotiations are picking up speed.

Scott Burson: Thanks to Olga Gutttag and Helen Cohen for advancing the superintendent evaluation process.

Tom Griffiths: PBC meeting: Fiske is on time and on budget. The architect is proceeding with the Central Office. The Financial Review Committee is working on what to do with debt in the future. The Council on Aging is still battling for a new senior center, now they are pitted against supporters of the Munroe Center for the Arts.

Helen Cohen: Jeanne Krieger reported that last night the Selectmen put an additional 5% of the municipal budget at risk and wondered if we were willing to do the same.

V. Vote to approve LHS field trip to Hangzhou, China:

Motion to approve the trip (Griffiths, Burson) passes (5-0)

VI. Discussion Items:

A. FY 07 School Budget “at-risk” list

Paul Ash stated that it is with great reluctance that he presents the at-risk list. Districts don't have adequate, fair or proper funding source because of proposition 2 1/2. People in the school system found out today that they may not have a job next year. What weighs on him heavily is eliminating programs that will directly benefit kids. He is distressed over these recommendations, which are made in collaboration with Central Office administrators and the principals. The presentation is available on the website, and was available to the public at the meeting. He prefers the term *basic budget* to *level services budget* because there are things that need to be put into the basic budget that weren't there before.

There are three “tiers” to the cut list. The first tier is comprised of the cuts that should be made first but they are not in priority order. Tier one eliminates almost all the enhancements and the additional FTE for K-5 that the School Committee requested. The second tier contains new sources of revenue that the Superintendent is recommending only if we really need them. The third tier cuts 4-5 instrumental music and 3-5 Spanish, among other things. Dr. Ash noted that he and his colleagues considered the question of eliminating programs versus cutting back.

Tiers 1, 2 and 3 together would result in 64.3 FTEs and \$5,051,279 being cut. 41 existing positions would be eliminated, which is more than 41 people but not all those people would necessarily be laid off, some would retire, etc... but there would still be a huge lay off.

The School Committee agreed not to produce cuts for an additional 5% that the Selectmen had suggested until absolutely necessary, as this would amount to another \$250,000 of possible positions at risk.

Motion to ask for an additional \$72,000 to be put at risk to meet the 2.5% requirement (Diaz, Griffiths), passed 5-0.

Paul Ash will identify an additional \$72,000 in cuts and would like to hear any positions on anything the School Committee members cannot support.

As per a suggestion by Olga Gutttag **the School Committee will hold a public hearing and discussion on 28th** and then meet 2 hours before summit at 5:00 on March 1st at LHS.

Dawn McKenna (from the audience) questioned how they could vote one day after the public hearing. Helen Cohen answered that there is a deadline and that they are acting in good faith. Cindy Savage (from the audience) questioned Paul Ash regarding the Policy Debate program in the high school: will all the students be moved to Lincoln Douglas, or will their opportunity to debate be eliminated? Paul Ash answered that if the override failed, the Policy Debate program would end because it is not viable at its current budget allocation.

B. FY 06 Monthly Budget Report: deferred due to the late hour.

VII. Action Items:

1. Vote to Accept Donation to Lexington Athletics Gift Account

Motion to accept the donation to the Lexington Athletics Gift Account from The Friends of Lexington Wrestling. (Griffiths, Burson) passed 5-0.

2. Vote to Approve School Committee minutes of November 15, 2005
3. Vote to Approve School Committee minutes of December 13, 2005
4. Vote to Approve School Committee minutes of January 12, 2006
5. Vote to Approve Executive Session minutes of December 20, 2006

Motion to accept all the minutes enumerated in the agenda (action items numbers 2-5) (Griffiths, Diaz)

Amendment to the motion to put footers in the minutes (Guttag, Griffiths) motion passed as amended 5-0

VIII. Motion to adjourn (11:35pm to executive session for the purposes of discussing potential litigation: (Burson, Diaz): Burson-aye, Cohen-aye, Diaz-aye, Griffiths-aye and Guttag-aye.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.

Respectfully submitted,
Leora Tec