

**Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – February 15, 2005
Clarke Middle School**

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

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

Enrollment Update

Bill Hurley reported that as of February 1st, there were 6,144 students. This represents 11 more students from the October 1, 2004 report.

Helen Cohen said it is interesting that the increase in student enrollment is reversed. There is usually more of an increase at the high school level rather than the elementary school level. It is good to see families moving into town with young children.

FY06 Proposed Budget Update

Bill Hurley said he has been trying to narrow the gap to a lower figure we could achieve. He has met with the town manager and they have narrowed the gap to the \$91,000 figure with the agreement that if additional revenues become available to the town between now and town meeting, some would be made available to the school department. As of now, Lexington Public Schools will absorb the \$91,000 as there are no additional monies. The operating budget has now been reduced to a new figure of \$69,476,005.

Tom Diaz wanted to clarify a comment regarding the item of no longer proposing fees for instrumental music. The School Committee took a vote at our meeting last Monday to not impose fees for elementary music. So whatever happens with this budget, we will continue on a fee free basis on that issue. Tom Griffiths' disposition of the instrumental music program is it would be the last thing that we should touch.

Olga Gutttag reiterated that it was clear in the previous vote that we removed instrumental music for a fee out of the budget list altogether, therefore, should not be considered for closing the gap. Scott Burson agreed that it was clear that we took it off the list at that time but the preference would be to replace it for something else. We could institute a fee for this program but we would have to move it out of the regular curriculum. Tom Diaz said if revenues appear between now and town meeting, the School Committee

would reconvene and put the first \$91,000 towards the school. If that does not happen before the town meeting vote on the school budget, we still have other options. Mr. Hurley assured the School Committee that based on the timeline, we would have sufficient time to notify any staff per their contract that they may not be employed next year due to reductions. Ms. Gutttag urged her colleagues not to ask Mr. Hurley at this time how the \$91,000 gap is going to be closed. She was told our benefits packet is now out to bid and there is expectation that bid may be lower than what we expected. Another reason we should not try to close the gap tonight is she has been receiving large numbers of emails regarding cuts and changes in middle school varsity and JV sports. As far as she can tell, an article in the Minuteman triggered this correspondence. At the moment, neither health education, nor any portion of education, or any change to middle varsity or JV sports is on the cut list. We hope that the \$91,000 comes back to us but if it does not, we will give people enough notice of whatever cuts we will be discussing.

Harrington and Fiske Construction and Move Schedule

Mr. Hurley informed the School Committee that the actual physical move to the new Harrington would take place next week during the February school vacation. When children return from vacation, they will begin at the new Harrington. The original plan was to move students from Fiske to the old Harrington as soon as possible but the bid process is not complete. As best we can predict, the time line indicates that it could be as late as mid to late May or even possibly June before we could move students from Fiske to the old Harrington. The Fiske community has been notified by letter and should have received notice this week that the transition will be postponed until the beginning of the September 2005-06 school year.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Olga Gutttag noted the School Committee is falling behind on approving minutes and wanted to clarify the procedure. She received comments and phone calls about how the School Committee posts information on the website. She will meet with Steve Arnoff to improve updating the website with information and policies and procedures of how information gets posted. She has also received a lot of phone calls and emails about Lexington High School staffing discussions that we had at the last budget meeting. It was noted that adding the 6.5 FTEs at the high school would be sufficient to address the graduation requirement for the increased enrollment and those of next year's senior class.

Susan Bottan informed the School Committee that after course selection is made, it will be determined if an FTE increase is necessary. It was noted that the majority of the 6.5 FTEs is to accommodate enrollment and we will not know until course selection as to enrollment.

Ms. Gutttag asked at which point should we have this discussion. A large number of parents will be interested in hearing and understanding the implications of the staffing that is going to be proposed for the high school. Mr. Hurley said this information should be available after the budget is finalized at town meeting and final enrollments are calculated at the end of March.

Scott Burson informed the School Committee that there was a flood at the Carey Memorial Library in late January when the sprinkler system froze and burst and a considerable amount of water was released into the library. Thanks to the swift action on the part of the fire department, the actual damage was contained but there was still a massive clean up and preservation process. Connie Ralston asked him to acknowledge and extend thanks to the members of the school system who helped. Their effort was appreciated. This is an excellent example of people in the town pulling together.

Tom Griffiths was told there was no permanent damage. Scott Burson said all materials have been saved and the building will be put back together in working order but the town is not sure how much it will cost.

Bill Hurley informed the School Committee of the carbon monoxide problem in the science building last week. Dana Ham gave an update as to what took place, actions taken and where it stands today. Last Thursday he received a call that the fire department was called to the science building for a carbon monoxide check. The boiler room was receiving high elevations. It was determined that a fan in the boiler room was not working. It was fixed and by 6:15 a.m. the fire department checked it and reported clear. During the day, we had engineers come in to find out what was wrong. Apparently during construction the chimney was not lined and in looking at the specs it was not on the specs to be lined. Engineers made some suggestions, we implemented them and they did not work because there were still readings of high carbon monoxide on Friday morning. At that point, the building was evacuated and closed for the day. After many hours of work, we found the problem. At some point during the existence of the high school, someone cut a hole in the intake duct and as mortar in the chimney deteriorated, flue gasses were sucked through the chimney and directly to the intake into the building. The ductwork has been sealed up and fixed. We are in the process of having an engineer design a chimney liner and working to have that fabricated. The cost for this will be in the area of \$40,000 to \$60,000. Mr. Ham assured the School Committee that as of Friday, there are been zero readings for carbon monoxide.

Tom Diaz thanked Dana for his diligent work on this matter. He asked what plans we have in place to review the other building so this does not happen again. Mr. Ham said the high school has two main boiler rooms that service the science building and the main building. As soon as he can, he will get up on the roofs and check all chimneys. He did note this could occur in a building that we have converted from oil to gas and will check those as well.

Helen Cohen thanked Dana for keeping the lines of communication open.

Olga Gutttag asked if there were air quality issues in other parts of the building so anyone who was in the building can feel protected. Mr. Ham said there were no noted issues in any other building but there is no way to be 100% sure because it is an odorless gas. The fire department was monitoring the buildings and they were comfortable with the readings. Ms. Gutttag asked if this would be part of the construction reimbursement given this was a side effect of upgrading the boilers and was part of the construction project. Mr. Ham is working with Bill Kealy on this issue. He wanted to publicly thank everyone for pulling together. There are now 23 detectors in building since the incident last Thursday. Ms. Gutttag thanked him for all the precautions being taken.

Tom Griffiths said there is three agenda items he would like to put on future agendas. One is the question of intramural basketball at the middle schools. He had a long talk with Leslie Nicholson of the Lexington Education Foundation regarding private funding for schools and she would like the opportunity to make a presentation at an upcoming School Committee meeting. He also hopes that the superintendent's report at the next meeting will have a carbon monoxide gas update including an update on the flue liners and whether it will be required in other chimneys as well.

Ms. Gutttag inquired about the capital item concerning the Clarke and Diamond energy savings consultant report. Mr. Ham spoke with DMJM Harris last week. They assured they would have the project completed before town meeting. It was noted the capital committee needs enough time to get it in their report. Bill Hurley informed the School Committee of the contract with O,R, &L. This contract is not only to make recommendations on purchasing but also on efficiencies. He does not intend to have a report done on special purchases before town meeting. Dana Ham said Rich Perillo would give him a breakdown of his recommended equipment list before town meeting.

Discussion Items

Update on Superintendent Search Process

Scott Burson has been authorized to begin contact discussions with Dr. Paul Ash.

FY06 Proposed Budget

To clarify, Tom Diaz noted the School Committee has a specific list of reductions that were discussed at last Monday's meeting. He asked for the community's indulgence in that they are watching an operation in process. The School Committee has asked the superintendent to put together a list of cuts and they feel Mr. Hurley has used his best judgment every time. He feels good about where we are at this point and feels we will get through the next school year with very minimal reductions.

Action Items

A motion was made with gratitude to approve the donation in amount of \$100 from an Estabrook family that will go into the Estabrook gift fund. (Diaz – Burson; 5-0)

A motion was made to approve the FY06 budget in the amount of \$69,476,005. (Burson – Diaz; 5-0 unanimous). Helen Cohen asked if we are including the \$91,000. The approved amount does include that figure. For the purpose of voting on the budget, this amount was previously voted on by the School Committee with a 3-2 vote. The effect of this vote tonight is to ratify the previous vote. Bill Hurley said this figure represents a reduction of \$701,463 from the budget originally presented to the School Committee and which they originally voted on. He also said this figure does include the \$91,000 without announcing what that amount would include and without specification. Tom Griffiths will not vote against the budget figured presented tonight as he feels it is necessary to come together as a committee. Helen Cohen originally voted against at the budget collaboration as she feels the town can and should provide for the \$91,000 that we need but will vote in favor of the budget figure tonight. Olga Gutttag thanked Mr. Hurley and Linda Vine and their staff for getting us through this process. Tom Diaz thought the budget collaboration meeting between the superintendent and town manager was a good idea and thinks they did a great job. He is happy with the way things worked out between the collaboration of our two chief executives. Mr. Diaz voted in favor of this number at the collaboration meeting last week as he fully expects that there is \$91,000 in revenue yet to be found.

Helen Cohen reported that at noon today State Treasurer Cahill presented the senior class president with a check for \$26 million, which is a major part of the reimbursement for the high school and middle school building projects. Treasurer Cahill explained that the list would open up in 2007 for us to apply for future projects.

Olga Gutttag said the \$26 million is 75% of the reimbursement due to us on the project. As soon as the audits are completed on these projects, we are promised the other 25%. By receiving this payment now we have managed to project half a million dollars of operation budget cuts that we would have had to make. We are in fine shape because this reimbursement has taken place.

Ms. Gutttag reminded the School Committee that tonight's meeting was the last meeting posted. The School Committee needs to pick the next set of meetings to give proper notice to the public. The School Committee will follow a Monday/Wednesday schedule during town meeting. They will meet one hour before town meeting from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

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A motion was made at 8:55 p.m. to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with a non-union employee and not returning to public session. (Burson – Cohen; roll call vote 5-0 unanimous)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

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