

## LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 12, 2006

Jonas Clarke Middle School Auditorium

17 Stedman Road

Present: Paul Ash, Scott Burson, Helen Cohen, Tom Diaz, Tom Griffiths and Olga Guttag.

7:41 p.m. **Call to Order and Welcome** (Helen Cohen):

### **Public Comment**

Amy Stix (Bridge School parent): She spoke of overcrowding at Bridge and the resulting inequities.

Tanya Morisset (Bridge School parent): She is very happy with the Bridge administration, but the class sizes are too large and so is the overall population.

Barabara Masi (Bridge School parent): She has previously presented data regarding inequities in Bridge enrollment. Wants alleviation of inequities before redistricting.

Kim Effron (Bridge parent): Concerned about health, cleanliness and safety at Bridge. Twenty-six kids in a science classroom is dangerous.

### **Superintendent's Report:**

1. "Tools for Schools": Bill Hartigan: On February 6th and 27th there will be training for faculty and staff district-wide to assess indoor air quality. SC members are encouraged to attend. There will also be a separate training for maintenance and custodial staff. The program will have surveys twice a year to assess where we are.

2. NSTAR Rebate Program: Bill Hartigan: We received a \$7500 check for work done at Clarke, and we will continue a relationship with NSTAR.

3. John and Abigail Adams Scholarships: 125 seniors are John and Abigail Adams scholars. The honor goes to seniors in the top 25% of class who have advanced scores in English and math on MCAS or advanced in one and proficient in another. They are eligible for free tuition for 4 years at a Massachusetts public university.

4. Update on curriculum Review Process: Carol Pilarski: Last comprehensive curriculum review started in 1995 in science and social studies (completed in 1997). We also did a K-5 Math review in 1997. To keep up-to-date with State Frameworks, various curricula for specific grades and subjects have been updated as needed since 1997. What has been lacking is a comprehensive look at an entire curriculum K-12 in all of our subjects. The administration hopes to select specific areas of focus and do a multi-year K-12 curriculum review for each. One way to proceed is to bring in objective observers from other districts to help review our curriculum.

5. Harrington School Car Accident: There was a car accident yesterday at Harrington, the child is fine. A car came in towards the sun and hit a child crossing at a crosswalk. The late afternoon sun presents a problem for drivers at this spot, so the crosswalk will be relocated. The children should not cross at that crosswalk. There is no sidewalk on the left side, there should be. Paul Ash said that the crosswalk will be covered over and a temporary barrier will be installed to create a sidewalk.

6. The proposed FY07 Budget will be on the LPS Website sometime next week.

### **Discussion Items:**

Paul Ash announced, and Ann Giombetti detailed, some changes in the budget proposal that they have made since the last presentation:

- Health, dental and Medicare will be removed from the school budget to the town budget at the request of the Town Manager, to better conform to Massachusetts practice.
- We must spend \$76-80,000 more than previously thought for SPED students going out of district due to a discontinuation of a cost-sharing arrangement with DSS.
- Some items were moved from capital to operational expenses: safety inspections for gyms, auditoriums and playgrounds; and storage units, because they didn't meet town's definition of capital.
- Also some changes to salaries.

Olga Gutttag pointed out that the level services budget should actually be called the level services + mandated expenses budget because a lot of the increases are from mandates such as ELL and SPED costs.

#### **1. Presentation of the FY07 Recommended Budget**

a. K-12 Student Services Budget: Tom Diaz and Helen Cohen reviewed this part of the budget.

i. Tom Diaz reported on the SPED portion. There was a discussion on how sure we are about the projected enrollment of SPED students. Mary Sullivan Kelly reported that for preschool through 6th grade the numbers are 100% accurate.

Discussion on whether or not it makes sense to reserve all the \$280,000 budget request for out-of-district contingency fund now or wait.

Paul Ash commented on three uses for the money in such an account: 1) Out of district placements; 2) Cost avoidance (i.e. building up our in-house program so students wouldn't have to go out-of-district); or 3) Legal mandates to hire staff to educate particular children.

Discussion concerning how the money in a revolving fund relates to the circuit breaker money. Unspent money in the contingency budget would roll over into the budget for next year.

ii. Helen Cohen reported on the nursing services budget. The budget provides for an addition of .5 special needs nurse at Harrington for the preschool and for going on field trips. Jane Franks explained the need for a full-time nurse in the building because for asthma and allergies and seizure disorders a response is often needed within minutes, and also explained that the field trip responsibilities would not be the bulk of the .5 position.

#### b. FY07 Capital Budget

Paul Ash stated that \$120,000 had been moved from capital to operating. Some capital items are:

- LHS: roofs and HVAC
- Diamond: auditorium roof
- Clarke: replacement of condemned bleachers seating 233 people
- Bridge: New lockers. This generated a discussion on the wisdom of spending \$120,000 on this. Bill Hartigan will look into the possibility of purchasing used lockers.
- \$400,000 is forecast for purchase of computers and associated equipment.
- LHS: field house bleachers
- LHS: auditorium repairs. Bill Hartigan described a 4-5 year plan to accomplish this and Olga Guttag asked if the tasks could be bundled so as to accomplish the project in a shorter period of time and require scaffolding to work on the ceiling only once to both fix the peeling paint and address the theatrical lighting needs.

The capital budget will be voted on January 24th.

Discussion of whether or not to spend money to evaluate elementary building projects. Paul Ash stated that he and the community need to have confidence that we are renovating the right school and that we are asking for the right amount of money. How can he do that without working with an architect?

#### 2. December FY06 Budget Report

Director of Finance, Ann Giombetti presented this report. The main change was the decrease in paying for substitute teachers. Ms. Giombetti said that the bottom line is in the black and we are in a position to fix what breaks.

#### **Action Items:**

Vote to Approve Changing the Placement of “Members’ Reports / Members’ Concerns” on the School Committee Meeting Agenda.

Motion to move members’ reports to earlier in the meeting, where they used to be. (Guttag, Burson)

Helen Cohen is opposed to this because it wastes staff time.

The motion passed 4 to 1.

### **Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:**

**Tom Diaz:** Article 40 committee will soon start a new phase of the campaign regarding engine idling. High school students volunteered to count cars that are polluting at the schools. Starting next week there will be teams of 2 students at each of four elementary schools.

**Olga Gutttag:** We need to work out procedures with police department regarding incidents that involve police issues; it would be good to include a couple of SC members in the group that would meet for this purpose (Gutttag and Cohen will be the SC representatives). The sidewalk committee has a map of Lexington and its members are in the process of identifying the most walked routes and the most needed sidewalks. The PTA presidents and HPAC are all interested in how we are dealing with new health curriculum.

**Tom Griffiths:** PBC: The New Fiske is on target and on budget. The committee will award a contract in excess of \$400,000 (\$430,000) for the architects who did the original study on the White House so they can give a presentation to TM. It will be phased so they will not spend all the money if it is not approved by Town Meeting.

Senior Center Siting Committee: their number one choice is to split the site. The old Harrington is distant second.

**Helen Cohen:** reported on the diversity task force. She said the Youth Services Council is building momentum. She attended a hearing sponsored by public education network (educational advocacy for urban and rural schools) and reports that the issues that they deal with should humble us. They were negative about NCLB. It stresses the teachers and made the schools drop programs.

11:12 pm: **Meeting Adjourned:** unanimous (Burson, Gutttag)

No Executive Session

Respectfully Submitted,

Leora Tec

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, January 17, 2006, at 7:30 p.m., at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.