

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

Cary Hall

1605 Massachusetts Avenue

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee members: Helen Cohen, Tom Griffiths, Olga Gutttag and Ravi Sakhujia. Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:43 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)

II. Moment of Silence for the Stone Family

III. Public Comment

Marge -Daggett (Minuteman Tech School Committee): I am following up on comments about cooperation between LHS and Minuteman Tech. At a future School Committee meeting perhaps Tom Markham, Assistant Superintendent at MMT, could present more options of cooperation.

Rob McNeill (Baskin Rd.): At Bridge, this year's third grade is above the recommended size, as will be next year's fourth grade. Redistricting affects class size. We are not suggesting anything in particular. Redistricting, budget and class sizes are all connected. Bridge class size is one of the reasons that redistricting was done. We were told to be patient. We still have a class size issue.

Peter Nor Brown : How will the School Committee work with extended day programs in a fair and transparent manner given the problems that have come up this year?

Tom Diaz: The proposed budget does not change fees from fiscal '07. We won't have the revenue estimates until late February.

Peter Nor Brown : Is that the same for the calculation of building usage fees for extended day programs?

Paul Ash: By the end of February we will have revenue figures and projections for next year, and then we will have discussion with the director of finance, and then the estimates will be shared with the School Committee.

Tom Diaz: In March.

Olga Gutttag: Extended day programs are very important to us; all four of my kids went through them. We are very aware of the issues. We will provide the information in a timely fashion.

Carolyn Fiore (Spring Street): How are the fees calculated?

Tom Diaz: We haven't decided how to calculate the fees.

Carolyn Fiore: The budget says on a cost basis.

Paul Ash: You can do that on a direct or indirect basis. I have not yet spoken to Mary Ellen Dunn about it.

Michael Salpukus: You said you can't give the methodology of computing until you have the numbers but don't need the numbers to come up with the methodology.

Paul Ash: True, but our time table is to talk about this later.

Tom Diaz: I also feel sorry about what happened but the decision was taken months before the override failed.

Ruth Pelletier (parent of a Bridge School third grader): We were told this was a redistricting issue—this rings false to me. This is overcrowding. We are losing an FTE, why can't she stay for the 4th grade?

Paul Ash: Because the population of the Bridge school is dropping by 68 students. Harrington will need an additional teacher. Depending on the budget that is approved the number of teachers will be different.

Mary Ann Stewart and Jessie Steigerwald: We have a new show on cable called LexTALK. Thanks to Dr Ash for being our first guest.

IV. Superintendent's Report:

We are on schedule for the move to Fiske. We will move over February vacation. It's a great educational space. There will be a ribbon cutting later in the spring. Helen Cohen will coordinate the ceremony.

Olga Gutttag: I'm concerned about the time capsule from the old school, why not have everyone be present? I volunteer to be first down the slide on the Fiske playground.

Tom Diaz: Toni Maeck is not present today, because she is sick.

V. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Helen Cohen: The budget represents a lot of work for the school staff. Thank you to Dr. Ash and Mary Ellen Dunn. This is a difficult time to be doing this.

Olga Gutttag: My sympathies to the Stone family. Thanks to the LHS staff and administration for supporting the kids and to Dr. Jones for letting parents know the school was ready for the students.

Tom Diaz: I attended the Appropriation Committee meeting. We are struggling with how to budget mandatory expenses like ELL and SPED. On the 19th Tom Griffiths and I met with municipal officials about consolidating the town and school facilities departments and about constructing a budget to finance a consolidated facilities department.

Olga Gutttag: Could we get intermediate documents on that?

VI. Discussion Items:

1. FY08 Budget Discussion
 - a. K-5 Budget Subcommittee Report:

Presented by Olga Gutttag and Ravi Sakhuja

Overall:

Class size is a concern.

Requests for 3% budget increases for supplies.

Severe cuts in technology have led to difficulty in relying on lesson plans requiring technology. The teachers miss the technology curriculum integrators.

Departments/Specialists

Literacy: Total FTEs did not change, but a shift in personnel is anticipated. Decrease in 50% in materials (due to one time purchases made last year).

Math: Total FTEs did not change. (Ravi proposes shifting one literacy person to math). A 3% increase in supplies is requested.

Tom Diaz: We hope to move the curriculum heads to the old Harrington with the Central Office so maybe they can be taken care of by centralized secretarial support. (He made this comment with regard to several requests for additional secretarial support).

Science K-5

Presented by Tom Diaz

No personnel increases. They will need to reorder materials in fiscal 08. We need to update the expense numbers. It would be good if they would show actual spending plans. For the supplemental budget there would be more instructional materials needed. (\$8800 for the 4 curriculum areas).

Helen Cohen brought up the point that no one making the presentation had proposed any cuts in expenses.

b. K-12 Budget Subcommittee Report

Presented by Tom Griffiths

ELL Program

There is a proposed reorganization of the program whereby the program director would go from being .5 program director and .5 teacher to 1.0 program director. A .2 secretary is requested. The teachers would go from 6.35 to 6.45.

Phys Ed and Wellness

The curriculum supports a number of mandates. Mr. Griffiths sketched the components of the phys ed and wellness programs in each grade. No change in personnel is requested. An increase of expenses of 3% is requested.

Athletics

There is a proposal to reduce the fee for 5th grade before-school sports from \$100 to \$60. When the fee went up, participation was significantly reduced.

An 8.35% increase overall in personnel is requested.

There was a discussion about the ELL restructuring that mainly centered around Olga Gutttag's concerns about reducing face time with students.

K-12 Library Media

Presented by Tom Diaz

There was a reduction in library aide hours at Clarke. At LHS the budget was reduced. The elimination of tech personnel means people turn to the library staff for help.

In the supplemental budget there is a 3% increase for projector bulbs.

K-12 Technology

Presented by Tom Diaz

The staff is too small. The integrated computer tech people were eliminated in the override. Same service adds 1.0 FTE tech support (it will only cost \$3K). The supplemental budget adds 2.0 FTE training and tech specialists with tech skills and instructional savvy.

K-12 curriculum department

Presented by Tom Diaz

They are requesting 3% for supply increases. There are no head count increases in the level service budget. In the supplemental budget the assistant to the superintendent will increase to full time and there will be increased secretarial support (it might not be needed). There is over \$150K proposed in the supplemental expense budget.

Doug Kleinmann (precinct 8): I thought the cost of the 3 years of curriculum review was not the same.

Paul Ash: Year one is curriculum review, year two is writing, year three is implementation. All three things happen in all three years. They overlap.

Tom Griffiths: Is the LEF portion back in the base budget?

Lynne Sarasin: LEF is funding professional development not curriculum review, and is in the supplemental budget.

Eric Wilson (Shade St., Bridge parent): Bridge's infrastructure is older. Technology is far ahead at Harrington and Fiske. There are many ELL students at Bridge. There is a change in leadership at Bridge.

Tom Griffiths: Redistricting will improve distribution of ELL students.

Paul Ash: Since there are three different budgets you can have two public hearings: one on February 12 on the supplemental and same service budgets, and one after the *at-risk list* comes out.

Tom Diaz: I anticipate voting the budget in early March.

VII. Action Items:

1. Vote to Approve New School District Lines (15 minutes)

Paul Ash: I am recommending that siblings of 4th graders who want to stay, can stay for that one year. It's only 6 children.

Olga Guttag: I am very pleased with that recommendation. I am looking at bubble classes over the system. It's a little scary. Can we look at some METCO students and ensure that these bubbles are not caused by having METCO students in bubble classes? No student is served better in a class of 26 over 22. Can we defer the vote for 1 week to get additional info on METCO and 2 other neighborhoods that I emailed about?

Paul Ash: Olga Guttag mentioned two small areas that it might make sense to move.

Motion to approve the redistricting plan subject to two small technical corrections the superintendent may wish to make (Griffiths, Guttag)

Discussion on whether or not to vote tonight and what exactly are the small technical corrections.

Jenny Richland: Vote tonight. The families who are being redistricted want to know where their kids are going.

The motion passed 5-0.

Paul Ash: Thanks to the committee and the members of the community who improved the plan.

Olga Guttag: If you have similar good plans for the budget bring them to us!

Motion to adjourn (Guttag, Griffiths?). The motion passed 5-0.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, February 6, 2007, at 8:00 p.m. at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.