

**Lexington Public Schools  
School Committee Meeting – June 21, 2005  
Clarke Middle School**

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

Helen Cohen called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Ms. Cohen announced that this is the last School Committee meeting for Bill Hurley, who has served as interim superintendent for the past year.

**Public Comment**

Dana Ham, Director of Facilities, wanted to publicly thank Mr. Hurley. Mr. Hurley said it was his pleasure to work so close to the administrative staff. He extended thanks to Dana Ham and to the School Committee for allowing him to serve the community.

Michelle Ekanem, mother of Janette Ekanem, Student Representative, said Janette could not be here tonight because she had to work. She read a statement from Janette thanking the Lexington School Committee for all she has learned serving as student representative for the past year.

**Superintendent's Report**

**Enrollment Update**

Susan Bottan reported on the most recent enrollment figures compared to the October 1, 2004 enrollment report. The enrollment update dated June 1, 2005 is attached.

**Report on Fiske Move**

Mr. Hurley informed the School Committee that the Fiske school will be closing at the end of June and demolition will begin soon after. Mr. Hurley introduced Carol Pilarski who gave a more detailed update.

Carol Pilarski first wanted to highlight the smooth and positive transition from the old Harrington to the new Harrington. She hopes to have the same transition from Fiske to Harrington but feels the challenges will be different from the Harrington move for students and staff.

Ms. Pilarski said she has worked with representatives from Fiske; Brian Baker, Nancy Choo and Nancy Petersen. ServiceMaster was hired to do a deep cleaning of the old Harrington to get the building ready for the move. Like with the Harrington move, we are again using Rent-A-Crate for this move and have 1,000 crates available for packing and moving. The library carts are now at Fiske and the library is packed and ready to

move by the end of this week. A moving company has been hired to do the bulk of the move on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>. Everything will be moved out of the Fiske building and into the old Harrington. If there is any furniture remaining in the building as of June 27<sup>th</sup>, principals from other schools are welcome to choose what they would like from any of the remaining furniture. There will be at least 35 but possibly up to 50 parking spaces added in the back of old Harrington so hopefully parking will not be an issue when school starts. Fiske will have a half-day on June 27<sup>th</sup>; June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> will be packing days for the Fiske staff. As for unpacking for Fiske, though materials will be moved over in early July since maintenance and custodians need to take care of housekeeping issues, teachers and faculty will be able to start unpacking only as of July 25<sup>th</sup>. September 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> will also be unpacking days, and the first day of school will be September 9<sup>th</sup> for Fiske students - a half day. Ms. Pilarski noted that starting in September, school hour schedules would be staggered. Fiske will maintain the regular elementary school schedule and Harrington will begin and end a half hour early.

Dana Ham updated the School Committee on a flood that occurred in the boiler room of the old Harrington. He is working with the insurance company on this, and in the meantime we are replacing burners, which are antique, as well as all motors and pumps that got wet. The majority of the work will be covered by insurance and will be completed in advance of the building being open in September. Demolition of Fiske will begin immediately following the move on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>. Permits are in place with the state for demolition. Mr. Ham stressed that no faculty can be in the buildings during moving times. In his opinion, he feels we are in good shape for demolition and reconstruction.

Ms. Gutttag asked if the end of the next academic year would be the same as for every other school. Mr. Ham said all schools would satisfy the 180-day legal requirement.

#### Proposal for Gillespie Auditorium

Mr. Hurley expressed his concern for the amount and complexity of work required to use the lights and audio system in the auditorium at the high school. Currently we do not have anyone overseeing the use of this facility and music and drama faculty often need to be pulled from their class to help other groups using the auditorium. This is detrimental to those classes. He introduced Walter Pavasaris to present his proposal.

Walter Pavasaris explained to the School Committee that not only does the Fine & Performing Arts department use the auditorium, but also there have been an increased number of public rentals. He has found over a period of time that we can better manage the auditorium with someone who can oversee the facility use on a day-to-day basis as well as on a long-term basis. Mr. Pavasaris' proposal is attached.

Mr. Hurley said he has had conversations with Mike Jones and Dana Ham regarding the long-term needs that were recognized. Mr. Hurley feels the proposal attached can be tweaked but agrees that for a one-year period; this is a doable and affordable fix to the present challenges of the staff at the high school. We are stretching our people too thin and because of extensive use he feels it is not practical.

Tom Griffiths made note that when we sum all these things together, we will be over our FY06 budget. The question then becomes can we afford to do this. Susan Bottan said there are some ways to offset this cost. There are three ways that we can fund this position. We can shift a stipend that is currently paid to a LHS staff member to do some of these duties; allocate some of the funds from the student activities fund; and we can allocate some of the dollars collected from the rental fee to rent the auditorium. Ms. Bottan feels for FY06 we can cover a \$20,000 salary. Mr. Pavasaris said he is not sure this should be a full-time or part-time position but does know this should not be a stipend for a current staff member. He would like to hire someone from the outside.

Mr. Griffiths said he is very impressed with Fine & Performing Arts at the LHS and if this is a position we can afford, he is very enthusiastic about it. Mr. Pavasaris along with Dana Ham and the building principal would be part of overseeing this position. Mr. Griffiths would like to have a clearly defined reporting procedure, whether it is to Walter or Dana.

Scott Burson said he is not sure what the School Committee is being asked to do and whether it is their role to participate. If the administration believes they can fund this, then the proposal is a courtesy but he does not see the need for the School Committee to approve this position. Mr. Hurley noted it was brought before the School Committee as a courtesy.

Olga Gutttag said she appreciated bringing this plan forward as this position has been a long time coming. She would like to see the Harrington theatre space included in this. She also feels we will have similar needs in this regard in other buildings. Ms. Gutttag suggested in the next budget cycle, we should establish a category of audio/visual assistant as a theatrical line item.

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

Tom Griffiths wanted to comment on interactions he had with both Bill Hurley and Susan Bottan. He said Bill has become a very close friend over the last year. It has been a pleasure to work with Bill; and he is intensely grateful and thankful that he filled in this year as Interim Superintendent. Mr. Griffiths said he has known Susan since he was on the Capital Expenditures Committee. He is blown away by her reliability, kindness, and willingness to deal with everyone under budget stress. As a member of the School Committee, Mr. Griffiths has had the opportunity to spend more time with Susan during the budget season. It has been a great pleasure to work with her.

Mr. Griffiths reported that he attended the appropriation committee meeting. A great deal of time was spent on the town audit report. There were eight changes made but only one involved the school department. He also attended the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) meeting. Three issues were raised with respect to the Harrington school. The question was raised on where we stand on meeting the requirements for 35 classrooms. The other issues involved the playground and irrigation problems. Mr. Griffiths noted the School Committee would be moving forward on the white house as soon as the PBC receives the final report from Hamblin & Associates. The School Committee has reached a settlement with the teachers. Mr. Griffiths believes the settlement is fair and the numbers are going to yield an approximate system-wide increase of just about 2.5% for FY06 and almost 3% for FY07.

Tom Diaz echoed Mr. Griffiths' praise for Susan Bottan and Bill Hurley. Mr. Diaz inquired about the grant that is available from the EPA that would provide funding for school buses and can be applied to a contractor such as C & W Transportation. Dana Ham said he spoke with the representative from Keyspan who will take part in this grant. Keyspan has the information necessary to contact Dave Eagle and John Henry and will reach out to them. Mr. Diaz said the Technology Review Committee would try to issue a progress report by end of the school year. They won't have all the recommendations until next year but will give a preliminary progress report by the end of the month and a more formal report in the fall.

Scott Burson said Bill Hurley and Susan Bottan would be missed. What characterizes a great school administration is what they are doing in their jobs for the kids. In Bill and Susan, Lexington had two people who never lost sight of that.

Olga Gutttag said she also attended the PBC meeting and discussed some questions raised from the town meeting member's list regarding Harrington. In regard to the balancing of the air conditioning, she assured them that the AC in the building is working fine. When you bring a new building on line, it takes weeks for the airflow to work the way it should. As problems arise, parts are being replaced under warranty. The sprinklers are now connected to the town water and we are waiting on a part to switch to the well that we use for the heating and ventilation system. There was discussion about issues on the playground in terms of it being a safety zone with sufficient space away from the roadway. If modifications are necessary, construction will handle it as part of the project. The Sidewalk Committee will begin a Safe Routes To School pilot program at Bridge this fall. Ms. Gutttag extended thanks to Paul Ash and Barbara Manfredi for listening to her and the Sidewalk's committee's request. Ms. Gutttag also thanked the LHS Landscaping Committee for the money they raised during their plant sale. At the LHS PTSA meeting, Dr. Jones reflected on his first year in Lexington. He discussed a letter received from two parents asking us to have more discussion on the Day of Silence at LHS. Dr. Jones said we should do this some time in the fall.

Helen Cohen said she will talk to Dr. Jones as to what his plans are for working around the Day of Silence and if there is something we need to do as a School Committee.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **Summer Schedule**

Helen Cohen announced that the School Committee's all day retreat with Paul Ash would be August 8<sup>th</sup>. A suggestion was made to have Bea Holland attend the retreat. A discussion followed, with the Chair being asked to work with Dr. Ash on the structure of the retreat, and need for a facilitator. Also, the first School Committee meeting will be held on Monday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, time and location to be announced.

A motion was presented that the School Committee to establish a position of Deputy Superintendent. Ms. Gutttag said this position was already in the budget.

Ms. Cohen introduced Dr. Paul Ash. Dr. Ash said he is looking forward to serving Lexington as Superintendent. He is pleased to recommend to Mr. Hurley that Dr. Lynne Sarasin be appointed as Director of Curriculum and Deputy Superintendent. Dr. Ash said he would not bring a candidate forward that he did not have complete confidence in. He is more than confident that she would make an outstanding Director of Curriculum and Deputy Superintendent.

Mr. Hurley recommended that the School Committee accept the position of Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and that they appoint Dr. Lynne Sarasin for that position. He also thanked the School Committee for supporting the reorganization of the Central Office administration as Dr. Ash originally recommended.

A motion was made that the School Committee establish a position of Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and that the School Committee support Bill Hurley's recommendation in the appointment of Lynne Sarasin for that position. (Griffiths – Diaz; 5-0)

### **Action Items**

#### **Life-Threatening Allergies Policy – Second Reading**

Scott Burson said after the last meeting, the subcommittee went back into session and discussed the concerns that were raised at the last School Committee meeting. The subcommittee went back and made the requested changes; the new policy with these changes is attached. The school district counsel has not had a chance to look at the revised policy until this morning, and Scott has given all School Committee members the counsel's recommended changes. If the School Committee is comfortable with the changes made the counsel, Mr. Burson asked if we could waive the third reading and

approve the policy tonight. Joan Stein, counsel for the school district, said she is impressed with the format of the policy and feels the policy document should be separate from the procedure. She is impressed with the comprehensiveness of policies and procedures in that there is nothing that the state requires to be in the policy that isn't already stated. She extended thanks to Jane Franks who brought the policy up to date. The principal recommendation from Joan Stein is to reference the actual legal standard or the district reactions that are reasonable and appropriate. Mr. Burson said he reviewed this language with her and made minor changes on Page 2 (J) to make it clear that medical records are confidential. They added a final paragraph (K) which sets the policy basis for procedures. It defines that when there is an event outside the regular school day that is not sponsored by Lexington Public Schools or part of the curriculum, the sponsors of that event are responsible.

Tom Diaz said the intent of Paragraph (K) is to make it clear that the school department is not responsible for these activities.

Scott Burson feels it is the School Committee's job to implement the policy; not deal with procedures.

Ms. Gutttag said she presumes that these changes have been seen and approved by the principals. Mr. Burson said he is not sure if the principals have seen this version of the policy. He recommended that the policy circulate to the principals, staff and other unions with the changes that have been made today, and, if necessary, we will come back for a third reading.

Fred Rosenberg, member of the policy subcommittee, said he believes the previous draft was circulated to the unions. It is important that when a new policy comes to the School Committee that you have a procedure in place, whether it is the final one or not. He feels the legal counsel's additions are consistent with what they had.

Jane Franks said the recommendations from the last School Committee meeting do not change the policy. She would like this to be approved tonight, as there is a need to implement this and be ready for children in September. We need to have this done now so we can alert faculty before September.

A motion was made that we accept this policy with the proposed changes and inform the faculty and all those who need to have it as soon as possible and waive the third reading. (Olga – Burson; 5-0)

Approval of the April 26, 2005 School Committee minutes has been deferred for further review.

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the May 17, 2005 School Committee minutes as amended. (Griffiths – Diaz; 5-0)

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A motion was made at 9:40 p.m. to go into Executive Session for the purpose of collective bargaining discussions not to return to public session. (Diaz – Burson; roll call vote 5-0)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

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