

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**Tuesday, March 6, 2007
Jonas Clarke Middle School
17 Stedman Road**

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chair Tom Diaz, School Committee Members Helen Cohen, Margaret Coppe, Tom Griffiths and Ravi Sakhuja. Minutes taken by Leora Tec

The meeting was convened at 5:17 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)

II. Public Comment

Tricia Perez-Kennealy (Stand For Children co-chair): Four state representatives will come to Lexington tomorrow at Follen Church for a Q&A about funding on the state level.

Dawn McKenna: LHS graduation won't be at Lowell; I was unhappy with it being at Lowell. I hope we can bring it back to Lexington. I hope we can engage in an appropriate process. The costs of having it at Lowell are more than the public was initially led to believe.

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Tom Diaz: Welcome to Margaret Coppe who was sworn in this afternoon. Welcome to George Burnell. Thank you to Mr. Pagett and Olga Guttag. They both served tirelessly with enormous energy and intelligence for no pay except the gratitude of the citizenry.

Tom Griffiths: Tom Diaz and I have been asked if we are going to Appropriation to discuss our budget. One thing they intend to talk about is adding capital projects that have energy savings associated with them. Some have long, some have short paybacks.

Tom Griffiths described several projects with short payback periods. He would like permission to say this represents a School Committee position. There are \$910K worth of short-payback projects.

Motion that the School Committee authorize Tom Diaz and Tom Griffiths to discuss the following items on a self-financing basis: (1) energy efficient lighting for Athletics; (2) mechanical Systems Bldg G, H, J, F Retro-Com Rpt 4,5,8 (\$200K); (3) demand ventilation and controls for large areas; (4) replace all steam traps (Dia/Esta/Bri/Bow/Has); and (5) re-insulate above all ceilings (Bridge, Bowman, Hastings) (Griffiths, Cohen). The motion passed 5-0.

Ravi Sakhuja: The cost for all these projects is based on bidding or study, these are not the final numbers. Overall cash flow from these projects depends on when we start them. There are two other items: 1.7 million for gas in Clarke and 1.3 million at the high school. We have 3 companies coming in tomorrow. They can look at the high school lighting as well. We will get feedback from them soon.

IV. Discussion Items:

1. FY08 “At-Risk” List

Paul Ash discussed the following:

23 second shift custodians. Convert 18 of them to part-time positions with no benefits. These employees are very loyal. They need to be informed right away. Hire 36 part-time custodians. Save \$223K.

Instructional Assistants:

Eliminate all K-5 support staff, subject to bargaining with LEA.

And other cuts such as cutting librarians.

The School Committee discussed the budget and the proposed at-risk list. Paul Ash is still recommending the entire supplemental budget. There are three budgets: same service, supplemental and at-risk list. “Tonight I said what budget can I present and what would I do to bring it down to available funds. (I know I did not bring it down to available funds.) In October you asked for a budget with enhancements. I hope there is a possibility that major portions of the supplemental budget can get funded because they are really important.”

The School Committee discussed busing, energy costs and SPED costs. Paul Ash reassured the Committee that money would be saved through the implementation of the new SPED programs that were voted on November 28th. They also inquired about cutting PE and librarians.

Public Comment

Pam Hoffman: I wanted to answer what librarians do in the school. The librarians do a tremendous amount for our schools. We already have a tremendous number of volunteers.

Vito la Mura: If this comes to pass this will be the second year in the row we will begin to dismantle a lighthouse school district. I can’t conceive of LPS without librarians. The worst case scenario is having one librarian at two schools. Trade that for .25 assistant principals and .5 assistant principals at each middle school and a .5 dean at the high school.

Patrick Mehr: To follow up on Ravi’s comments on electricity. Clarke is extremely inefficient and the new Harrington uses three-fourths the energy so it is even less efficient than Clarke. Same comment about the new Fiske. Maybe

other part-time people can go full-time or close to full-time to save money on the benefits.

There was a discussion of METCO funding and of Avalon Bay busing and of health care benefits.

Mary Ann Stewart (Harrington PTA President): Many of these items have direct impacts on all of our children. I want to echo Vito's concerns. Parents are talking about Newton eliminating librarians and seeing a reduction in 4th grade MCAS. We work closely with custodians. It concerns me that we would have a high turnover in that department.

Dawn McKenna: I am seeing this for the first time. We will be taking a huge step backwards. Several items are listed on the essential list that I don't call essential. Mandarin is not essential. I have a gnawing feeling about putting custodial services at risk after the custodial question passed. My husband is an elementary school principal. He had no library; that is unacceptable for Lexington.

Ms Biglow: School Support staff. There aren't enough people on the playground as it is.

Paul Ash: We would need to hire some additional 76 weekly hours of support staff. If we eliminated all the support staff, the schools would not function. Minimum number is 76 hours. Two-thirds of the support would be removed.

Ms. Bigelow: The librarians order all the books.

Deb Strod: We are already at the unimaginable.

2. FY08 Budget Discussion (20 minutes)

a. Facilities Budget Subcommittee Report
Presented by Tom Griffiths

There have been some goals established. We have moved beyond crisis-based management to do preventive maintenance. We use a web-based work order management system. Priorities were discussed. One requested personnel increase—one custodial position at Fiske. Utilities numbers have been increased by \$365,746. A 3% increase in expenses and some supplemental budget amounts have been requested.

b. Central Office Budget Subcommittee Report
Presented by Helen Cohen

Dr. Cohen presented the projects that were happening this year: redistricting, completion of the New Fiske, the elementary school master Plan, first year of PE and Wellness curriculum review, along with what is in store for next year. The curriculum reviews are threatened under the

current financial circumstances. No big change in Central Office expenses except for professional dues. Human Resources should have some supplies. Doug Kleinman pointed out a math error. There are no changes in staffing. Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent was left out. They are trying to expand mentoring for second year teachers.

3. FY08 Budget Discussion

V. Action Items:

1. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of January 30, 2007
2. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of February 6, 2007

Motion to approve the School Committee minutes of January 30th and Feb 6th
(Griffiths, Cohen) **The motion passed 4-0** (Coppe abstained).

VII. Motion to adjourn (Griffiths, Sakhuja). **The motion passed 5-0.**

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at Cary Hall, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue.