

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, March 14 2006
Lexington High School Media Center
Lexington High School

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash; School Committee Chair Helen Cohen; School Committee Members: Tom Diaz, Tom Griffiths, Olga Gutttag, Ravi Sakhuja and student representative Toni Maeck. Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:37 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Helen Cohen): Welcome to Ravi Sakhuja the new Committee member. Thank you to Scott Burson for six years of service, his legal expertise, writing ability and deep commitment to students and administration and respect for faculty. Thank you to Steve Arnoff, outgoing Director of Technology. Congratulations to our reporter, Bethan Jones, who has been admitted to the Harvard School of Education.

II. Public Comment :

Vito LaMura: I am a proud member of Stand for Children. A rally is coming up for increased state aid for education. Schools are strapped for funds. We are anticipating the third override in four years. Legislative and executive leaders of Massachusetts should be ashamed of themselves. There will be a rally at the State House on April 26th.

III. Superintendent's Report:

A. Lexington High School Science Fair: Dr. Ash participated as a judge in the Lexington High School Science Fair. Both the number of students and judges and the quality of the work were impressive. Thirty-five students will go to the regional fair, some will go to state finals.

B. Meeting with Lincoln-Douglas Debate and Policy Debate students and parents: Dr. Ash met with approximately fifty parents and students about these debate programs. There was a lot of listening and conversation. They discussed options and tonight Dr. Ash will announce a change in his previous recommendation. There will be a parent committee with parents, students and administration representatives who will come up with a recommendation to Dr. Jones.

C. Bowman School Grade 5 students at Fenway Park: Bowman 5th graders will sing the National Anthem at Fenway Park on May 14th.

D. LEF Summer Fellows: Thank you to LEF for supporting all ten of the summer fellowship applications this year.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Tom Griffiths: Congratulations to Olga for having received a letter from Mitt Romney in response to our lobbying efforts. PBC: Fiske is 57% complete and there is a date for completion. White House: Still need to determine if we should request \$375K for design and construction

documents in Town Meeting. The number of parking spaces was discussed. The PBC suggested that we not try to track the DPW building. There was a comment that the White House could be available for bidding by next winter.

Olga Gutttag: I am concerned that we just got a new version of the at-risk list. I would like to have things at least three hours before a meeting, have a discussion and then vote the following evening. The SPED PAC is working on how to provide more support to our SPED Director and staff. Thanks to Vito for his eloquent speech on lobbying. We have sent our resolution to legislators and gotten a response from the DOE saying we are getting several hundred dollars more. That is not enough. METCO lobbying day is March 16th supporting a bill that would provide \$1500 more per student. I joined the EDCO data subcommittee, which will provide comparative data in many categories among the EDCO communities. The sidewalk committee is busy; the SRTS program has been adopted by most other elementary schools. Thanks to DPW for being very helpful.

Tom Griffiths: Olga and I would like to get more data electronically. And we would like to get budget information on spreadsheets.

Olga Gutttag: To keep all SC members equally informed, when one of us asks a question of the administration can the answer be sent to all SC members? Dr. Ash agreed to do this.

Tom Diaz: Come to the Stand for Children rally and write letters to legislators, not emails. The Library Board of Trustees met, Norm Cohen was nominated as chair, and Helen Cohen was nominated to fill the vacancy left by Scott Burson. Many of you may not know that in addition to being a lawyer, Scott is a professional librarian. National Library Week is in early April. The Planning Board is continuing to present a warrant article on inclusionary housing. We will ask to extend the engine idling committee's life for one year. The plan is to write a by-law for the 2007 Town Meeting. This morning was the NPFH steering committee meeting. I missed Charlie Martin's presentation in February but hear it was excellent.

Ravi Sakhuja: I am glad to be here. I am impressed by the balancing act necessary to protect the quality of education and the pocketbooks of our citizens. I am looking forward to the team effort that is necessary.

Helen Cohen: Thanks to LEF for Educated Tastes and all they do.

V. Discussion Items:

A. Proposed LHS Mission and Expectations Statement:

Paul Ash thanked Michael Jones and Carol Pilarski for their efforts on this initiative. Michael Jones, in turn, thanked the chairs of the committee, Debora Hoard and Henry Turner. There was general approval of the passion, hard work, broad-based support and positive outcome associated with this endeavor.

B. FY06 monthly budget report:

Paul Ash: Current thinking is that there will be a \$100K projected surplus if we liberate encumbered funds. There have been three move-ins requiring out-of-district placement within SC meeting 3/14/2006

the last few weeks. Also, the Aim program does not have a director. The program is in trouble; it was not designed correctly. It is causing more out of district placements. We are currently in negotiations with the Walker School in Needham to provide leadership and consultation until the end of the year. We hope to hire their system to manage the program. That could cost \$80K, and it leaves no money for anything else. We are implementing an immediate spending freeze; also I will ask Carol Gregory to defer filling all open jobs whenever possible. Possible layoffs may be on the list. I am not forecasting a deficit. We monitor the situation on a daily basis.

VI. Action Items

A. Vote to approve FY07 “At-Risk” List [this done before the FY06 monthly report]:
(The Superintendents’ presentation appears on the LPS website.)

1. There are two tiers:

Tier One: Items the superintendent recommends cutting first if there are insufficient funds (including new positions).

Tier two: The most vital positions; these will be cut last. This tier includes total eliminations of programs: 34.4 FTEs and \$2,362,559 will be eliminated.

2. There are three possible budgets: (1) a budget that stays within a 2.5% increase from last year; **(2) a basic budget** [this requires an override, and funds the items on tier 2]; and **(3) a needs-based budget** [requires either a separate override or a separate question from the basic budget, and funds the items on Tier 1].

3. The Superintendent has decided to implement new revenue sources, so we can restore critical services no matter what happens in June [see presentation for details]. Olga Guttag suggested adding increased transcript fees to this list.

4. Discussion:

Olga Guttag expressed concern about our science programs, stating that the elementary science specialist should be protected and that honors and level one science courses in the high school should not be cut from six to five meetings per week.

Paul Ash: We need \$4.7 million dollars. I suggest dividing that amount into four potential override questions:

1. **“Tier Two Plus:”** (“Basic Plus”) Includes those items in Tier Two plus teacher induction (because it is cost effective) and 1 unallocated FTE K-5 teacher: \$2,602,759.
2. **“Tier One Less:”** Tier 1 less the items moved to questions 1, 3 and 4 \$1,074,637. This is the question that will allow us to move towards excellence.
3. **Preventive Maintenance:** This is \$608K in preventive maintenance plus four custodians (\$40K each) and a facilities manager (\$55K), totaling \$823,000.
4. **SPED Contingency** \$280K

5. Motion to accept the FY07 needs based budget in the amount of \$66,360, 858, which requires an override and funds all of tier one and tier two. (Diaz, Griffiths)

Olga Gutttag expressed a preference for voting from the basic budget up, so that she won't be accused of not supporting the budget. Tom Griffiths responded that bottom-up or top-down didn't change how people stand.

There was a discussion regarding electricity rates, which Ravi Sakhuja had looked into. These rates are impossible to predict with exact certainty. The town is raising their budget in this area by 30%.

Paul Ash recommended eliminating \$80,000 if Fiske moves mid-year, eliminating \$463K through revenue raising, and adding \$200K for a potential increase in the cost of electricity.

Vote on Tom Diaz's motion (3-2) (Diaz, Griffiths, Cohen for, Gutttag and Sakhuja against)

6. There was a discussion regarding whether or not to reduce science classes from 6 to 5 times a week.

Paul Ash assured the Committee that they could have a high quality program with science classes meeting 5 times a week.

7. Discussion about removing specific items from the "at-risk" list and replacing them with other things.

a. The Committee decided, with Paul Ash's approval, to remove one of the custodial positions from question three and move it to question two.

b. Motion to move the elementary science curriculum specialist that is currently in tier two and costs \$90,568, into the protected budget and protect this position with the .5 HS evaluation team leader (on p.6, protected by the fees) and additional money from the \$200,000 budgeted for the electric reserve, hoping that we get sufficient savings from the Clarke program. (Gutttag, Sakhuja)

After Mary Sullivan Kelly explained the importance of the .5 evaluation team leader in terms of protecting us from legal liability, Dr. Gutttag amended her motion to say that Dr. Ash should decide what to put at risk when the science specialist becomes protected. Dr. Ash said that he would recommend the unallocated FTE at the elementary level and a small amount—the balance of \$90,568 minus \$58,600—to come from a reduction in the energy budget.

The vote on the above motion passed 4-1 (Cohen).

c. Motion to take K-12 and health curriculum specialist (.5 FTE) and Middle School PE health teacher (.25) into question 1 (Sakhuja, Gutttag). The motion passed 5-0.

8.

Motion to present the Board of Selectmen with the four questions as outlined by Dr. Ash, the wording to be supplied later, in the amounts of: \$2,549,901, \$1,114,637, \$783,000 and \$280,000.

(Diaz, Griffiths)

In the ensuing discussion Olga Guttag noted that she could not support question 2 and Mr. Griffiths expressed his opinion that now is not the time to give opinions on individual questions and that the School Committee should be supporting the vision of the new Superintendent in promoting excellence and not to undermine one of these questions right now.

The motion passed 4-1 (Guttag).

B. Vote to Accept the Diamond School Construction Project for School Purposes. (Griffiths, Guttag). The motion passed 5-0.

C. Vote to Accept the Clarke School Construction Project for School Purposes (Griffiths, Guttag). The motion passed 5-0.

D. Vote to Accept the Lexington High School Project for School Purposes (Griffiths, Sakhuja). The motion passed 5-0.

E. Motion to allow Bridge School to accept Wilson Farms money in the amount of \$973.00 (Diaz, Guttag). The motion passed 5-0.

VII. Motion to Adjourn (Guttag, Diaz). The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Monday, March 27, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the School Administration Building Conference Room, 1557 Massachusetts Avenue.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leora Tec