

**Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – March 15, 2005
Harrington Elementary School**

Members present were Tom Griffiths, Scott Burson, Olga Guttag, Helen Cohen, Student Representative Janette Ekanem, and Interim Superintendent William Hurley. Tom Diaz was not in attendance.

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Public Comment

Susan Elberger, former School Committee member, proposed an event about who to call with certain questions. The League of Women Voters agreed to host this event. Paul Ash thought this was a good idea. She asked one of the School Committee members to be part of the panel.

Susan Sear, member of SAMS, introduced a newly formed group of concerned parents who want to educate the town that in conjunction with junior varsity and varsity sports, there is an intramural program out there for children as well.

Superintendent's Report

Enrollment Update

Susan Bottan reported on the updated enrollment through March 1, 2005 and how it compared with the October 1, 2004 enrollment figures. Enrollment is not increasing dramatically which is good news, and enrollment figures for next year should be on target.

Facilities Update

The new Harrington is now open. We are working with Mr. Crump to plan an open house for the community scheduled for Tuesday, April 5th, from 6:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Dana Ham reported good news on the white house. He received 10 responses to the RFQ. The Permanent Building Committee met and made recommendations to the town manager of three top bidders we would like to see do the feasibility study. David Hanlon of Hanlon Associates was selected for the project. Mr. Ham noted we could also use this company for the design process if we so chose but at this time they are only conducting the feasibility study.

Mr. Ham gave an update on the Fiske progress as to dates and bids. The bid notice will be in the Central Register next week and bid documents will be available the following week. The bid opening will be scheduled around the first week in May.

Administrative Search Update

Bill Hurley informed the School Committee that Carol Pilarski and Andre Ravenelle have been chairing searches for two elementary principals. So far there have been several days of interviews. Carol Pilarski has been working with Hastings and Andre Ravenelle for Bowman. Paul Ash spent this afternoon meeting with some administrators individually and then stayed for our staff meeting. Dr. Ash has identified a candidate that he wants for the Director of Human Resources position; that person has accepted the position. Ads for other administrative positions have been in the Boston Globe and resumes are now being accepted. We are in the process of putting together interview committees.

Mr. Hurley said we have not yet discussed the school calendar for next year and it is important that the School Committee attend to that quickly. There are two options to look at; one is a pre-Labor Day start and one with a traditional after Labor Day start.

Andre Ravenelle presented the two calendar options for the 2005-2006 school year. One option has the traditional after Labor Day start of 9/6/05. With no snow days, the last day of school would be 6/25/06 or with five snow days, it would be 6/30/06. The other calendar option would have a pre-Labor Day start, possibly 8/30/05 or 9/1/05. The administrators have drafted the calendars so they can see when both full day and half-day conferences are scheduled. He is looking for the School Committee's opinion on what calendar option they prefer. If the pre-Labor Day start is approved, the last day of school would be 6/23/06.

Scott Burson said the School Committee has received a number of calls regarding the late ending date this year. He is interested in input of both administrators and faculty as to their recommendations on the calendar. He would also like parents to come forward and talk to us as well. Mr. Hurley strongly supports the calendar with a pre-Labor Day start.

Vito Lamura, LEA President, said the faculty was polled extensively a few years ago about this issue. It may be problematic to have a pre-Labor Day start this year because of late date of discussing this. If you want to bring teachers in before September 1st, you have to meet with the Association to discuss that first.

Members' Reports/Members Concerns

Helen Cohen said the Youth Service Council had their first event for middle school students last week; snow tubing at Nashoba Valley.

Scott Burson said after a long hiatus, Andre Ravenelle asked to resuscitate the Policy Sub-Committee. Scott will contact members of that committee to set up a meeting time and get policies back in action as per one of the School Committee's goals for this year.

Olga Gutttag met with Steve Arnoff and Marianne McKenna to brainstorm about the time line on getting information on the LPS website. They came up with a process to get town meeting information on the website as soon as possible. She attended the award ceremony of the LHS science project fair. She extended thanks to the Lexington Education Foundation for hosting Educated Taste event. In regard to Scott's comment on the policy review committee, Ms. Gutttag feels they should take a look at the policy on Internet use. There is an LEF grant at the high school where students are provided with email accounts but as the policy stands now, the grant is difficult to implement. The energy subcommittee that deals with NSTAR has a program in place that offers energy education. They have a program that donates light bulbs to schools for fundraisers and whatever money is raised the school can keep. She will get more information on this by the end of the week. Ms. Gutttag is tracking on the Massachusetts School Committee list-serve what legislative issues are most pressing for communities. The most common is lack of money. The MASC has put together a "reverse the curse" plan asking restoration of local aid by the state. Ms. Gutttag proposed a resolution in support of this plan that she would like the Lexington School Committee to endorse. If the plan works, this would give Lexington an additional \$611,969 in state funding.

A motion was made to adopt the resolution as proposed with the one noted change.
(Burson – Cohen; 5-0)

Janette Ekanem announced that this Friday, March 18th, is the David Germaine basketball game between students and faculty to raise money for his scholarship fund. It will be held at Lexington High School at 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$8.00 at the door.

Tom Griffiths said that he and Tom Diaz attended the report on youth risk behavior based on an LHS survey last Tuesday. Elaine Sterzin and Jennifer Wolfrum ran the session. Attendance consisted mostly of practitioners and psychologists. Elaine Sterzin will do a presentation before the School Committee. Mr. Hurley thinks this program should be extended to the middle schools as well. Problems usually arise early in the middle school so he urges this program be extended to at least 7th and 8th graders.

Susan Elberger said she has worked in alcohol and drug treatment programs and feels the starting point was middle school aged children, if not younger. She also agrees this should be extended to the middle schools.

Janette Ekanem thinks a group of high school students should visit the middle schools to discuss these issues with them. She feels it would be good for middle school students to see high school students doing the right thing. Also, a very successful diversity day was held last Thursday at the high school.

Discussion Items

Follow up on Warrant Articles – Discussion With Capital Expenditures

Charles Lamb, liaison between the Capital Expenditures Committee (CEC) and the schools, discussed warrant articles with the School Committee.

Article 30 involves \$125,000 for new intercom equipment. The CEC is in support of this.

In regard to the heating\cooling and energy saving equipment, Dana Ham said we have a partial figure. He has been in contact with DMJM Harris and will have a report for tomorrow night's Capital Expenditures meeting. Ms. Gutttag is confident that the \$350,000 is a reasonable figure.

The building envelope is currently at \$75,000. Capital Expenditures Committee is in agreement on this.

The Capital Expenditures Committee is in agreement with the \$100,000 to work on exterior lighting around the schools.

Mr. Lamb said the Capital Expenditures Committee is not in agreement with the \$250,000 necessary for the security monitoring system. It seems to be lower in priority and it is his recommendation that zero dollars be contributed to this.

The Capital Expenditures Committee is in agreement of the \$140,000 for electrical equipment and generator at the Diamond Middle School.

Capital Expenditures Committee is postponing the vote on the custodial and maintenance equipment pending the report from Rich Parillo, the consultant from OR&L. They are in agreement with the \$50,000 but anything beyond that they will postpone their decision pending that report. Dana Ham reviewed the amended equipment list based on Mr. Parillo's recommendations. Mr. Lamb said he would reconsider the CEC's position.

Olga Gutttag hopes to have schools collaborate with the town so that the town maintains school grounds. She suggested a possible trade off for schools' cleaning services or charging the school a fee. Dana Ham and Bill Hadley are already looking for joint savings.

Mr. Lamb said many requested items are for maintenance and could have been purchases in the operating budget rather than through debt exclusion. Mr. Burson noted there may be contractual obligations for items such as lawn mowers. Ms. Gutttag expressed her concern about what will happen to our buildings if we do not get the equipment that is listed on the warrant. We keep deferring necessary maintenance. We have invested over \$100 million in our capital projects with the expectation that we are going to get 50 years

out of these buildings. Unfortunately, we are going to have run down buildings within 10 to 15 years if we do not maintain them. If we trade one request for another, we are just swapping something else that needs to be done. She would like to take the entire requests to town meeting and make a good case for our needs. The School Committee is asking for less than the bare minimum and hopes CEC will support our urgent needs.

Charles Lamb asked the School Committee to prioritize the list of requests. It would help CEC to make their recommendations. Tom Griffiths said there is no specific priority to the list. We need to worry about the investment of equipment as our buildings deserve the best maintenance.

In regard to the White House, CEC are putting forth \$300,000. This is three quarters of 12% of the \$2.5 million diminished or \$225,000 for design and \$75,000 worth of necessary capital maintenance on the White House to allow continued occupancy. At a prior PBC meeting, Ms. Gutttag said there was a \$75,000 item that was mentioned for a feasibility study that looked at restoring or rebuilding the administration building. Her sense is that it is still a worthwhile part of the project.

Mr. Lamb said the \$300,000 was based on the estimate that the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) gave them. Based on the current judgment of the PBC as to the study and design, the Capital Expenditures Committee will approve that figure. Scott Burson and Helen Cohen accept the PBC's judgment but Tom Griffiths is uneasy with the \$300,000 number. Mr. Ham noted that PBC Chair, Phil Poinelli, said it is between 12% and 15% for the design development. The 15% number puts you at \$375,000. We have heard from the Historic District that the building will cost between \$2 million and \$3 million. We want to make sure the new building is big enough to suit our needs. We don't have to spend all of what is allotted but he would hate to get to the point where we are compromising the design. Ms. Cohen does not feel she knows enough to go either way on this and would rather put this off until we get more information. Mr. Ham is concerned with the \$300,000 because of fluctuation in the construction trade as we are in times of serious construction costs inflation.

The School Committee is working with Steve Arnoff on the technology request. Mr. Arnoff is in the process of reviewing the network for the entire district. He will have a better idea of where to spend money some time next week. It is currently still the school's plan to ask for the \$350,000. Ms. Gutttag discussed the asset management system that includes bar coding and management for physical assets such as furniture and equipment and another one for textbooks.

Article 32(c) involves the \$75,000 needed to install an advanced left turn signal at the intersection of Maple and Lowell streets. This upgrade is essential to the safety of over 1,000 students and employees who will be sharing the Harrington site while Fiske is under construction. The Capital Expenditures Committee is in support of this.

Article 32(h) involves public safety. The Capital Expenditures Committee is in support of this.

If the School Committee and the CEC are going to be on the same page, a prioritization of the equipment was suggested. Mr. Hurley thinks we should do a priority list that matches the \$1.5 million. We are now \$450,000 over from this list. Olga Guttag feels if we prioritize, people may think we do not need the bottom items. She feels we truly need all our requested items and should try to get them all. Scott Burson feels strongly it is irresponsible not to prioritize this list.

The administration and the School Committee will get Mr. Lamb as much information as they can as it becomes available.

The Permanent Building Committee had a meeting on Tuesday. Discussion involved the anticipated schedule for the Fiske school and an anticipated overview of the budget as it stands. Ms. Guttag went over the predicted time schedule noting that we are not moving out of Fiske until after the end of the school year. Demolition will take three months and construction will begin October 2005. Construction will take about 18 months, which brings the start of school for the new Fiske Elementary to September 2007. The anticipated cost of Harrington was \$14,500,000 coming in substantially under budget. The Fiske construction estimate showed it coming in at \$15,646,000 plus soft costs. We still have to produce a list of add alternative items to guard against Fiske's bid coming in too high. Tom Griffiths said the override was phrased in a permissive way with no amount mentioned. If we are over budget, we need to go to town meeting to request more money than we will have to decide how it will be financed.

Media Center Representative

Scott Burson has been sitting on the Board of Conveyors to establish a media\corporation to make available to the residents of Lexington a public access media center that would include governmental, educational and public access. They have made significant progress in terms of establishing underlying bylaws for the organization. Schools are a major player of public access and bylaws give the School Committee the right to appoint a representative. Wendy Wilson, LHS social studies teacher, has been the liaison on media projects and has worked with the cable providers. Tom Griffiths and Scott Burson recommended to the School Committee that Ms. Wilson be given the opportunity to continue to do the same. A motion was made that the School Committee appoint Wendy Wilson as the representative to the Lexington media corporation. (Burson – Guttag; 4-0) It was noted that Ms. Wilson does not live in Lexington but that is not a requirement of this law.

A motion was made to accept the Fiske add-alternate list with the one change noted. (Guttag – Burson; 4-0)

All motions were vote 4-0 as Tom Diaz was not present at this meeting.

Article 12; amend the Selectmen/Town Manager Act. Olga Guttag and Tom Griffiths oppose this article. Scott Burson said there is no need to have a recall procedure and is not in favor of this article. Helen Cohen is abstaining from voting on this tonight. She will vote on it at the March 28th meeting.

It was noted that the Selectmen have voted unanimously for the CPA.

A motion was made at 10:27 p.m. to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and a student issue that requires confidentiality and not return to public session. (Burson – Guttag; 4-0)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

cc: William Hurley
Tom Griffiths
Olga Guttag
Scott Burson
Helen Cohen
Tom Diaz