

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 16, 2006
Lexington High School, Library Media Center
251 Waltham Street

Present: Superintendent Paul Ash, School Committee Chairperson Helen Cohen, Tom Diaz, Tom Griffiths, Olga Guttag and Ravi Sakhuja
Minutes taken by Leora Tec.

The meeting was convened at 7:36

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Helen Cohen)

II. Public Comment

Leora Tec (Harrington PTA co-president): Harrington late shift custodian Ralph Mills who died suddenly on April 29th will be greatly missed.

Barbara Parker (Marrett Road): The School Committee invited COA-member and architect John Ruffing to speak about plans for the White House, he has not yet had the opportunity.

SC member responses:

Helen Cohen: We do have plans to have the architect, John Ruffing, come to speak. We moved at Town Meeting to consider a whole master plan. I spoke to him about making the presentation to PBC and I will call him to come to School Committee too.

Olga Guttag: He should be put in touch with the firm working on our master plan and with Bill Hartigan.

Tom Griffith: I attended COA meeting and spoke with Ms. Parker and Jim Goell. They were dissatisfied that SC was not meeting with architect so I think we should do it on May 30th and perhaps invite members of PBC to sit in on the meeting.

III. Superintendent's Report

1. 25 LHS students went to MA State Science Fair at MIT and all received awards: 5 first, 3 second, 7 third, 8 honorable mentions. It is extraordinary to send 25 students to MIT and to have every one win an award.
2. Lexington High School Envirothon Science Team won 2nd place at the MA Envirothon Competition and several team members won individual awards.
3. Lexington High School Math Team came in 1st in NE Math Championship (Superbowl of Math).

4. Lexington High School Jazz Combo was named the winning Jazz Group in the 29th Annual Downbeat Magazine Student Awards - an international honor.
5. LPS will get \$266,962 in extraordinary relief under the Circuit Breaker Program We are eligible for these funds because our SPED costs have gone up over 25% in one year. This money can be used to offset SPED costs. This should be viewed as one-time revenue. Dr Mary Sullivan Kelley and Ann Giombetti did a huge amount of work to file this application. Helen Cohen thanked them on behalf of the School Committee.

SC member questions:

Tom Diaz: What is the effect of this on fiscal 07?

Dr. Ash: No real effect on FY07 state aid. SC must decide if this money should stay in the SPED account for FY07 or be used for FY06 SPED expenses and help us lift part of the budget freeze.

Olga Guttag: Since we budgeted Circuit Breaker Reimbursement based on Dec. 05 SPED costs, is there a discrepancy between our projected revenue and what we will actually get through the Circuit Breaker in FY07?

Mary Sullivan Kelley: Acknowledged the help of her office staff with application. In Nov. 05 we had pretty good idea of our FY06 actuals, so there should be little if any difference in circuit breaker amount budgeted for FY07

6. Update on Master Plan:

At a PBC meeting last week it was agreed that the \$60K reallocated by TM from extraordinary repairs will allow the PBC to hire an architect to prepare a master plan of 4 elementary schools, look at old Harrington school and at the White House. Chair Phil Poinelli offered that the PBC do the designer selection process. Dr. Ash accepted. Bill Hartigan will be the lead school person on this project. This will be an exciting partnership. The master plan is connected to the drawing of district lines that will happen next fall.

SC member comments:

Tom Griffiths: We should explore the notion of a new building on the White House property for Senior Center and school admin building.

7. Principal Search update:
Bowman's Principal, Dr Steven Flynn, has been appointed the new principal of Clarke Middle School. Thus the Bowman School Principalship is open. Estabrook Principal, Joni Jay, just announced she has accepted a position as a principal in Sudbury next year. So we need to hire 2 elementary school principals.

SC member comments:

Helen Cohen: Thank you to Joni Jay for being a good leader. Parents should participate in meetings re: principal searches.

Olga Gutttag: Hope a representative from SPED PAC will have a seat at the table for both searches.

Tom Griffiths: Joni Jay has my immense respect for working in a straightforward way; the results speak for themselves.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

Ravi Sakuhuja: Attended No Place for Hate meeting with Olga: 1. There has been a neighborhood dispute between couple of families living in the Oxbow St area, in the last few months. NPFH made note and is on standby. 2. There was also a discussion of the King and King book incident at Estabrook School and the filing of a law suit by couple of parents. There may be a rally planned by NPFH.

Tom Diaz: The library trustees had their semiannual meeting. Donations of friends of the library will support the entire summer reading program for elementary students. Kathy Quinlan will be the new assistant director. The trustees ratified the appointment of Norm Cohen as chairman of the trustees and Helen Cohen as Scott Burson's replacement.

Tom Griffiths: I attended a COA meeting, a PBC meeting and an EDCO presentation by MSBA Exec, Director, Katherine Craven, about qualifying school capital projects for state reimbursement. There will be no waiting list in the future for school projects, you apply and if you don't make it you can reapply. Preventive maintenance on existing buildings will not count against us.

Olga Gutttag: 1) We are way behind in posting the minutes. Let's do it by the next meeting. 2) Ravi and I are on the policy subcommittee.

Motion to appoint Susan Bennet to serve on policy subcommittee (Gutttag, Diaz). The motion passed 5-0.

The Policy Subcommittee started working on the Wellness policy. We will bring it to the next SC meeting or the one after that. 3) The issues regarding the parking lot behind Harrington are now resolved. 4) Congratulations to Bridge Safe Routes to Schools program, they won a prestigious EPA award. 5) Thanks to the PTA Council for a productive and an enjoyable year.

Helen Cohen: We will do an evaluation of Dr. Ash shortly.

V. Discussion Items

The first of three presentations on curriculum and instruction as it relates to children were presented. The concept of Action Research was introduced by Dr. Lynne Sarasin. Four different Action Research Projects were presented as samples of how professional development time was used this year in K-8. Teams of teachers from Bridge School, Fiske

School, Clarke Middle School and Diamond Middle School presented their projects, and how they plan to extend their research next year to improve student achievement. Power Point Presentations were available.

Paul Ash added that they are asking teachers to look at student data and to do it collaboratively. Then the group asks what can they do differently. The whole conversation in the school changes. People will collaborate if it makes their load lighter. The School Committee expressed gratitude for the presentations and for all the action research projects being carried out.

VI. Action Items

1. Vote on School Choice

Motion to accept Dr. Ash's recommendation that the Lexington Public Schools not participate as a School Choice district (Griffiths, Guttag). The Motion passed 5-0.

Paul Ash explained that SCs have to vote not to participate, otherwise it will happen, in which case parents from outside Lexington could send kids here and we would get inadequately reimbursed. There is also a philosophical question.

VII. Motion to adjourn to executive session for the purposes of collective bargaining not to return to public session Diaz-aye; Griffiths-aye; Guttag-aye; Sakhuja-aye; Cohen-aye. The motion passed 5-0.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, May 30, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.