

**Lexington School Department
School Committee Meeting – March 28, 2005
Central Office Administration Building**

Members present were Tom Griffiths, Scott Burson, Helen Cohen, Olga Guttag, Tom Diaz via telephone conference, and Interim Superintendent William Hurley.

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

A motion was made that the School Committee allow Tom Diaz to participate at this meeting via telephone conference. (Burson – Cohen; 4-0)

Superintendent's Report

Intramural Middle School Basketball Program

Mr. Hurley informed the School Committee that Tony Porter has a meeting next week with the parent group to present the school's desire to incorporate intramural programs into the Middle schools next year. The hope is for the intramural basketball program use the court when the varsity team is on the road. There was a question whether there would be a junior varsity team as well as an intramural program. Unfortunately the system cannot accommodate junior varsity and an intramural program. If given the choice of junior varsity and intramural at the middle school level, Mr. Hurley is in favor of an intramural program as it can accommodate more children. When he has more information, he will share it with the School Committee.

2005-2006 School Calendar Drafts

Andre Ravanelle informed the School Committee that there were two draft calendars made. One is a pre-Labor Day start and one is a post-Labor Day start. He asked the School Committee to look over the calendars. This does not need action tonight but the School Committee needs to act on this as soon as possible so people can make plans regarding vacation and camp for their children. Scott Burson thinks over the long-term it is worthwhile to think about a pre-Labor Day start but feels it is too late for us to be thinking about that for this coming September. Mr. Hurley agreed noting that given the late date, it would not be feasible for people's calendar for a pre-Labor Day start. Helen Cohen agreed as well but noted the School Committee should make decision regarding this next fall for the following school year. Olga Guttag is concerned with the potential June 30th end date as high school students and middle school students have camps that start in mid-June. She is in favor of the idea that was proposed at the last meeting, which is to use the April vacation starting from the 21st and counting backwards as the floating

snow days. This would accommodate the end of the year pressure and still give people at least four days for the April break. Mr. Hurley advised against that as he said there would be a lot of community comment. People plan time off and vacations well in advance for that week. Vito Lamura feels April is a much-used vacation that people book well over a year in advance and would not support that as an option. Mr. Ravelle confirmed that the school department is no longer focusing on a pre-Labor Day start and will focus on a post-Labor Day start to finalize the calendar.

Enrollment Update

Susan Bottan presented the School with a handout (see attached) depicting information regarding student withdrawals and entry.

Capital Expenditures Committee (CEC) Discussion

Article 30(e) pertains to the security equipment. The CEC does not agree with this. A motion was made for the School Committee to change their vote due to financial constraints and delay these expenditures for the future. (Gutttag – Cohen; 5-0) There was discussion regarding taking advantage of this in the future. Mr. Ham said we could have a security survey done. We need to look at everything, not only cameras but how we secure our buildings. We could have someone come in to tell us what we need. From a crime standpoint, we made this decision on what we thought we needed. A suggestion was made to put together a grant that Homeland Security would fund. Elaine Sterzin said there is an emergency response grant coming up that she is looking into. This portion of Article 30 will be dropped until next year.

Dana Ham talked to NSTAR and Keyspan. The representative from Keyspan said there is a rebate for the controls at Diamond. They will get back as to what we qualify for. NSTAR said they would work with Keyspan on a rebate for us as well. Mr. Burnell said if the School Committee comes to town meeting with the original requested budget, they would not be in agreement. It all depends on what a realistic rebate is. If we get 50% and if the structure fits, he will support it. The question is if we can get a 50% rebate or will it only be 10%. Also, we will not know the return on the investment period until we have an idea of what the rebate would be. Mr. Ham said we have a minimum of a three to five year payback. By law, the univents have to exchange air in the rooms three times an hour. Because of this, the fans are running 24 hours a day as there is no way to turn the system off. The amount of labor to make these vents run as they are now is huge. Mr. Burnell feels the bulk of the requests is maintenance related and, therefore, not capital. He feels these are operating requests and are not capital issues.

Tom Griffiths said the School Committee is proposing \$143,000. We have cut our custodial staff and thus the staff is now functioning less efficiently than it could. We are requesting three riding scrubbers (\$25,000 each), one Robo-Scrubber for the High School (\$38,000), and a Bobcat to help with snow removal (\$30,000). These are clearly capital

items. We plan to go to town meeting or at least to the collaboration meeting to make this argument in its strongest terms. Mr. Burnell said they are short on capital funds and have no room to add anything than what was already allocated for the schools.

In regard to Technology, the position remains the same at \$250,000. This is the amount the CEC has available. Tom Griffiths noted we have already cut \$50,000 from the original \$350,000 request. The School Committee feels the money is necessary to implement up to date technology in our schools. Steve Arnoff said the computer network is now at 90K and should have been replaced three or four years ago. The feed from the network basically goes down to a trickle and is extremely slow. He also noted that there are a number of computers that are 9, 10 and 11 years old and need to be replaced. The request also includes LCD projectors for the renovated wing at the High School. Charles Lamb understands that the School Committee feels all of these requests are important, but he would like to see a prioritized list going into town meeting.

John Rosenberg said the amount of borrowing on Article 30 is more than what we thought a few weeks ago. As for the Fiske, there is another pot of money that we have to figure out what we are doing with. Tom Griffiths said we would not know until the bids are open the first week of May. We have prepared an add-alternate list without furniture for \$750,000 and with furniture for \$1.5 million. Considering there is a two-year time line for this project, there will be another debt exclusion during that time.

The equipment items we are asking for were part of the original debt exclusion. We made a promise to the community to maintain these buildings and we cannot without the proper equipment. Mr. Burnell said he would be very surprised if there is a desire to exceed the amount of capital money available and does not see a scenario where they would ask for more money. Charles Lamb said he would consider exceeding the debt limit if the School Committee can come up with a prioritization list. The School Committee said they would present this at Town Meeting as if we need everything that is being requested.

Warrant Articles

The biggest open issue for the School Committee as far as the articles are concerned is whether we should we adopt the Community Preservation Act. Helen Cohen is concerned that this may result in voter fatigue. Ms. Gutttag feels if voters decide they will be fatigued about passing overrides, they are welcome to say no to this. If we get this money through other means, it will free up money in our budget. It is a win/win situation and we lose nothing by presenting this to the voters. If we get money from the voters, we will also get matching funds from the state. Scott Burson agrees with Helen in regard to voter fatigue and does not support this issue. Tom Griffiths is in favor of this stating that it gives us a chance to acquire funds but suggested the School Committee pass on making a recommendation on Article 7. Tom Diaz said he does not mind not taking a position as long as his colleagues would be okay with him expressing his opinion as an individual at

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Town Meeting. It was agreed that the School Committee would not make a recommendation on this article.

A motion was made to at 7:35 p.m. to adjourn. (Burson – Diaz; 4-0)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

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