

**Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – May 2, 2005
Central Office – Administration Building**

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

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Superintendent's Report

Feedback on GPA

Last week Dr. Jones gave a presentation on Grade Point Average. Mr. Hurley wanted to give the School Committee an opportunity to weigh in their opinion on this subject.

As previously explained, Ms. Guttag will excuse herself from this discussion. She has two children at Lexington High School. She will not be voting on this but believes this issue is actually not just an operation issue but is an issue of changing some policies at the high school. She asked the School Committee to consider this under the policy realm. Tom Diaz is interested in hearing from parents on either side of this issue. He does not believe this meets the criteria of being a policy issue. He would like to leave the possibility of changing this to the discretion of the new superintendent. Ms. Cohen feels last week's presentation was very useful but is confused about this issue as she sees arguments on both sides. She would like to hear more from parents and faculty.

Scott Burson is inclined to see this as a policy issue but is reluctant to offer an opinion about the appropriate way to assess the progress on this. Tom Griffiths feels the weighted GPA system seems to be broken and is appalled at the way it is calculated. On the other hand, he is hearing a tremendous amount of feedback from parents and has to listen to that side of it as well. He feels this is a School Committee policy issue and would like to explore this in a future School Committee meeting to talk through it a little more and to give parents more time to voice their opinion. Mr. Burson would like the faculty to address these issues and convince him as he is not convinced that eliminating the weighted GPA will do anything to address the problems identified. Tom Diaz respects everyone's view but feels it seems this is a case where the faculty are unanimous as to their opinion. Many people came forward at last week's meeting praising the faculty. Maybe we should take their advice.

Discussion Items

School Capital

Tom Griffiths has represented the School Committee in continuing disputes with Capital but has been resolving almost all of the issues in favor of the capital limit on borrowing.

He had a very long talk with Charlie Hornig and decided it was proper for us to finance the White House with bonding rather than cash. Mr. Hornig's argument was very strong stating we would want to roll any borrowing we do into debt exclusion. The advantage being it creates room for additional levy borrowing. It was agreed with Charles Lamb of the Capital Expenditures Committee (CEC) to excise from our budget the \$100,000 that would be used for energy savings at Diamond as we felt we did not have enough back up information on that. We will also reduce the technology program by \$30,000 in the area of LCD projectors. Those two changes were necessary to come into conformance with Capital by and large. Mr. Hurley argued that might well be because of their lack of understanding of how we utilize technology and equipment from an educational standpoint. Mr. Diaz feels the School Committee should honor the agreement with the CEC to ensure approval at town meeting. Mr. Hurley supports the School Committee's commitment but suggested seeing if the CEC is open to other options. It was noted that the way the motion is written, it allows the School Committee to make the decision where the most urgent spending should be. It was the recommendation of the School Committee to agree to this deal. It is believed from conversations with PTA presidents and LEF that we might have an opportunity to look for private sources of funding for the projectors. This will allow us to deliver LCD projectors to many more classrooms than we could afford under our budget. Mr. Burson hopes Capital will allow us to use flexibility on how we spend the money for our technology. If not, we will of course still honor the agreement. This is a perfect example of the financial constraints the town and school are under.

Tom Griffiths noted he moved \$60,000 for emergency repairs to the maintenance part of Article 30 and will discuss it at town meeting under 30(c). He reduced the amount to \$240,000 as the amount we would actually ask for to do the design work on the Central Office. This will allow us to ask for a debt exclusion. He asked the other School Committee members for a motion to accept these changes.

A motion was made to accept the changes to the motions for Article 30 as proposed on the handout at tonight's meeting. (Guttag – Burson; 5-0)

Article 29(c) is for the appropriation of \$125,000 for the Estabrook roof and Article 29(d) is for the Fiske appropriation in which we asked for an increase to \$1.575 million under that article. A motion was made to accept the motion under Article 29 as it is before the School Committee this evening. (Diaz – Guttag; unanimous 5-0)

Steve Arnoff asked what the final total was on Article 31. Mr. Griffiths said the total is \$270,000 and feels it would be far better for us to vote the entire article so it will give us the flexibility to use the money as we see fit. It will also give us the ability to move funds within the Article categories. He suggested Mr. Arnoff speak to the CEC after the article is approved tonight. Mr. Burson feels the motion is broad enough for us to be able to use the funds for how we see fit.

Tom Griffiths will present Article 30(a) through (g). Dana Ham and Roger Borghezani will be on hand to answer any questions. Tom Griffiths and Phil Poinelli will jointly present slides on the White House.

Action Items

The minutes of the February 8, 2005 School Committee meeting were previously approved as amended.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2005 School Committee meeting as amended. (Cohen – Diaz; 5-0)

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the February 25, 2005 School Committee meeting as amended. (Cohen – Diaz; 5-0)

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the March 1, 2005 School Committee meeting as amended. (Diaz – Burson; 4-0. Ms. Gutttag abstained, as she was not present at that meeting.)

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the March 23, 2005 School Committee minutes. (Burson – Cohen; 4-0. Tom Diaz abstained, as he was not present at that meeting.)

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the April 6, 2005 School Committee meeting. (Diaz - Cohen; 5-0)

A motion was made to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and returning to public session subject to the call of the Chair. (Burson - roll call vote; 5-0)

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

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