

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 30, 2006
Lexington High School, Library Media Center
251 Waltham Street

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.

6:30 p.m. Celebration of Scott Burson's service on the School Committee — LHS Commons II

I. Call to Order and Welcome (7:30 p.m.):

Public Comment

II. Superintendent's Report:

1. Lexington Education Foundation Grant
2. Update on Director of Technology Search

III. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns:

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Tom Diaz: Noah Berger is coming to speak to the faculty on their next professional development day.

Ravi Sakhuja: Tonight Nora Mann, Assistant District Attorney is speaking about the Internet along with psychologist Dan Rosa, for the Lexington Center for Parents and Youth.

IV. Discussion Items:

1. First Reading of the Wellness Policy — Robin DiGiammarino represented the policy subcommittee. We are creating this policy in response to a federal act requiring the formation of wellness policies in all public school systems. She gave the background of the work on this issue in Lexington. The School Committee discussed the issue. Ravi Sakhuja brought up the fact that the policy does not discuss mental health and stressed that this needs to be covered somewhere, whether in this policy or in another one. Tom Griffiths brought up the meaning of "screen time." He is not sure he supports a blanket reduction of screen time. Paul Ash supports Olga Gutttag's suggestion to use the phrase "non-educational screen time."

Victoria Buckley: Could you have a no peanut rule?

Jane Franks (head nurse): Our Food Allergy Policy says we don't use any nuts in food preparation.

Olga Gutttag: We need to say that this policy is consistent with the food allergy policy.

2. **Architect John Ruffing's** presentation on School Administration Building Possibilities: Mr. Ruffing presented plans showing a revamping of the School Administration building to include both the schools' Central Office and a Senior Center. You could also put a building between Cary Hall and Town Hall. You could still use the parking at Muzzey condominiums and if you use your imagination you can find parking; maybe two story parking.

There were questions and discussion from the School Committee.

Paul Ash: There will be an architect/master planner coming in to take a look at the situation of all the schools and the School Administration building. He will be overseen by Bill Hartigan and myself. I look forward to working with anyone who can make this the best plan.

Member of the Audience: Seniors worry about their safety in the current senior center. Why not have a building with multiple functions?

3. K-8 Redistricting Process

Paul Ash: Redistricting is essential but not something any superintendent wants to do. I want to establish a 15 member advisory committee about redistricting. There will be two parents from each elementary school, two School Committee members and me. The plan will be implemented in September 2007. The options would be shared with the parents in September/October 2006 and they would tell me what works best. (He showed a map of the districts, including the parcels of land with the number of kids in the K-5 district. And he explained the dynamic, interactive properties of the computer mapping program). We also must come up with a maximum capacity for each school over the summer with the master planner. I will make my recommendation in November or December after a series of public hearings and would ask that you decide before January 1. This will inform the budget.

There was a question of how the middle schools feed in.

Olga Gutttag: We should first establish criteria, for instance children who walk should not be redistricted to a school to which they have to take the bus.

Paul Ash: We should have people on the committee who have lived here for a while and know the town.

Discussion of who should serve on the committee: People recommended by PTA presidents, people who served on previous redistricting committees, people who have lived in Lexington for awhile.

Tom Diaz: We should be clear about what the objectives of the redistricting are.

Tom Griffiths: If we provide guidance we shouldn't provide absolute guidance.

Olga Gutttag: This is too important to delegate responsibility. I would like to offer to be one of the School Committee members on this committee.

Tom Griffiths is also interested.

Olga Gutttag and Tom Griffiths will be the two School Committee representatives on the redistricting committee.

Tammy: My children go to a school that is out-of-neighborhood.

Paul Ash: Students who are currently out-of-neighborhood get put back in their neighborhood school, and then we reopen the out-of-neighborhood process.

Tom Griffiths: Would any special needs facilities be moved?

Paul Ash: No, that would not be a method of balancing enrollments.

4. Superintendent's Evaluation Document and Process

Helen Cohen described it.

The Committee discussed it, including guarantee of confidentiality.

Olga Gutttag: We should go back to the practice of having exit interviews with administrators. That can be done in an executive session; it is part of their personnel record.

Paul Ash: Exit interviews must be done in the legally proper manner. I am enthusiastic about this evaluation process.

David Regillo: Why can't people just check their names off if they did their surveys?

The public report on the evaluation will be in early September. We need the returns by the end of the school year.

Jessie Steigerwald (precinct 8): Hastings wants to raise money for a playground and would like School Committee approval.

5. Draft 2007-2008 Calendars

Paul Ash: One calendar starts before Labor Day and one starts after.

A discussion ensued about the virtues of each. Feedback is expected from teachers, if they like the idea parents will be asked if they like the idea too.

Dawn McKenna: Why can't you have a professional development day on October 31st? It is unfair to the parent community to make a monumental change in two weeks in June. We can do this in 2008-2009 just as easily.

Paul Ash: Do you feel it has to be voted by June 20th or can it wait until September?

Olga Guttag: June, because people have to make plans.

Paul Ash: The last week in June is not a good educational week.

Toni Maeck: I and many fellow students are in favor of the August start because of standardized tests.

Tom Griffiths: Lexington parents have been on notice that we were considering a prior to Labor Day start.

Helen Cohen: What Dawn is saying has merit. It may feel rushed to people.

Vito LaMura: You need over a year's lead time to plan vacations.

Motion to vote on the establishment of the 2007-2008 school calendar at one of our September meetings (Griffiths, ???).

Discussion of how much lead time teachers need for the calendar decision and discussion of constituencies that may need to know of calendar changes.

Paul Ash: If the LEA is not comfortable starting before Labor Day we can vote on June 20th for the other calendar.

Based on Vito LaMura's preference for having the issue decided on June 20th Tom Griffiths withdrew his motion.

Motion withdrawn.

The public can give feedback on June 6th. The vote may take place on June 20th.

6. School Committee Retreat: Helen will bring in a consultant for that.

V. Action Items:

1. Reorganization of High School AIM Program

Questions and discussion.

Motion to endorse the superintendent's recommendation because it is educationally the right thing to do and it will likely save us resources (Guttag, Diaz). **The motion passed 5-0.**

2. Monthly Finance Report and Transfer Vote

Paul Ash and Ann Giombetti presented this report showing a positive balance. They decided they would lift the freeze, allow principals to buy what they needed; then in June if they still had enough money they would top off oil tanks and buy other critical things for the school system.

DVD Ended

3. Vote to Accept \$1,720.00 in Donations to the Lexington Children's Place
 4. Vote to Accept Donation of Dictionaries
 5. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 14
 6. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of March 21
 7. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of April 10
 8. Vote to Approve School Committee Minutes of May 16
 9. Vote to Approve Executive Session Minutes of March 21
- All votes passed by 5-0**

Executive Session:

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, June 6, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. at Lexington High School, Library Media Center, 251 Waltham Street.