

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, November 14, 2006

Jonas Clarke Middle School Auditorium

17 Stedman Road

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

The meeting was convened at 7:38 p.m.

I. Call to Order and Welcome (Tom Diaz)

II. Public Comment

William Lockwood (Clarke Student). The bridge at Clarke has been unusable for over a year.

Bill Hartigan: A volunteer group will be fixing it very quickly due to Mr. Lockwood bringing it to our attention.

Patrick Mehr: Fifty out of seventy heat pumps in this building are not functioning so we use resistance heating which is not efficient. We must be using 30% too much energy. We could spend \$3 million to improve our buildings to save \$800K every year. The improvements could be in place 13 months from now.

Tom Diaz: We will discuss this in subsequent meetings

III. Superintendent's Report: 7:40 p.m.

Mary Ellen Dunn is the new Assistant Superintendent for Finance.

IV. Members' Reports / Members' Concerns: 7:45 p.m.

Ravi Sakhuja: I was a presenter at the Massachusetts Association of School Committees on our energy situation: we have made forward progress. Perhaps we can reorganize the current plan a little bit.

Helen Cohen: Thanks to Chinese-American Association of Lexington for raising money for diversity awards to school staff members.

The Youth Services Council is working with the group that Ravi started last year for town-wide youth services.

Ravi Sakhuja: Yesterday we had a presentation about the effect of media on children. Kudos to Kate Cremens-Basbas and to Lynne Sarasin.

Tom Griffiths: Morocco was great.

Olga Gutttag: The policy subcommittee is starting to work on the fundraising policy. Dr. Ash will be the administrative liaison.

Tom Diaz: Thanks to Olga Gutttag for working on the new Fiske playground. Tomorrow night there is an information session for The Town Meeting Members Association at Cary Hall.

V. Discussion Items:

1. *Presentation of Master Plan for K-5 Schools and the Central Office* (60 minutes)

David Finney of Design Partnership presented the Interim Report of the Master Plan (the cost figures are not yet complete and will be presented in December).

Throughout the study they assumed the new Fiske and Harrington as standards. If renovation is recommended the spaces would be brought up to standards of the new schools.

Design Partnership confirms a significant future downturn in projected K-5 enrollment in Lexington schools.

They looked at actual capacities (with modular classrooms) of existing schools. Based on the capacities Fiske and Harrington are considerably under designed enrollment.

If you want the next four schools of roughly equal size you can have six or five schools. If six, the other four would have 310 each. If five, the other four would have 413 each. The five school model is the appropriate way to go, as the capacities are closer to the 2 existing new schools. Also, it will be cheaper to have five rather than six schools. Educational considerations: a school of 400 students is three rooms per grade. If a school is too small specialists will have to move from school to school. If a school is designed too small the shared facilities (cafeteria, computer lab, etc) won't be as big. The recommendation is the five-school model.

They looked at renovation and expansion plans for each school. If newly built, schools will all be two-story schools and thus will have smaller footprints, providing more land on the sites for other uses.

Implementation Plan: Design Partnership estimates that construction could start as early as mid 2009. One possibility is using the old Harrington as swing space, or the swing space could be the school that will be closed. You could close one school in 2010 and accommodate 120 extra children in the other schools.

Questions and discussion from the SC:

The money we get from the state is less than it has been in the past. It is more economical and more environmentally friendly to build two-story buildings. This plan includes a lot of flexibility in it. The 6th school, if used for swing space, could be reintroduced as a working school if the predictions are off. Important factors: kids are kept safe and in an appropriate educational environment during construction, educational equity, planning for enrollment-prediction errors. The town has to make certain not to shed any school land.

David Finney: Those are all important factors, as is efficient and environmentally sensitive usage of sites, both of which often point to the same design outcomes.

Consensus was to authorize a plan for building schools with optimal educational capacity of 450.

John Rosenberg: The housing market may be more of a factor than birthrate, was it factored in?

Paul Ash: Women of childbearing age and number of lots to be developed are the two most important factors. The former has declined. The in-migration has been taken into account.

Trisha Keneally: How many kids go to private school?

Paul Ash: We don't know.

Stephanie Grimaldi: Do the projections include METCO?

Paul Ash: Yes

Patrick Mehr: How does methodology account for in/out-migration. The population at LHS keeps going up.

David Finney: The elementary population grew and that showed up later at the high school level.

Patrick Mehr: If we renovate three schools can we have economies of scale and industrialize construction?

David Finney: It's hard to do with renovations; a bit more possible with new construction.

Jim Goell: The current site of the Central Office will be available for other uses.

David Finney: My work is not really how to utilize the White House. The Central Office is better served by relocating. The White House is vacated.

Tom Griffiths: The School Committee would make that decision.

Dawn McKenna: Thanks for saying you'll keep the schools. We've spent a lot on consultants looking at these schools. We should look at 500 people plans. Sounds like we are thinking of doing one school at a time. **Olga Gutttag:** Regarding money we've spent on consultants doing master plans, educational requirements have changed. A master plan revision done at this stage will save us money.

Tom Diaz: Is everyone prepared to vote to plan schools for 450 students?

Ravi Sakhuja: This is like making these decisions in the air.

Tom Griffiths: When we say a 444 school we are talking about equivalent SPED space?

David Finney: Yes.

Motion to instruct David Finney to plan for schools with the capacity of the Harrington school (about 450 students) (Griffiths, Gutttag). The motion passed 5-0.

2. ***FY07 Budget Projection and Recommendation for Supplemental Appropriation Request*** (45 minutes)

Several out of district students have been added; the total SPED overrun is slightly over 1 million.

A discussion ensued over whether to ask for the money from the Special Town Meeting to cover this deficit and either put it in the Appropriation Committee's reserve or into the school budget directly.

Richard Eurich (Appropriation Committee): If you are now aware of the expenses they are not unforeseen, but they may be extraordinary. The School Committee should request appropriation to its budget to cover students whose expenses are now real and quantifiable. The Appropriation Committee recommends leaving existing funds in its reserve to cover other out of district cases that might arise between now and the end of the school year.

Tom Griffiths: The Appropriation Committee's argument is a strong one. We should ask for the money from Town Meeting to go into our budget.

A discussion ensued about whether to use the current energy surpluses as previously agreed, that is, whether to request appropriation of \$915,000 or \$1.035 million.

Tom Diaz: We already determined the four step process, that's the agreement we made on March 29th.

Paul Ash: Of course I'd like to have surpluses in the budget. Our word is our bond. We said we would use our surpluses and then go to Town Meeting.

Motion to present a motion under article 2 to a special Town Meeting to cover a projected deficit of \$915,215 (Griffiths, Cohen)

Discussion:

Patrick Mehr: You have to tell Town Meeting that we are going to get some money back from the state.

Tom Diaz: Agreed.

Patrick Mehr: And the state changes its own rules.

Dawn McKenna: Problems of the budget are blamed on SPED.

Paul Ash: SPED costs are skyrocketing. It means fewer services for regular education. We need legislative relief.

The Motion passed 5-0

3. ***FY08 Capital Recommendation*** (15 minutes) This is just a brief look.

Bill Hartigan: LHS men's locker rooms need a comprehensive study.

Discussion of items on the capital list.

VI. Action Items: 10:00 p.m.

1. Vote to Approve Recommended Amount for Supplemental FY07 Appropriation (5 minutes) (see above)
2. Vote to Accept Donation of \$2,475 to Lexington High School Debate (5 minutes)
Motion to accept with gratitude the fee that Douglas Reeves returned to support the debate team (Cohen, Gutttag). **The motion passed 5-0.** Committee's chair will send a letter of thanks from the School Committee to Dr. Reeves.
3. Vote to Approve Clarke Grade 8 Field Trip to Canada (5 minutes)
Motion to approve Clarke Grade 8 Field Trip to Canada provided that the student-chaperone ratio is no more than 10 to 1 (Gutttag, Griffiths). **The motion passed 5-0.**
4. Vote to Approve Clarke Grade 8 Field Trip to Mexico (5 minutes)

Motion to approve Clarke Grade 8 Field Trip to Mexico (Cohen, Griffiths) The motion passed 4-1 (Gutttag).

5. Vote to Approve Diamond Grade 8 Field Trip to Canada (5 minutes)

Motion to approve Diamond Grade 8 Field Trip to Canada (Gutttag, Sakhuja) The motion passed 5-0.

6. Vote to Approve LHS French Exchange Trip to France (5 minutes): postponed until next time

Motion to adjourn (Griffiths, Cohen). The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

The next meeting of the School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, November 28, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. at Jonas Clarke Middle School Auditorium, 17 Stedman Road.