

Lexington School Committee Meeting – November 30, 2004
Diamond Middle School

Members present were Scott Burson, Tom Griffiths, Tom Diaz, Helen Cohen, Olga Gutttag, Student Representative Janette Ekanem, and Interim Superintendent William Hurley.

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

Diamond Middle School – Welcome from Principal Joanne Hennessy

Bill Hurley introduced Joanne Hennessy, principal of Diamond Middle School. Ms. Hennessy welcomed all to Diamond Middle School and introduced George Saxon as the new assistant principal. Diamond has 792 students, 24% of which are students of color. There are 92 teachers, 26 teachers are on pre-professional status. Diamond Middle has a great math team and students have received numerous awards. They have numerous sports teams that are very successful and they have received achievements in band, chorus and orchestra. There are also a number of student teams that do volunteer work. Diamond is concentrating on two main goals this year; professional development and diversity.

FY05 Enrollment and Class Size Presentation

Susan Bottan presented a five-year enrollment report from 2004-05 to 2009. This report was based on the October 1st enrollment numbers. This report is used as a tool to assist in the planning for staffing, space, equipment, furniture, and supplies and materials. The methodology used for this report is the Cohort Survival Ratio along with actual enrollment from three years prior and town census data.

Ms. Bottan reported that the total enrollment for 2004 is 6133; Elementary School 2700, Middle School 1506, and 1927 at the high school. These are 2004-05 actual numbers as of October 1, 2004. There was a decrease in elementary students than projected possibly because some parents chose to enroll their children in full day kindergarten and kept them in the private sector. The FY 2006 projections versus this year's actual enrollment is 6173; Elementary School 2642, Middle School 1531, and 2000 at the high school. These 2006 projections will have an impact on staffing. At the Elementary School level there will be the need to maintain preferred staffing levels as there may be an increase from 128 to 130 classrooms. There will be two additional kindergarten classes and two second grade classes but a reduction of one first grade and one fourth grade class. We are

planning conservatively for 1.0 FTE. There will also be an impact on SPED and Health Services as well as the need for one 1.0 FTE custodian at Harrington. At the Middle School level, maintaining class sizes, teaming and program electives will be a challenge. Clarke is projected to have level enrollment but Diamond is projected to increase by 26 students. We are planning to add 2.75 FTEs. At the high school, we need to maintain access to graduation requirements and class sizes. There is a projected increase by 73 students, which is nearly one section. A total of 6.5 FTEs is projected for the high school.

In regard to long-range projections, Tom Diaz asked if there were any notions about how we can improve the accuracy of the five-year projection. Also, given the sources of data that go into the model for projections, do we have evidence to support people moving to Lexington in the future. Ms. Bottan said she could work with the planning department and the census department and report back to the School Committee.

Bill Hurley commented that the hardest piece to project is how many families will be moving into Lexington and how many families will be moving out.

Scott Burson thanked Susan for giving a clear presentation. He wants to reinforce that it is important for the community to understand the challenges we face with budgeting and staffing classrooms.

Helen Cohen asked if our projections are comparable to other school system's projections in regard to our accuracy. Bill Hurley said our projections are more accurate than most other school systems.

Olga Gutttag is concerned about classroom sizes but also school sizes, especially elementary schools. She feels they may be over populated for the size of the facility, particularly Bridge. Building capacity as well as classroom capacity is a concern to her.

Janette Ekanem commented on increasing enrollment at the high school and asked if there are any plans to add another building. Mr. Hurley said he has not heard about any plans to increase the size of the high school. He is not sure enrollment size will warrant additional space and does not see space being an issue for the high school next year.

Tom Griffiths is curious as to how projections are made for kindergarten enrollment from the years 2011 to 2015. Ms. Bottan said they are constantly going back and taking guesstimates from previous years' projections. Mr. Griffiths also noticed no enrollment projections made for Avalon Bay and recommends that we do that. He is concerned about redistricting.

Mr. Jeon, parent, said when the budget was presented at town meeting, it was not clear as to projected enrollment and actual enrollment figures. It was noted that if there were 28 more students, there would be a need for an additional 2.75 FTEs. Does this mean if

there is a decrease in 28 students, then there would be the need for a decrease of 2.75 FTEs. Per Ms. Bottan, it would depend on the number of students who are enrolling and in what grade.

Scott Burson said the community has to realize that we are trying to run our classrooms as close to the preferred size as possible.

Olga Gutttag noted an option for keeping elementary classroom counts to a minimum would be to have split grades.

Mr. Jeon is concerned that as we go into the budget cycle again with enrollment going up and down that this will have an effect on the budget. He suggested taking a look at trends when presenting enrollment information.

Susan Elberger suggested talking about class sizes in other school districts. It might be worthwhile for the community to have a sense of comparison.

FY06 Budget Preview

Susan Bottan presented the preliminary FY 2006 budget preview to the School Committee. This preliminary preview came from conducting district wide forums. The priorities defined focused on ensuring the safety and health of all children, emphasizing curriculum and instruction, and maintaining the infrastructure within which teaching and learning takes place.

The major factors driving the budget are obligations, growth and the critical needs of each school. Obligations are defined as expenses related to settled collective bargaining contracts, special education rate and enrollment changes, utilities increases, inflation, health and dental benefits, and curriculum and instruction material contract. Staffing levels will be impacted by projected enrollment growth at the elementary, middle and high school levels as well as in special education and additional custodial staff. Critical needs will continue to be defined by the Superintendent and his administration.

Olga Gutttag asked in regard to the projected electricity increase, are we bidding alone or bidding out for the entire town of Lexington. Ms. Bottan said for the past two year, the electricity bid process has been worked on by an entire town committee and will be open for the town as well as the school side.

Construction Report – Update on Harrington and Fiske Construction

Mr. Hurley said there is a meeting with the contractors on Thursday. There is also a Permanent Building Committee meeting next week. He will be attending these meetings along with Dana Ham him and will report back to the School Committee.

Olga Gutttag asked if the contractors could provide us with a list of items that are still missing from the construction site. It is difficult to plan if we do not know what is missing and what is waiting to be delivered. Mr. Hurley said he would ask the Permanent Building Committee for that information.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Tom Diaz asked Mr. Hurley what we could change in the system to provide JV sports in the middle schools, primarily JV basketball. Mr. Hurley will talk to Tony Porter to see what options would be available.

Dawn McKenna, parent of a middle school student, is concerned as there are fees that supposedly pay for these programs and we also had \$30,000 from the override for JV programs. She wants to make sure that students who come forward are allowed the opportunity to play and asked the School Committee to make children aware of what JV sports are available. Olga Gutttag would like to take this a little further than just JV sports. We ought to be able to save on transportation costs if we call it intramural sports as opposed to JV sports. This way there are no transportation issues. She is in support of using the gym at the new Harrington if space is an issue.

Ms. Gutttag attended a Board of Selectmen meeting yesterday. There was discussion of a sidewalk plan to increase Lexington's friendliness for walkers. A committee of 9 to 13 members will be put in place for three years to advise selectmen on sidewalk policy and community needs. She requested the School Committee's permission to serve on this committee. Ms. Gutttag discussed RCN contractual changes in that RCN has not been televising the School Committee meetings. It is important that this gets fixed. Comcast will provide RCN with the tapes of the meetings but RCN needs to provide Comcast with the blank tapes for recording. The Selectmen revisited their goals and noted several of them require joint actions and meetings with the School Committee.

Helen Cohen and Tom Diaz attended the quarterly diversity potluck meeting to hear what the different schools are doing to raise consciousness and make students more aware.

Discussion Items

School Calendar

Dick Michelson, owner of Michelson Shoes, raised an issue regarding the school calendar. Mr. Michelson is the Chairman of the Lexington Retail Association, which is an organization of businesses that puts on promotions for the town. The last three years, the association has put on a Halloween trick or treat day. It is a safe way to have children go out trick or treating during day light hours. In 2005, Halloween falls on a Monday. Mr. Michelson is requesting the School Committee to adjust the calendar and make Halloween a half-day at the elementary level. The businesses in town that participate in

this program would greatly appreciate it as there is great participation with businesses, parents, and children. Helen Cohen commented that this is a wonderful event. Bill Hurley will get back to the School Committee with his recommendation.

Superintendent Search Subcommittee Update

Helen Cohen reported that there was a meeting with half the search committee last night to review resumes and select the semi finalists. The second half of the search committee will begin the interview process in December. On December 15th, the search committee will select the 8 or 9 finalist to present to the School Committee. Ms. Cohen noted the search committee is moving along according to the time line.

Action Items

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2004 School Committee meeting as amended. (Burson – Guttag; 5-0)

A motion was made at 9:40 p.m. to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing collective bargaining and potential litigation and not returning to public session. (roll call unanimous vote; 5-0).

Submitted by,

Lisa McGuire

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