

Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – Humphrey Occupational Recreation Center
October 26, 2004

Cheryl Prescott-Walden introduced Bill Hurley, Interim Superintendent, who turned the microphone to the chair of the School Committee and thanked everyone for the welcome.

Members present were Tom Griffiths, Tom Diaz, Helen Cohen, Olga Guttag, Scott Burson, Bill Hurley, and new student representative Janette Ekanem.

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order and opened the meeting by thanking everyone and inviting for public comment on items not on agenda.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

Bill introduced Janette Ekanem, new student representative, and the School Committee introduced Kelly McCausland.

Minority Hiring Report

Kelly McCausland presented the minority staffing report and invited parents to talk with her at her table later during the breakout session. We hired 74 teachers this year; 11 were faculty of color or 14.8% of new hires. The system goal is for 20% of hiring to be faculty of color. This year was one of the better years in past three. Of the new hires, 49 had advanced degrees and 26 were beginning teachers, supported by LEF funded mentoring program. Overall, 10% of our staff are people of color. We are not satisfied and will again go into early recruitment, which has been effective in the past. Lexington is one of 25 districts that is part of an affirmative action hiring consortium to recruit staff of color. Principals have looked at their own numbers and statistics on hiring and retention and are developing strategies to improve minority hiring to reach our goal.

Budget Report FY05

Susan Bottan said the enrollment is 6133 students and 1100 staff members with a \$66 million budget. Susan described factors affecting the budget development. In FY05 we focused on items that we held sacred: class size, programs, restoration of previous cuts. The successful override meant that we could restore some of the previously cut programs, staffing and services as well as do capital projects and repairs. We are now developing the budget for FY06.

Construction Report - Update on Harrington and Fiske Construction

Harrington will not open quite on the expected date but a few weeks after. Within a few weeks of Harrington's move to their new building, Fiske will move to the old Harrington.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Olga Gutttag informed there is a conference of MASC and MASS starting tomorrow and School Committee members will be voting on seven resolutions. She sought member input on how she, as the representative voting delegate, should vote.

1. School committees will have power to terminate principals: Tom strongly opposed. To take this kind of meddling and put it into School Committee hands is a step in the wrong direction away from the Education Reform model. Scott agrees and feels the School Committee should work with the superintendent and deal with personnel decisions lower down in the organizational structure. (4 opposed, 1 abstained)
2. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: MASC calls upon congress to fully fund IDEA, to ensure that the rights of disabled students are protected by the law, impose a moratorium on sanctions of ESEA and IDEA until IDEA is fully funded. Opinions: Tom Griffiths supports full funding IDEA, but troubled by the moratorium and states that LPS would exert itself to serve students with disabilities. Scott Burson feels some of the penalty provisions are severe and are not likely to impact LPS but may have some significant impact in other districts and will support resolution. (all in favor)
3. Student Assessment and Accountability: They are urging the court and state Department of Education to develop an accountability system that tracks alignment of curriculum and development over time and before grade 10. Item analysis will be used to determine student strengths, establishes a certificate of occupational sufficiency, uses test date to improve student learning, explores value added components, uses various assessments in addition to MCAS before determining a school as under performing. (all in favor)
4. Value added assessment to evaluate student achievement: This will include grade-by-grade testing to be implemented in one year and will be included in NCLB plan. (3 yes, 1 no, 1 abstained)
5. MCAS graduation requirement delay: Call on the state to delay MCAS as a graduation requirement. (all in favor)
6. METCO: MASC expresses continued support for METCO and urges funding for METCO equal with other choice programs. (all in favor)

7. Reaffirmation of advocacy agenda of MASS and MASC to provide adequate funding for schools through state and tax base, reorganization of Board of Education, Medicaid reimbursements go directly to schools, maintaining masters degree as requirement for superintendents of vocational schools, improving state assessment accountability system. (all in favor)

Helen Cohen noted she was glad to have a student representative on the committee again.

Scott Burson informed that as of this morning he is chairman of the Cary Library Board of Trustees. Carol Mahoney resigned her position to take the position as Director of Branch Libraries of Boston.

Discussion Items

Superintendent Search Committee

Helen Cohen and Tom Diaz are chairing this committee. There have been focus groups to detail qualities. A search committee has been created that is starting to work on review process. Over the next couple of months the process will be confidential but the final set of interviews for 3-4 candidates will be conducted in public sessions in January 2005. They urged the community to think about coming to Lexington to see the candidates. The hope is to have a new superintendent in place by February of next year. Applications are coming in now and will be reviewed by a sub committee.

Public Input on Superintendent Search

Andrea (?) – The new superintendent must support METCO and be very vocal in that support. Is there any way to get the criteria list that will be used as benchmark for looking at candidates? The School Committee has been advised to maintain confidentiality of this list by the consultant. If parents have ideas, then please write them down and communicate about it. Tom asked what is rationale for keeping criteria under wraps. The consultant said we do not want to give candidates the criteria so that they shape their responses to fit the criteria. We want to get an honest view of who they are. Tom Diaz said they would do a needs based approach by conducting focus groups, looking for candidates who meet Rubric. They will keep the detailed criteria secret, put an ad out that generally describes the criteria, then set out additional criteria. For example, proven success in running a district in size similar to Lexington, demonstrated experience and success in working with diverse students, demonstrated success at running a high performance school district.

Parent: Please give some thought to the personal as well as the academic side of the person and integrity of person as an individual.

Parent: We want someone who is a strong supporter of teachers.

Parent: Are you looking for a younger person who may have more experience with diversity issues or someone with lots of years of experience?

Tom Diaz said the School Committee is looking for continuity and to change the rapid turnover that Lexington has experienced for the past several years. Therefore, they do not want someone who is two years away from retirement.

Helen Cohen said they could have available to people the advertisement, criteria and ad on the website. The community was urged to call Helen Cohen at 781-862-1279 or Tom Diaz at 781-862-6177 or they could email them as well at helencohen@rcn.com or tdiaz@rcn.com.

Question: What are Mr. Hurley's expectations for the position? Mr. Hurley said there are common denominators for this position: integrity and honesty and for making the best possible decisions you can with the information at hand; Common skills: understanding of budget operations, understanding good teaching and learning, understanding the particular needs of a district.

Tom Diaz identified criteria that are in the general advertisement.

School Committee Goals

Tom Griffiths briefly reviewed the School Committee goals for 04-05.

1. Conduct successful search for superintendent
2. Develop and pass a FY06 budget.
3. Continue capital and facilities projects: Harrington and Fiske, then other elementary schools and central office building.
4. Comprehensive review of technology in the schools.
5. Negotiate contracts for pay with faculty.
6. Improving communications.
7. Reviewing policies and revising if necessary.

Placement Plans for Boston Students

Does Lexington Public Schools have a commitment to maintaining the number of students from Boston we have right now and maintaining it in the future? Mr. Hurley and the School Committee have a personal commitment.

Action Items

Vote to Approve Home Schooling

A motion was made that from this point forward the Superintendent is authorized and delegated the authority to review and approve requests for home schooling. (Burson – Gutttag; 5-0)

Tom Diaz and Scott Burson seconded to approve minutes of September 28th. Helen Cohen had two corrections. (Page 2) Gang of 8 meetings are now called Process not Processed Meetings.

(Page 4 second paragraph) Brian was supposed to email Helen or tom Diaz.

(Page 5) All the paperwork for home schooling is order. Tom Diaz accepts as corrected (Diaz – Gutttag; 5-0)

The next meeting was scheduled for November 11th at the Harrington School. It is Veteran's Day and a holiday for staff. Out of respect to veterans, it might not be the best time to have a meeting. The members could not come to a conclusion about another appropriate date so the School Committee is recessed so parents can go to break out sessions. They will reconvene after the breakouts to discuss the next meeting time.

Recess for breakout sessions for individual schools and curriculum groups.

The meeting reconvened and Tom Griffiths inclined to meet on November 2nd at 7:30 at the LHS Media Room. The Harrington meeting will be held on the November 16th to discuss Harrington technology.

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. (Cohen – Gutttag; 5-0)

Submitted by,

Elaine Sterzin
Grants Manager

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

