

**Lexington Public Schools
School Committee Meeting – LHS Library Media Center
September 14, 2004**

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

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

The School Committee recognized and honored Mike LaPierre, the cameraman for Comcast. September 28th will be his last night for videotaping School Committee meetings.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Superintendent's Report

Staffing Update

Kelly McCausland, Director of Human Resources, gave an update on the annual staffing report. She noted there were 28 leaves of absence, 22 resignations, 21 retirements, 13 reductions in force, and 12 non-renewals. There were also 74 new teacher hires, 11 of whom were faculty of color. This is 14.8% of the new hires, coming close to the affirmative action goal. Out of the new hires, 28 are beginning teachers, 49 with advanced degrees, and 7 with ten or more years experience.

Tom Griffiths reminded all that a fund has been established in honor of Joanne Benton proceeds of which could be used to support the mentoring program. Contributions to this fund are welcome.

Enrollment Update

Susan Bottan, Director of Business and Finance, provided the School Committee with information on all six elementary schools with a breakdown of enrollment for each school and grade level. She also reported on enrollment for the middle schools and high school. As of September 10, 2004, there are 6,212 students enrolled in Lexington Public Schools. This enrollment figure is an increase of 51 more students than was projected and 92 more than the 2003-2004 school year. An official enrollment by grade and school will be presented in October with an annual enrollment report published in November.

Helen Cohen commented that the larger enrollment this year seems to have occurred mainly in the higher grades. Ms. Bottan noted there have been a number of students who transferred from private to public schools, which is one reason for the increase in students in the higher grades.

Olga Guttag noticed Hastings is the only elementary school that has one split level grade. She expressed a concern over the population size difference between Clarke and Diamond wondering if Clarke is a bigger facility. Dana Ham, Interim Director of Facilities, informed all that both middle schools are comparable in square footage and room size.

Susan Elberger, former school committee member, gave some background on why Hastings is the only school that has a two-grade split.

School Construction Update

Dana Ham, Interim Director of Facilities, expressed thanks to the custodians, maintenance personnel and the facilities office for getting all the schools ready for opening. He informed the School Committee that the roof repairs have been completed at the high school and Estabrook. The indoor track at the high school will be started by the end of the month and completed by the end of October, and the Harrington gym floor will be completed by the end of September.

Tom Griffiths inquired about the punch lists for the secondary construction projects. Dana Ham said he would need to speak to the PBC about punch lists. To his knowledge it is mostly hardware issues at Clarke and Diamond such as keys and locks. There are some small issues with painting and tile at both middle schools. The high school is basically completed.

Members' Reports/Members' Concerns

Helen Cohen noted the School Committee attended the welcome back faculty assembly on September 7th.

Tom Diaz commented on the goal-setting meeting held on September 10th and said the School Committee goals would soon be published.

Tom Griffiths wanted to make the community aware of a group called the National Alliance that occasionally distributes racist pamphlets around town, so parents should be prepared with explanations to their children.

Bill Hurley informed the School Committee the focus groups are scheduled for September 27th and September 28th and distributed the schedule for those days. This information will be published in this week's Minuteman and on the school website.

Olga Gutttag would like to discuss the Permanent Building Committee's priorities at the next meeting.

Discussion Items

Use of Facilities Request Letter

Joan Heffernan, founder and president of the In The Middle after school program, requested the School Committee waive the remainder balance of the rent due for the 2003-2004 school year, which is \$5,718.75. The rent due for the upcoming school year is \$11,437.50. Ms. Heffernan requested that the School Committee reduce this amount by 50%, which would be \$5,718.75.

Dennis Lawler, parent of two In the Middle students, said this program is important to families where both parents work.

Catherine Palladino, new hire at Diamond, said anything that keeps the program running and affordable would be worthwhile.

The program currently costs approximately \$150 more per month than a similar program at an elementary school.

Bill Casel, parent of a 7th grader at Clarke, said it would be hard to manage public school if they did not have In the Middle. Both he and his wife work and he cannot get to school in time to pick up his child. He does not know what he would do without the program.

Joan Heffernan thanked all the parents for their support and respectfully submitted her request for rent reduction so they can continue to offer this service to the town.

Tom Griffiths asked to defer the decision until at least the meeting on September 28th.

Brian Heffernan, Board of Directors of In the Middle, said the initial intention was ultimately to have two programs; one at Clarke and one at Diamond. At this time, it is impossible to have a program at both schools and pay double rent.

Susan Bottan will be meeting with Joan Heffernan to help understand their constraints and see what can be done.

Dawn McKenna, Board of Selectmen, speaking as a parent, pointed out that the School Committee over the years has made many accommodations for elementary school programs. She feels the School Committee should give In the Middle three years rent reduction with two classrooms at each middle school to start off the program.

Superintendent Search

Helen Cohen noted the dates for the focus groups are September 27th and September 28th. There will be an opportunity for everyone who has an interest in the schools to attend. Tom Diaz also has put the Superintendent Search on the agenda for the October 12th and October 26th School Committee meetings to talk about the process and get input from the community. The School Committee would like to have an additional meeting scheduled specifically for this topic.

Tom Diaz read the Notice of Application for Search Committee to the School Committee for their approval. It was the consensus on the part of the School Committee to have the Application printed in Minuteman on Thursday.

Technology Report

Tom Diaz reported that at the August 10th meeting, the School Committee authorized Bill Hurley to fill a position called Instructional and Information Technology Director. The technology committee will report to Mr. Hurley and the School Committee on the financial topics that are important for the next fiscal budget, and help construct a five-year technology plan that needs to be submitted to the State. Mr. Diaz will report at the September 28th meeting the outcome of the first technical review committee meeting and will have assigned roles and responsibilities of its members at that time. He noted that the Technology Review Committee would be dissolved by the end of the school year.

Olga Gutttag said the original focus of the technology committee was to assess our needs and update the State plan on how to integrate technology into education. We need to ensure we are using our technology well in school and determine what we need to do to get Lexington up to date, using state of the art technology.

A motion was made to adopt the wording of the revised Technology Committee Charter. (Burson – Cohen; 5-0).

Fund Raising Policy

Bill Hurley informed the School Committee that there have been a number of questions raised by chairs of the PTOs regarding fundraising, School Committee policy and what the parameters are. He pointed out inconsistencies with this policy noting that the fundraising policy in the School Committee Policy Handbook has different wording than what was approved in a prior School Committee meeting. Until further review is taken,

Mr. Hurley will act on the prior voted Minutes and will get further clarification on this document.

Deb Hoard noted when the override did not pass, the PTA tried to figure out how to have fundraisers for all the schools and how to use the money through the schools. Olga Gutttag interprets the policy to read that there is no limit on what any school can obtain provided that all schools are obtaining at the same level.

Scott Burson agreed with Tom Griffiths that the PTA should have some input on this policy.

Deb Hoard agreed that the policy is confusing. How principals interpret this policy is an issue as well. She encouraged the School Committee to tighten the policy up a bit.

Dawn McKenna said parents have been contributing to the school community for years and each school balances out over the years. She does not want to see a policy that is so restrictive that parents cannot participate and have a positive role in the schools.

Tom Diaz feels this policy needs further review and clarity.

Mr. Hurley noted the prior Minutes reflect what was voted on by the School Committee and that is what is official. He does not see any immediate request coming forward that would be problematic.

Budget Process FY06

Mr. Hurley noted the budget process for FY06 would be close if not identical to what the system used in the past. Administrators will have the responsibility of budget management with specific guidelines that will come from the Superintendent's office and the Business office with parameters on developing the FY06 budget. Administrators will meet with their own staff to determine their needs. We will prioritize the needs and match them against the priorities and then will share this with the School Committee for input.

Susan Bottan gave last year's timeline for the Superintendent to present the budget.

Olga Gutttag is concerned that we are under on the facilities budget and feels we have to put more money into the facilities budget to maintain the buildings.

Distribution of Brochures

It is the recommendation of Mr. Hurley to limit backpack information to announcements solely related to school events and/or directly related to town-sponsored events. There is a concern that groups or organizations that are not directly related to the town or school system are not covered under liability insurance.

Tom Diaz is in support of Mr. Hurley's comments. Helen Cohen and Olga Guttag also agree. In regard to the flyer announcing the walk for dyslexia, Mr. Hurley suggested getting this information to students through committees or other groups at the schools. Scott Burson feels there should be a policy on this issue but for now supports Mr. Hurley's recommendations.

Tom Griffiths agreed to leave brochure distribution to Mr. Hurley's discretion.

Action Items

It was agreed to defer the decision of the Use of Facilities Request until the September 28th meeting.

The Distribution of Brochure Request was referred to the Superintendent for his discretion.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2004 School Committee meeting. (Cohen – Burson; 5-0)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2004 School Committee meeting. (Guttag – Burson; 4-0, Helen Cohen abstained).

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2004 School Committee meeting. (Guttag – Cohen; 5-0)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2004 (Session 1) School Committee meeting as amended. (Cohen – Guttag; 4-0, Scott Burson abstained)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2004 (Session 2) School Committee meeting as amended. A correction was noted to Bill Hurley's name. (Burson – Cohen; 4-0, Tom Griffiths abstained)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2004 School Committee meeting. (Burson – Guttag; 5-0)

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the August 24, 2004 School Committee meeting. (Cohen – Guttag; 5-0)

A motion was made to accept the list of liaison assignments and publish this list on the Web expeditiously. (Diaz – Burson; 5-0)

A motion was made to adjourn at 10:30 p.m. (Burson – Gutttag; 5-0)

Submitted by:

Lisa McGuire

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