

**School Committee Meeting – September 28, 2004**  
**Clarke Middle School**

Tom Griffiths called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m. Members present were Tom Griffiths, Helen Cohen, Scott Burson, Tom Diaz, Olga Guttag, and Interim Superintendent Bill Hurley.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

Pam Houlares welcomed everyone to Clarke Middle School and introduced Joan Zahka, president of JCSA. Ms. Zahka discussed the school improvement goals for this year and gave a list of what the Clarke PTO does for students throughout the year.

**Superintendent's Report**

Use of Facilities Update

In regard to the In-the-Middle program at Clarke, Mr. Hurley stated the rate they are asking for this year is within the policy limit and noted their specific request will be honored. Joan Heffernan will meet with Susan Bottan this week to help them structure their finances for upcoming years.

Update on IIT Director Search

Andre Ravenelle shared with the School Committee where they are in this process. They have received 26 applications for this position, put together a search committee of seven members, and they have been actively looking through the applications. This Friday is the first meeting to look at the criteria and decide which applicants to bring forward for the interview process. They will hopefully have this wrapped up within two to three weeks.

Professional Development Report

Carol Pilarski noted the first Professional Development day took place on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. She gave a review of the activities that took place that day, as well as giving an overview of the past year's activities. All Professional Development offerings are on the web, and all registrations now take place on -line. She extended special thanks to Abe Shankman who volunteers his time and who has worked closely with Ms. Pilarski to get the Professional Development on-line process up and running.

### **Members' Reports/Members' Concerns**

Olga Gutttag expressed thanks to Marianne McKenna for all her work on LPS website. Ms. Gutttag and Mr. Griffiths have spent a lot of time looking at organizing the website and would like to see the community use it for more informational purposes. Mr. Griffiths emphasized that the LPS portion of the website is still an administrative function but made recommendations for its upkeep. As for the School Committee portion of the website, all members agree it is in good form and a good source of information. It was conveyed that since the website is the property of the school department, all information has to be approved by the Superintendent before being put on the website.

Mr. Hurley said once the IIT person is identified, he would like this person to meet with key personnel to take a look at the entire website to be more in sync with the School Committee and with up to date information.

Olga Gutttag pointed out that there were two unions missing representation on the subcommittee liaison assignments. One is the Custodian and Maintenance SEIU; and the other is Technology, which has yet to be formally named. It was agreed that Ms. Gutttag should represent the Custodian union with Helen Cohen as her back up. Tom Diaz will represent the Technology portion with Tom Griffiths as his back up.

Helen Cohen will attend the first meeting of the Youth Advisory Counsel on Thursday morning.

Scott Burson announced that Saturday morning is the kick off convention for the next phase of Lexington's 20/20 planning process.

Tom Diaz wanted the community to know of two committees he is serving on. One is the Article 40 Committee, which has to do with air pollution. The other is the technology subcommittee, which had its first meeting today. He feels they got off to a good start; discussing their roles and responsibilities.

Tom Griffiths announced that the next School Committee meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> would start at 6:30 p.m. for discussion regarding the next town manager. Also, Gang of 8 Meetings will now be called Process Planning Meetings.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **Probable Line Item Coverage for FY 05 Negotiated Settlements**

Mr. Hurley noted that coverage for FY 05 negotiated settlements would be part of the operating budget. Susan Bottan, Director of Business and Finance, said the cost of the FY 05 negotiated settlements is \$652,000. Allocations from the operating budget have been defined from unemployment benefits, Metco funding, postponement of hires, and

salary differential. Ms. Bottan stated that \$200,000 was allocated in salary differential. There was also an expense of \$188,000 received as there were six additional retirees than originally budgeted for, but an additional \$24,700 was generated from savings created from voluntary resignations.

Scott Burson questioned if the unanticipated additional retirements generated obligations in terms of benefits. Ms. Bottan stated no as these additional retirees were part of the longevity buy out plan. Ms. Guttag was disturbed that 2.5 FTE custodial positions were used for this funding. She is a strong believer in maintaining our facilities expressing her feelings that with healthy buildings come healthy children. She pointed out that we are well below funding for facilities, and taking even more money out of the facilities budget makes her uncomfortable. She asked if there was any other place in the budget to come up with this money. Ms. Bottan stated by mid-year we will have better knowledge of the expenditures and can look at the salary differential again at that time.

Mr. Hurley assured that the issue of how we maintain our buildings would be looked at very closely this year. Ms. Guttag asked for an update at the next School Committee meeting on energy costs in regard to NSTAR. Scott Burson feels maintenance is important but we are in the business of providing education to kids and if push comes to shove, he prefers to save programs. We should make every effort to maximize dollars we have in our custodial budget, but he feels it is more important to have the educational function tuned up and make do with the rest. Tom Griffiths agrees with part of that but feels we should do a good job of maintaining our facilities. If you defer it for so long, he is afraid there could be crucial problems.

#### Add-Alternate List for New Fiske School Construction

Mr. Hurley stated all parties agreed to return the current list back to the Permanent Building Committee for discussion before the School Committee reflects on the matter and does its own prioritizing. The next PBC is meeting Monday evening, October 4<sup>th</sup>, and the list will be discussed at that time.

#### Superintendent Search Report

Helen reported on focus groups and advertising. Focus groups have finished as of this evening. Dick Warren is the consultant conducting the focus groups. She has been working with Mr. Warren to see if there can be an extra focus group for parents. A possible date of Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> was given. She would like to send a flyer home on Friday in backpacks. She has also been working with Kelly McCausland, Director of Human Resources, and FMS, the consulting firm, to create an advertisement for the Superintendent position. The completed advertisement will be appearing in Education Week for two weeks and will revisit the need to advertise more after at the end of the two-week period.

Tom Diaz said there will be a half-hour set aside at the October 12<sup>th</sup> School Committee meeting for parents to comment on this topic. There will also be time set aside at the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting in Boston for this purpose as well. The brochure has been delivered to FMS and talks about Lexington and what the Superintendent position entails. The School Committee is currently collecting applications for the search committee, the deadline being October 4<sup>th</sup> for applications. A decision will be made the week of October 4<sup>th</sup>.

Brian Heffernan asked if there could be a simple point of contact that people can send in their comments. He was advised to email either Helen Cohen or Tom Diaz with any questions or comments.

#### Rules of Conduct for Public Comment

Ms. Guttag commented on discussions she has had with other school committee members of other communities regarding rules for public comment. Generally the public does not need to be recognized for comment at meetings but it has just been our practice to do so. She asked the School Committee members if this was worth looking into and including in our policy manual. This may be helpful if we ever have a disruptive member of the public. Helen Cohen agreed it would be a good idea to have a policy in place. Scott Burson also felt it would be useful to adopt a policy and recommended referring this to the policy committee. He feels the School Committee should make ground rules and have them available to the community. Tom Diaz is leery about putting a policy in writing and would rather inform the community of the rules from time to time in a public forum.

A motion was made to move this to the policy subcommittee and bring it back before the School Committee at a later time. (Guttag - Griffiths; 5-0)

#### Action Items

A motion was made to designate Olga Guttag as the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) representative with Tom Griffiths being the alternate. (Diaz – Cohen; accepted 5-0)

Reggie and Sandy Osgood were present this evening to represent the Elks Lodge and present their donation of dictionaries for all third graders. Carol Pilarski thanked Reggie and Sandy Osgood for their generosity stating the books amount to a \$700 donation. A motion was made to accept the donation of the dictionaries for third grade students with deep gratitude to the Elks Lodge. (Cohen – Guttag; 5-0)

Andre Ravenelle stated all the paperwork for home schooling is in order, except for the correction needed on the grade at the particular school. A motion was made to approve the request for home schooling with the clerical error to be amended. (Cohen – Burson; 5-0) A request was made to get a report on all home schoolings at the end of the school year.

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

It was agreed to put off approving the minutes from the September 14, 2004 meeting until the next School Committee meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. (Diaz – Burson; 5-0)

Submitted by:

Lisa McGuire

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