



Lexington Public Schools

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Our Schools

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Last Friday, we reopened Lexington High School after a major flood that knocked out electrical power, hot water, and telephone services to the building, as well as internet access for the school district. Without lighting, air ventilation systems, hot water, and fire alarms, the school was not safe and needed to be closed. During the next three days, an incredible amount of work was accomplished, and students returned to classes on Friday, September 5.

Looking back on last week, there were really two stories. First, there was the technical story - the steps that needed to be taken to safely reopen the school. Numerous experts quickly developed an action plan, ordered parts, and began replacing disabled utilities. The second story was how well our town functioned during this crisis, which started on Labor Day. Once the head custodian, Ralph Paoletta, discovered seven feet of water in the boiler room, the call went out to school, police, fire, and elected and appointed municipal officials to meet behind the high school and coordinate the response efforts. Within hours, the team took immediate steps that were needed: contacting the insurance company, hiring a company to pump out 200,000 gallons of water, and notifying 2,000 students and their parents there would be no school on Tuesday.

The days that followed were remarkable. Each day, the team met regularly in the LHS library to assess the situation, make decisions, and coordinate efforts. Included in these meetings were the Director of the Health Department, the Director of Dining Services (Chartwells), the Assistant Fire Chief, the Plumbing Inspector, the Electrical Inspector, the Building Commissioner, the high school principal, other school administrators, the head custodian, the Director of Public Facilities, other members of the facilities team, and me. In my twenty-nine years in school administration, I have never witnessed a more professional and cooperative effort. People came to these meetings well prepared, ready to solve problems, and determined to assist each other. Some members of the team worked 24-hour shifts to do whatever was necessary to reopen the high school. In addition, the high school PTSA played a vital role in sending updates and "no school" announcements to parents and students, since the website was down for two days.

Periodically, I write to you about Our Schools. This week, I am proud to share with you how "Our Town" worked together to manage a serious problem and safely reopen LHS for our students.