

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Thursday, March 15, 2012  
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA  
OPEN SESSION

Present: Jennifer Glass (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Tim Christenfeld, Jen James, Carol Perkins (Boston Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).  
Absent: Lisa Pizarro (Hanscom Civilian School Liaison Officer).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Christenfeld reported that 83 middle school students were involved in the production of *Guys and Dolls*.

Mr. Christenfeld and Mr. Brandmeyer attended the EDCO Board Meeting. EDCO of Greater Boston was dissolved and will roll their activities into the EDCO education collaborative. School committees will have to vote to dissolve their participation with EDCO of Greater Boston. EDCO of Greater Boston's Executive Director will retire the end of June, and the Associate Director will retire the end of August.

Mr. Christenfeld noted the Lincoln Town Report shows a spike in the birth rate.

Mr. Christenfeld mentioned the Finance Committee's effort to fund a consultant to develop alternatives to the school building project, and the Finance Committee will meet next Tuesday, March 20. He recommended that the School Committee participate to ensure that long-term costs to operate the school, educational considerations, the disruptive effects of the work, and energy efficiency are considered.

Ms. Perkins noted that yesterday was METCO Lobby Day at the State House. The METCO Parent Group meets on the third Tuesday of the month and will meet on Tuesday, March 20 at the Hyde Park Library in Hyde Park. She noted that they held a successful skating party, and grades 3-8 had MCAS boot camp practice.

III. Public Comments

Jonathan Hoch of Tower Road, Lincoln, mentioned the statewide effort to promote media literacy in schools ([www.massmediaconsortium.com](http://www.massmediaconsortium.com)).

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Appoint Superintendent

Document: None.

Ms. Glass summarized the comments received from the feedback form after the interviews with André Ravenelle and Rebecca McFall, and said the district had two great candidates, either one of whom would serve the district well. She recapped the superintendent search process, and thanked the highly dedicated and qualified people who served on the Screening Committee, especially Chair Julie Dobrow, and thanked the community for its dedication to following the process.

Last week, Ms. Glass, Mr. Christenfeld, Lincoln Principal Steve McKenna, teacher David Trant, and parent Becca Fasciano visited Fitchburg and Wellesley. Ms. Glass thanked those who helped with the off-site visits. Mr. Trant presented the report on Dr. McFall, using the FMS framework to evaluate each candidate's leadership skills. Mr. Trant said that Dr. McFall is comfortable talking with all people, and she is an engaging, inspired, concise presenter, whom many in her district consult for guidance. She uses data to inform goals and is fiscally savvy, was able to get the Finance Committee to support a new initiative in a tight budget. Dr. McFall is a calm and stabilizing force in the central office who builds strong teams and sees the big picture. She's smart as a whip and can communicate where the district is going, sets goals to meet needs and has strategic innovative ideas. Mr. Trant noted that Dr.

McFall is an effective instructional leader who has been a teacher and been promoted to administrative positions. She builds positive relationships, is politically savvy, sets high expectations, supports needs, motivates and inspires. Her strengths are that she builds relationships with all stakeholders, she effectively collects data, and has the best interests of students at heart. She processes conflicts and makes decisions in a timely fashion. Wellesley is already starting to mourn her potential departure.

The visiting committee wonders whether Dr. McFall is a good mentor. While she's been present and involved in a school building project, she has not had the lead role. She has not worked with the military.

Mr. Trant presented the report on Mr. Ravenelle. Mr. Ravenelle's communication skills were shown when he had to close schools, which was very emotional, but people felt that they were heard and their opinions included. He is accessible to everyone and goes to art shows and is seen in Fitchburg. A parent of two autistic children who met with Mr. Ravenelle was very pleased with his help. He is fiscally savvy and has found ways to do more with less such as by seeking grants and closing schools before laying off staff. He demonstrated team-building skills in opening an innovative school on the Fitchburg State campus. One teacher told Mr. Trant that Mr. Ravenelle impressively was able to get a highly transient teacher population talking to each other. Mr. Ravenelle is a visionary: for example, the high school nurse has a clinic where students' medical needs and prescriptions can be filled. He found ways of fixing the Fitchburg schools that were falling apart. He is an instructional leader who looks at how all students can benefit. Mr. Ravenelle is politically savvy and built relationships with five key people in Fitchburg, including the mayor. His motivation is to help people achieve their potential, and he is committed to art. Mr. Trant reported that Mr. Ravenelle's strengths are that he is student-centered and concerned with developing the whole child. He has positive relationships and is a visible participant in Fitchburg. He has made tough cuts when needed, and has experience with the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA].

Mr. Trant reported that the visiting committee was left wondering whether Mr. Ravenelle's skills would work in Lincoln; while some loved him, others were neutral. He does not have experience with the military.

Committee members shared their thinking about Mr. Ravenelle.

Mr. Sander noted that the Committee is blessed to have such finalists. Mr. Ravenelle's experience as a superintendent and with the MSBA, he made a strong first impression and his sense of humor was attractive. He liked Mr. Ravenelle's focus on students and high-achieving students, and his efforts to substitute teach in class to stay connected with students. His ability to make the most of scarce resources is a strength.

Mr. Sander was concerned about how he would transition from Fitchburg to Lincoln, whether he is a good listener and what his educational vision is. He does not have experience negotiating teacher contracts, and Mr. Sander wondered why Mr. Ravenelle wants to work in Lincoln.

Mr. Schmertzler was also concerned about how Mr. Ravenelle would make the shift from Fitchburg to Lincoln, as Lincoln is a stable district, and Mr. Ravenelle would not have to start from scratch as he did in Fitchburg. He wondered about Mr. Ravenelle's listening skills but noted that he had very impressive presentation skills.

Mr. Christenfeld echoed the comments of his fellow members. He emphasized the great job Mr. Ravenelle has done in Fitchburg; 24% of their students are on IEPs, and they have endured budget cuts each year for the past five years. He plays a visible role in the community and has patched things together. He is a great superintendent and is a great communicator and performer who was popular with the Lincoln 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

Mr. Christenfeld's concerns were about his style and how he would work with the administrative team, as our team is used to being challenged. Mr. Ravenelle left his team to do their jobs and was there to help if they needed him. Mr. Christenfeld noted his warmth with people but was not sure whether he inspires teachers.

Ms. James agreed with Mr. Sander's assessment and noted that Mr. Ravenelle was an extrovert, which can be good and bad. She liked that he would bring technology into the classroom. Her concerns were that he has less recent classroom experience, and that he has no experience with METCO and the Base, which are very important parts of the district.

Ms. Perkins liked Mr. Ravenelle's focus on students and his participation with and in the community. She agreed with all that has been said.

Ms. Glass noted Mr. Ravenelle's skill at talking with all groups; he clearly has a gift for connecting with people. He is child-focused, and she liked his powerful image of finding the spark in

each student. He is an artist and a strong supporter of the arts, he brings imaginative solutions to building community and has relevant experience with the MSBA. She noted that the districts he's worked in, Barnstable and Fitchburg, are very different from Lincoln. His clarity with how processes are managed is helpful.

The Committee members discussed Dr. McFall.

Mr. Sander liked Dr. McFall's deep educational and curriculum knowledge and her vision. She's a great communicator and listener, and her values are in line with the district's. He liked how she identifies how things will be decided up front. She emerged as the go-to person in Wellesley with their tumult in the past few years. She's evidenced incredible loyalty to Wellesley and is a strong team builder who has done cutting-edge work on combating the achievement gap. She has marshaled evidence to teachers, and has a deep understanding of the role of standards and individual learning. She is committed to METCO and enables all to shine. She seems to strike the right balance between consistency without conformity.

Mr. Sander's concerns are that she does not have direct experience being a superintendent or getting building projects through, but she is a fast learner. She's done some budgeting but has not put one together. It takes longer to warm up to her than it did to Mr. Ravenelle. He wonders whether she would focus on high-achieving students and be able to build a connection with the Base. She builds consensus, and he wonders whether that will take her longer and make it harder for her to make decisions.

Mr. Schmertzler was very impressed with how she related to students and answered their questions. She could communicate with adults in the same way, which is good. Growing up in Los Angeles gives her sensitivity and an awareness for diversity and for the student turnover at Hanscom.

Mr. Christenfeld agreed with all others said and noted he sensed her capacity for empathy and her skills listening to people and following up on what she hears. She has no ego, works hard, and is quick to share credit with others. She understands that people have lives outside of school. She prepares meticulously and anticipates answers to questions.

Mr. Christenfeld's concerns are that while she has been exposed to the budget, she has not prepared one. Her experience with building projects is tangential, and he is not sure (like many in Lincoln) that she has an intuitive understanding of the sacrifices the military students make, but he believes she has the capacity to get there.

Ms. James said she did her homework on the district and on the resources in Town. She liked Dr. McFall's focus on the whole child and her calm presence, which is important. She's also a quick study, and Ms. James liked her awareness of not overworking staff and managing the workload. Ms. James echoed the concerns of the lack of experience with the building project and the budget. She believes that with a great staff, Dr. McFall can learn these things and be successful.

Ms. Perkins liked her background working with diverse communities, her approach in dealing with conflicts, and her ability to listen to all sides.

Ms. Glass echoed the comments and said one thing struck her; the central office said she was well-informed, and she can delegate tasks and provide the appropriate support to get them done successfully. Dr. McFall does not need to take credit for things, and is a calm go-to person who asks good questions. She wants to build a go-to team that is well-rounded. Ms. Glass is concerned that she does not have experience with military families, but Dr. McFall asked about supports for students when their parents are deployed and the transition when parents come home. Dr. McFall is not a superintendent, and it is a steep learning curve, but she did much homework and is passionate to work in Lincoln.

Ms. Glass noted it was a difficult choice, and she is grateful for two fabulous choices, each with a different flavor. The Committee respects what each has accomplished. Ms. Glass noted that she is grateful for the thoughtfulness that the members and the community brought to the process.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to appoint Dr. Rebecca McFall as the next superintendent of the Lincoln Public Schools. The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Dr. McFall.

Ms. Glass moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to adjourn to executive session at 8:07 pm for the purpose of making an offer to Dr. Rebecca McFall. The Committee would return to open session. Ms. Glass, yes; Mr. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Mr. Christenfeld, yes; Ms. James, yes; Ms. Perkins, yes.

Ms. Glass called the open session to order at 8:27 pm, and reported that Dr. Rebecca McFall was pleased to accept the position of Superintendent of the Lincoln Public Schools. Ms. Glass also called Mr. André Ravenelle to thank him.

#### B. Update on Hanscom Middle School Building Project

Document: None.

Mr. Brandmeyer welcomed Lindsay Cottingham, Department of Defense, Facilities, Joe Landrigan, Project Leader at Ewing Cole, and Steve Gastright, Architect at Ewing Cole. Ms. Cottingham is a wonderful advocate with the Department of Defense, and they are thrilled that Ewing Cole will also work on the Hanscom Primary School. He noted that there is a team of people working on the Hanscom School projects, and they have been fortunate to work together.

Ms. Cottingham noted that she is here to prepare a budget estimate for the Hanscom Primary School to submit to Congress. She said it's been great to work with former principal Randy Davis and with current principal Beth Ludwig and Ewing Cole Architects. Ewing Cole has started to work on the Hanscom Primary School with this visit.

Mr. Landrigan presented the Hanscom Middle School design, which can house 310 students in grades 4-8, is 85,000 square feet, and will cost \$34 million. The cost includes the demolition of the current Hanscom Middle School and the temporary school that will house the students while the new one is being built. The design will be completed in the summer 2012 and will go out to bid in fall 2012, with ground breaking in spring 2013 and the project completed in spring 2015.

Mr. Gastright reviewed the PowerPoint presentation of the design and highlighted the 21<sup>st</sup> century design principles; the Hanscom Middle School is the first school to be designed with those principles. The rooms are student centered instead of teacher centered, and there are larger collaborative spaces. The student commons area is the school's social heart, and all activities come off that space. Furniture can be moved in the rooms to encourage student collaboration. They pushed energy efficiency, and the minimum standard is LEED Silver Status. The building has a tight footprint making use of maximum daylight. Photovoltaics, wind turbines, solar hot water panels will all be part of the building and the sustainability will be a teaching tool for science classes. The exterior colors are inspired by the outdoors, and the interior sports neutrals with a few colors, but not orange.

Mr. Landrigan and Mr. Gastright said they are thrilled to work with Mr. Brandmeyer, Mr. Creel, Mr. Ledebuhr, and Ms. Ludwig. They said this is their best experience working for the Department of Defense, and they look forward to working on the Hanscom Primary School. Mr. Ledebuhr and Ms. Ludwig appreciate their work and creativity. It is easy to establish trust with the Ewing Cole staff. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that designing a building project is about the process of teaching and learning, and on that score, Ewing Cole has pushed the administration and teachers to think outside the box, and he thanked them for giving them that opportunity.

Ms. Glass thanked them for listening and for their creative thinking and looks forward to the new building.

#### C. Report on DESE Coordinated Program Review Self-study Process

Document: Report to School Committee and Mickey Brandmeyer from Stephanie Powers, RE: Report on Coordinated Program Review, dated March 7, 2012

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that Ms. Powers has worked very hard to ready the district for the two-year Coordinated Program Review [CPR] by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], the purpose of which is to ensure that the district complies with federal and state laws, regulations, and local policies and procedures. The CPR audits the district's actions in special education, civil rights and other general education requirements, English Learner Education, and Title 1 Program. This year the district completed a self-assessment to identify any areas of non-compliance. The CPR occurs every six years with a mid-cycle review of Special Education.

Ms. Powers noted the review of student special education files is time-consuming but helpful in identifying areas of achievement and areas that could be improved. She reviewed her report, mentioning that the district has an excellent track record. The new self-assessment year helps streamline the process. As the laws change, it is necessary to make sure that the district complies and makes changes if needed. Ms. Sterling added that changes to English Learner Education are coming, but they do not yet know what they will be.

Ms. Glass thanked the entire team. She knows how much work it is, and she knows the district keeps focused on students.

#### D. Capital Planning Committee By-Law

Document: Draft, Capital Planning Committee By-Law, dated February 2, 2012

Ms. Glass said the Selectmen and the Capital Planning Committee have taken votes on the drafted bylaw formalizing the Capital Planning Committee, named (CapCom). Other Town Boards and Committees are not taking formal votes on the proposed bylaw, which will be presented at Annual Town Meeting later in March. She stated it is worthwhile to convey the School Committee's support for a bylaw concept, and each Committee member can vote for or against it at Town Meeting. She noted long-range planning is valuable. Mr. Schmertzler represents the School Committee.

Mr. Schmertzler noted the bylaw could be adjusted later if needed, and the CapCom's proposed composition and appointment process represent a compromise. The bylaw covers what the Finance Committee wanted, and the CapCom would be a subset of the Finance Committee. He suggested that any concerns be sent to the Selectmen. The current CapCom is now involved in major projects, but they still want to have separate committees that are formed for specific needs, such as the School Building Committee, to take charge of projects.

Mr. Schmertzler noted the Finance Committee and the CapCom are convening a small committee to determine how things were evaluated with the school building project. He said they cannot simply judge the current building project on money and said the school buildings need to keep up with the way learning is changing.

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Schmertzler for representing the Committee. She noted that as a body, the School Committee is supportive of long-range capital planning.

#### E. Lincoln School Building Committee [SBC] Update

Document: None.

Mr. Brandmeyer mentioned the Finance Committee and CapCom study on school facilities to confirm the work that the SBC has already accomplished to prepare for the vote on the school building project. There is a citizen's petition for Town Meeting about the school project. The Finance Committee's confirmation study will require hiring an engineering consultant at a cost of \$50,000-\$100,000, and he hopes it will be an apples-to-apples comparison. The SBC will share the information and data. There is confusion as to whether there would be MSBA support and reimbursement for small repairs, and the MSBA would not fund another feasibility study. If the Town defeats the current school building project at the polls, they would have to submit another statement of interest to the MSBA, with no guarantees that the district would be invited to undertake the process again.

Mr. Brandmeyer discussed the integrated design workshop with many involved, and they examined several areas, including mechanical and electrical concerns with energy savings. They will not take a geothermal approach as we are in the wrong part of the country. The roof has the infrastructure in place to accept photovoltaics. The ventilation system will be an air displacement system that is quiet and captures air from the roof. The second area was the site and the playing fields.

Ms. Glass said the new study will not be undertaken to create another option, but to confirm the assessment of the repair option.

The next SBC meeting is March 26; they will continue with the schematic design with OMR. They are holding more community forums to get the information out. Skanska and OMR's cost estimators are developing cost estimates for the project that will need to be reconciled. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that they would like to use all monies on the building and the components that stay with the buildings, not on more consultants, temporary classrooms to house students, and the like. The Finance Committee and CapCom meet every Tuesday night.

They need to make the case about the project and will report at Town Meeting.

#### VI. Superintendent's Report

Documents: 1) Email Message from Beth Ludwig, Hanscom Primary School Principal, to Mickey Brandmeyer and Erich Ledebuhr, RE: Suspicious Envelopes at Superintendent's Office, dated March 15, 2012; 2) Email Message from Mickey Brandmeyer to Lincoln School Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers, RE: Sewer Backup, dated March 15, 2012

Mr. Brandmeyer commended the School Committee for their process in hiring a new superintendent. He said it was very characteristic of the thoughtful work he has witnessed in his last ten years of service.

Mr. Brandmeyer noted the great news that the district has been awarded the contract to operate the Hanscom schools. The Department of Defense noted that "Lincoln provides the best value for the

dollar." The contract ends on June 30, 2017, is \$50-\$65 million, and is for one year with options for four years. It also extends to the teachers' association. He thanked Mr. Creel, Mr. Ledebuhr, Ms. Ludwig, and Ms. Powers for their work.

Mr. Brandmeyer mentioned the *Boston Globe* story about suspicious letters with a white powdery substance from Texas arriving at two schools in Massachusetts, including Bedford. The Lincoln Public Schools would have to go into lockdown mode if they received a letter.

Mr. Brandmeyer said there was a sewage back-up at the Brooks School this afternoon. The clogged pipe has been repaired. School will be open tomorrow.

Ms. Glass thanked him for his work.

## VII. Curriculum

Document: None.

Ms. Sterling attended a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading class that was giving structure to differentiated instruction in reading. She worked with three top readers and their vocabulary. She noted it was great fun to listen to the students verbalize their thoughts and to see them receive coaching. Ms. Glass thanked her for her work.

## VIII. Policy

None.

## IX. Facilities and Financial

### A. Warrant Approval

Document: None.

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$587,554.28 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$176,140.22 for a total of \$763,694.50. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants and recommended that they be approved. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

## X. Old Business

None.

## XI. New Business

### A. Town Meeting Presentation

Document: Draft, FY 2013 School Budget: Storyboard for Review at School Committee Meeting of March 16, 2012

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that they have been asked to keep the presentation for Town Meeting thin, targeted, and specific.

Ms. Glass asked for comments on the storyboard draft. Ms. Sterling suggested that they include the aspirational goals instead of the mission statement.

## XII. Approval of Minutes

Documents: 1) Draft of School Committee Minutes for Meeting of October 20, 2011; 2) Draft of School Committee Minutes for Meeting of November 3, 2011; 3) Draft of School Committee Minutes for Meeting of November 10, 2011

Mr. Sander moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the minutes of the meetings of October 20, November 3, and November 10, 2011. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes. They will be posted on the website.

## XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

## XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Glass, seconded by Ms. James, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations for union personnel. Ms. Glass, yes; Mr. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Mr. Christenfeld, yes; Ms. James, yes; Ms. Perkins, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 10:05 pm.

## XV. Executive Session

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary