

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 14, 2008 – Open Session

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Tom Sander, Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative)

Absent: Laurie Manos, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative)

Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance)

I. Greetings and Call to Order – 7:16pm

Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:16pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Al Schmertzler reported attending 3 events:

1. He noted that he and Julie Dobrow attended a talk about the question of “colorblindness” in school assignments and the recent Supreme Court decision. He mentioned that a lawyer from UC Berkeley, the head of the METCO Board, and the Superintendent of the Somerville Public Schools were among the speakers. He added that it was an interesting discussion, especially hearing the students’ input.
2. Mr. Schmertzler reported attending an event where the topic was “Dash Board” which is software that allows students to be at home doing homework and have an immediate interaction with the teacher which allowed for monitoring and guidance.
3. Mr. Schmertzler commented on a meeting in Concord that discussed “Civic Engagement”, noting that it was not just about getting children involved but about getting all people involved with their community by volunteering within the town.

III. Public Comments

None

****IV. Consent Agenda – later in meeting***

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Hearing on Emergency Access Road

(Documents: *Letter from the Rizzos; Drafts: Easement Agreement, Acceptance*)

Mickey Brandmeyer recapped the discussions that had taken place over the last year concerning the emergency access solutions. He covered the initial concern about the conservation land areas around the Lincoln campus which made it difficult to find land for an emergency access road. He reminded everyone of how Bill and Jane Rizzo offered access to part of their property to provide an easy emergency exit. Mr. Brandmeyer suggested that the Rizzo’s offer was a demonstration of exceptional community spirit. He discussed all the procedures that had to take place to complete the project which included obtaining permits, removal/replacement of a tree and making sure that the bridge on the path was stable and could bear the weight of the smaller emergency vehicles but noted it was predominantly a walking path.

Included in the packet provided was a formal letter from the Rizzos and drafts of the forms that outlines the agreement between Lincoln and the Rizzos with regard to the emergency access road.

Kevin Mooney, Lincoln’s Chief of Police, commented that it was a great option and that he was grateful to the Rizzos. Artie Contoni, Lincoln’s Fire Chief, concurred. Chief Mooney reiterated that there was an understanding with the Rizzos that if the access was being abused that they could call the police to report trespassing.

Sharon Gillespy asked if the road, since it went over a small bridge, would be able to hold a fire engine. Al Schmertzler replied that the bridge could not handle the weight of a fire engine but an ambulance could pass.

Julie Dobrow reminded everyone that there really was not a lot of cost involved, noting the only true costs being the landscaping and permits as well as the cost of an engineering study. These costs had been requested from the Capital Planning Committee and were approved.

Mickey Brandmeyer stated that once the plan had been approved, not only by the School Committee but also by the Town of Lincoln, they would be able to proceed.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to move the easement to the Town Council.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Acceptance of a \$50.00 donation from **Lueders Environmental, Inc.** to the Lincoln Public Schools.

B. Acceptance of a \$2,636.00 donation from **Friends of the Lincoln Library** which will be used to purchase two IMAC ZODV computers with printer and accessories.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Sharon Antia, the SC voted unanimously to accept the donations.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

B. Full Day Kindergarten Discussion

(Memorandum: *Full-Day Kindergarten Recommendation*)

**Recap: Lincoln has offered an 85% Kindergarten program for many years and, with learning expectations increasing and the need for more time to teach, the SC is voting to determine if a full-day Kindergarten program will be established.*

Julie Dobrow mentioned that the proposed full-day Kindergarten was discussed at the last meeting but since that meeting was held on the Hanscom campus but primarily affected the Lincoln campus, the School Committee wanted to have a second discussion at the Lincoln campus.

Mr. McKenna reiterated that this proposal for full-day Kindergarten was not to put higher expectations or more curriculum work on the students but rather to give more time for the students to do their work, teachers to have more time to work with the students, give another weekly special, and to encourage social skills development. He noted that there was research that stated that the full-day Kindergarten, a program that more school districts are adopting all the time, was beneficial for students and was reflected throughout their first years of school. He added that it would be most beneficial for the “at-risk” students and would help to keep those students from falling behind. He mentioned that he had sent out surveys to the current and future parents of Kindergarten students to allow for their feedback. He acknowledged that the feelings from the parents were split between the current model and the proposed full-day Kindergarten but that the majority of the respondents favored a move to full-day Kindergarten. Mr. McKenna commented on the support of full-day Kindergarten by the Kindergarten teachers and how it would help their teaching environment given they have increased expectations of them relative to the past. He added that he recommends implementing the full-day Kindergarten in September but acknowledged that the feedback on the starting time was split between September and October. Mr. McKenna noted that parents supporting either side had very justifiable and passionate reasons to solidify their beliefs of what would be the most beneficial. He recommended that all students start the school year with full-day Kindergarten and then if there are prominent reasons for a child not to attend full-day K then it could be looked at on a case-by-case issue. He added that he felt it should not be an initial choice.

Al Schmertzler asked what percentage of current incoming students are “at-risk”. Stephen McKenna replied that he could not specifically answer that but noted that Kindergarten students could be identified throughout the year long as being “at-risk”, since assessments are sometimes not done in preschools.

Al Schmertzler asked if the Governor wanted a full-day Kindergarten, would it interfere with giving the parents, those with issues, a chance to not have their child participate in the full-day Kindergarten program. Mr. McKenna replied that the minimum hours required for Kindergarten statewide is currently 25 hours per week and that Lincoln’s program already exceeded that. He added that he could not really answer what would come of that without knowing the specific hours of the proposed statewide full-day Kindergarten, adding that if there was a child that was unable to function within the full-day Kindergarten model then it would be viewed on an individual basis. Mickey Brandmeyer elaborated that the Governor wanted to make it universal for the Kindergarten programs to all be full-day. He stated that there are many districts/schools that want to do full-day K but don’t have the space. He noted that the vision for full-day K on a state level was the way to go but that available space would be more of an issue than not being able to get the resources. He added that Lincoln does have the space available so it would not be an issue to expand the Kindergarten program.

Al Schmertzler asked if the advanced learners would still be challenged. Mary Sterling replied that the Kindergarten teachers already do well at that and would continue to do so.

Julie Dobrow stated that she, along with the SC members, truly compliment Stephen McKenna for his hard work and for reaching out to all those that would be affected to get a true sense of what the community wanted.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC unanimously voted to establish full-day Kindergarten at the Lincoln School, to be implemented in September, for the 2008-2009 school year.

C. Recommendation for 2008-2009 Foreign Language Program

(Document: *Lincoln Public Schools: "Recommendation for Adjustments in the Foreign Language Program", "Staffing, Budget, & Time Table"*)

Mary Sterling summarized the history of the Foreign Language Program discussions. She presented a report that demonstrated the recommendations for the adjustments in the Foreign Language program and the requests for staffing and budget with a structured time table. She added that the time table allowed for a recommended slower implementation in January to allow for the Foreign Language instructor(s) to develop effective program units and lessons according to the overall curriculum, research and order materials, and meet with the grade 4 and 5 teachers.

Tom Sander asked if the January implementation was just for the first year and asked in for the second year, whether the Foreign Language program would start at the beginning of the school year for 4th graders. Mary Sterling replied that the January start was just for the first year.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the SC voted unanimously to accept and implement the Foreign Language Program for the 2008-2009 school year.

VIII. Policy

A. Second Reading and Vote on Advertising and Commercialism

(Document: *Advertising and Commercialism: Original and Draft Revision, Letter/Email: Advertising Policy Discussion and to SC from Presidents for the Lincoln School PTA and Hanscom PTO, Massachusetts PTA – House Bill 489, Lincoln PYA – "Impact of Elimination of Fundraising Activities"*)

***Recap: In April 2007, the SC adopted its Advertising and Commercialism policy but in the fall, questions arose from the impact the policy had on the PTA fund-raising efforts. Since the initial discussions, proposed revisions have been made to make the details of the policy less subjective to avoid any misinterpretation.**

Julie Dobrow stated that in April 2007 there was a policy adopted to help regulate the advertising practices in the Lincoln Public Schools. After the School Committee adopted this policy, it was brought to their attention that the policy might have had some unintended negative consequences with regard to the fundraising practices of the PTA and the PTO. The discussion from the last meeting was reviewing a revision that could be added to the policy but there was some debate about the wording and the interpretation of it.

Sharon Gillespy commented on the current issue of raising money for the middle school playground at Hanscom and how the chair of the fundraising committee was having trouble getting businesses or groups to contribute without there being some form of recognition, even if it was a simple plaque or acknowledgement, noting that with this policy the school cannot acknowledge the business that donated. Mickey Brandmeyer responded that a plaque would be a great observation when you get a business to donate and that the policy did allow for the business to be acknowledged but just in a manner that is not to advertise the company. He felt that certain small acknowledgements would be okay and that the policy would support a small sign listing of the contributors.

Julie Dobrow acknowledged the hard work of the PTA and PTO and her tremendous appreciation for the many ways in which these organizations support the school, and noted the School Committee is responsible for setting policies that regulate what can happen on school grounds. She stated that the intent of the policy was only to prevent undue or excess advertising that could potentially take place within the school system with outside fundraising. She felt that this new revision actually allows the PTA and PTO to come to the Superintendent if there is a question about any advertising associated with a fundraiser or activity. Tom Sander concurred with Ms. Dobrow and added that this approach was one that would be most beneficial over the long-term when different members would be interpreting the policy. Julie Dobrow added that the state and national PTA have issued public statements; including asking member organizations to consider fundraisers that do not utilize excessive advertising commercialism.

Jonathan Hoch complimented the School Committee and acknowledged that the School Committee was trying to craft a compromised solution among the SC, PTA and PTO. He noted that it would be a long-term effort to keep the advertisers at bay and that the focus needed to be the purpose of the school which was to teach the children not persuade them on what to buy or like. He agreed with the plaque but noted that it should be without the logo which brands the child with the image.

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Tom Sander, the School Committee voted to implement the Advertising and Commercialism policy as presented with the new revisions. Sharon Antia opposed the motion.

D. Proposed 2008-2009 School Year Calendar – First Reading
(Documents: Draft: 2008-2009 School Year Calendar)

**Note: The contract with the Lincoln Teacher’s Association (LTA) requires that the Superintendent consult with its Executive Board prior to a vote by the School Committee. The teacher’s contract has a provision that requires a vote of the LTA membership if the teachers are required to return before Labor Day. The recommendation is that the teachers return after Labor Day, therefore no vote of the LTA is required.*

Mickey Brandmeyer discussed the draft, noting that would still be a need for discussions with the Teacher’s Association about the schedule for the most effective time. He added that it was important to complete this early to allow sufficient time for families to plan trips. He included neighboring community’s calendars to allow for comparison and noted the reasons for the differences between Lincoln’s and others.

Sharon Gillespy felt that the 22nd and 23rd of December (Monday and Tuesday) were not good days to request the presence of children when there are so many people from Hanscom that will be traveling, therefore making the absences for those days significantly high. She requested they reconsider the break around the Christmas given that most military families are not from this area and would need the extra time to travel to see their relatives. Mickey Brandmeyer agreed to look over the perennial problem.

Al Schmertzler asked if there could a different calendar for Lincoln campus than the Hanscom campus. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that this was not possible since it would affect the teacher’s contracts.

VI. Superintendent’s Report
None

VII. Curriculum

Mary Sterling reported that she had visited 9 out of 10 classrooms used for the math trials. She noted it was interesting to see how the teacher was teaching the unit and how the students responded, adding that the students were surveyed for feedback. She complimented the teachers that volunteered, acknowledging their hard work. Ms. Sterling also complimented the Math Committee for their partnership and dedication to the teachers and making sure that the program was being implemented the way that it was suggested.

Ms. Sterling reported on the **Task Force for High Performing Students** stating that at the February 7th meeting, she was able to tell the Task Force members about the Lincoln School Foundation (LSF) grant that they were awarded to help with the costs of speakers and resources. She gave informational points by noting that the students needed multiple outlets for extensions or challenges as opposed to one program. Some programs should be a “low-barrier” so that many children could get involved.

Al Schmertzler asked when programs were going to start. Mary Sterling replied that the Task Force recommendations were planned to be presented to the School Committee in the spring. Mr. Schmertzler questioned if the suggestions were done and approved in the spring, would it be certain to be implemented in September. Ms. Sterling answered that there could be an implementation of some things but she could not say for sure that all items would be implemented. She added that as items were implemented, it could be determined what else could be implemented in a manageable way.

Julie Dobrow questioned if looking at the achievement gap and the issue of high achieving students could be incorporated into some of the summer work, as well as math. Mary Sterling responded that would be looked into but noted that the summer work in place already had some focus on those topics.

Al Schmertzler questioned the grade or grades this would cover. Mary Sterling replied that it would be implemented over a number of grades.

IX. Facilities and Financial
A. Warrant Approval

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Julie Dobrow, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants in the amount of **\$837,657.60.**

B. Cost of Operations: Pod C

(Memorandum: Proposed Request for Proposal (RFP) Process for Lease of Pod)

Buck Creel addressed the questions that the School Committee had from the previous meeting concerning the costs involved with the POD C with regard to its operation. He reviewed the memorandum, noting that it was not the exact amount but closest to \$27,500. He proposed that the SC request an initial rent of \$25,000. Mr. Creel stated that the utilities were not included in the rent. He demonstrated the continuity level of operations.

Al Schmertzler recommended that there be some escalator increase over the five year period. Buck Creel commented that there was an escalator increase of 3%. He reiterated that the \$25,000 was the initial rent with an understanding of the increase of 3%. Mickey Brandmeyer stated that the report may not clearly show that there would be an escalator increase over the remaining years and suggested it be clearly stated.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously that the POD C continue to be surplus space and available for rent, that it preferably be used for a licensed after-school school-aged child care program and related use, and that it allows the acceptance of less than fair market rental rates for the lease of POD C to promote a public purpose by providing an affordable after-school day care center for school-aged children.

X. Old Business

A. Review Updated Long-Term Agenda

(Report: Long-Term Agenda, 2007-2008)

Mickey Brandmeyer discussed that the long-term agenda covers the next few months' business and a history of what all has taken place.

Al Schmertzler asked about the "Statement of Interest" needing to be done by April 15th, noting it seemed to be scheduled late. Buck Creel acknowledged that it was probably scheduled too late and suggested that it be moved up. Mickey Brandmeyer added that due to all the required voting, he agreed and requested the date be changed to April 10th.

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the SC voted unanimously to approve the updated long-term agenda, with minor scheduling revisions, and update the posting to the website.

XI. New Business

A. Review Town Meeting Presentation Outline

Mickey Brandmeyer requested to move this to the next meeting given that not all of it had been reviewed.

XII. Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the January 3, 2008 minutes.

XII. Information Enclosures

All were disbursed at the beginning and throughout the course of the meeting.

XIV. Adjournment –

On motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary