

MINUTES FOR THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, September 20, 2007

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Laurie Manos (Vice Chair), Sharon Antia, Al Schmertzler, Tom Sander, and Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative) Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buck Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Thanks offered by School Committee Chair to teachers and principals for welcoming and informative Open House nights in the district's schools.

Thanks offered to Mary Goldstein for her representation at Committee meetings on behalf of Hanscom. Welcome to Sharon Gillespie for her willingness to become the Hanscom representative.

Laurie Manos announced the formation of a subcommittee to join PTO and PTA members in looking at the advertising policy to make it more actionable and work better for everyone involved.

III. Public Comments

Chair welcomed public comments and presentations; reminded public that School Committee members are interested in hearing the public perspective on issues related to the schools but may not respond unless an item is on the agenda.

Consent Agenda

None

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Computer Room Dedication

Chair invited Alan and Kristin Bjork to join the Committee in honoring Betty Bjork. Superintendent Brandmeyer recognized Betty's contributions since 1959 as a teacher and administrator in Lincoln. Betty worked for EDCO as computer coordinator and was a forerunner in exploring how to make computers a more powerful tool for students to learn. The Superintendent recommended naming of Lincoln School computer lab in her honor. Kristin Bjork shared memories of Betty bringing early computers home and declaring that computers are going to change the way that education happens. She reported that her mother founded the EDCO computer center and worked at EDCO to develop mathematics software. The family wishes to establish an endowment to educate teachers to use the computer as a powerful learning tool. Mary Ann Thompson has offered to administer the fund. Julie Dobrow thanked the Bjorks for their generosity and fitting tribute to Betty. It comes at a fortuitous time in the district just as the schools have implemented the Technology Master Plan and purchased new computer hardware and software.

Alan Bjork suggested a plaque in Betty's name for the computer lab. Mickey Brandmeyer will have a plaque made with an inscription about the vision Betty had and the contribution she made. Al Bjork indicated that the initial gift will be 10K; many colleagues and friends will be notified of the gift and Al anticipates that there will be more contributions to the endowment. It will also be a codicil in Al's will. Buckner Creel said we have mechanisms already established for endowment trusts to manage the process. The school department will manage the process of teachers learning about the possibilities for funding and applying for grants through the fund.

Edie Baxter expressed delight in seeing this kind of tribute happen for Betty and her work. Buckner Creel expressed his fondness and appreciation of Betty's influence on his kids. Kathy O'Connell, current mathematics curriculum specialist, stated that there truly are many classroom teachers whom Betty supported in their professional development. "Your Mom and your wife really touched our lives." Becky Eston said that the fact that this tribute will stay in this school is wonderful.

Chair moved to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to name one of our computer labs in Betty's honor. We look forward the dedication. Al and Kristin Bjork offered thanks to Committee.

B. Final Report and Recommendation from Class Size Subcommittee

Delayed until a later meeting. Laurie Manos announced that the class size recommendation will be discussed on October 18th when the School Committee meets at the Hanscom campus. Information about gaining access to the Base will be distributed. Final decision will be on November 1st meeting on Lincoln campus.

C. District Work Plans

Mickey Brandmeyer distributed an additional workplan on Leadership and School Culture. Goals for district were approved in June 2007. Each approved goal engenders several workplans that outline how we intend to accomplish the goals. We use workplans to capture the highlights for what we do during the school year. It is a challenge because Mary Sterling and Ed Orenstein are new to the district and learning how this process works.

The development of workplans also involves the principals in conversations about the district's work. Mr. Brandmeyer will share highlights and ask the School Committee vote to approve at the end.

Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety: Buckner Creel highlighted three work plans:

Health and Safety - Al Schmertzler questioned whether School Committee members could do a walk through of area under discussion for emergency access. Scheduled a walk through for School Committee and Mickey Brandmeyer on Tuesday Oct. 2nd at 8:00.

Budgets and Contracts - Al Schmertzler raised a question regarding bus contract – wants to include proper emissions control in school buses. Mr. Creel asked to speak at a later date about that topic. Mr. Schmertzler queried the contract with LEAP for rental of POD C – stressed the importance of self-sustaining programs that do not add cost to the district's budget.

Facilities and Operations - Emphasis on Food Service program and planning.

Mr. Schmertzler raised concern about the acronyms... requested an acronym glossary for Facilities Master Plan. Ms. Gillespy raised question regarding master plan at Hanscom and the DODEA evaluation of schools. Mr. Creel emphasized future discussions with key personnel on the base to discuss school needs. Julie Dobrow had a question regarding literature review. Mr. Creel explained that there are protocols for custodial tasks that we can adapt rather than develop our own.

Leadership and School Culture

Sharon Gillespy raised questions about special needs of a military child. The Superintendent cited a study that is part of the military organization that publishes materials. Mary Sterling said she would be glad to look into it.

Tom Sander requested a report back to School Committee on the impact of the Responsive Classroom work and how far it gets us toward the goal. Interested in what kinds of changes occurred. Suggested addition of "civic engagement" and wants to know what the thinking is behind how to increase student civic engagement.

Laurie Manos expressed a concern that there is too much in the work plan and thought that it would be difficult to focus on big initiatives.

Tom Sander: While there is a clear theoretical benefit to focusing in the School Committee's goals, since many or most of our initiatives are in reality multi-year, we can't simply focus on one or two in one year, cross them off, and then move on to new initiatives. Need to identify the right things that are on the plate and measure progress. Superintendent: social and emotional dimension never goes away... not as central in our focus as the CIA workplans... but needs to be in the environment. Civic engagement comes up at different times; opportunities arise.

Al Schmertzler expressed his desire to have students know how the town works: teach leadership and community participation. If people from committees were to be part of kids' education, they'll learn how to participate.

2nd plan revisits the issues of emergency access.

3rd plan: Mission, vision, strategic planning. The Superintendent gave rationale and highlights.

Al Schmertzler questioned if we are going to have anything for the really bright kids?

Julie Dobrow made a motion to accept these work plans as amended. Tom Sander seconded – Approved 5-0 with Hanscom Reps concurring. Julie Dobrow expressed appreciation to Buck, Mary, Mickey and principals for hard work.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Recognition of Teachers Receiving Professional Status

The Superintendent reviewed the background for decision to grant professional status. Emphasized Lincoln Public Schools commitment to stay in Lincoln as members of professional faculty; increased rigor of hiring process and standards in supervision and evaluation. These teachers have consistently demonstrated high level of teaching and involvement in student learning. Recognition and celebration is important. The Superintendent read the following names of teachers receiving professional status into the record: DePaula Balich, Kathleen Desjardins, Scot Dexter, Lisa Falcone, Clair Groden, Kerry Hachey, Diane McKenzie, Cynthia Matthes, Laurel Reckert, Sharon Reneris, David Trant and Katherine Whitney.

Julie Dobrow offered congratulations to all of them on behalf of the School Committee.

B. Enrollment Update

The Superintendent presented enrollment statistics which are also reported to DOD (555 in Hanscom campus) and to DOE (680 in Lincoln campus). This includes out of district placements. Nothing surprising in numbers. CASE students included at Lincoln Campus but not yet at Hanscom. Will revise to include CASE student numbers at Hanscom.

VII. Curriculum

A. Report on Summer Curriculum and Professional Development Activities

Mary Sterling reported on the curriculum and professional development activities that were completed over the summer. She shared a few specific examples about elementary science, common assessments and interdisciplinary instruction.

Ms. Manos and Mr. Sander: thanked for presentation and specific examples. Mr. Sander: where do topics and focus for projects originate? Dr. Sterling emphasized the opportunities for sharing samples of student work. Julie Dobrow suggested that she speak with Ben Aaronson at Lincoln Journal – good to highlight the summer work done by the teachers would be of interest to community.

VIII. Policy

None

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Schmertzler said he has reviewed warrants in the amount of \$666,231.66 with payroll warrants totaling \$529,166.49 and accounts payable warrants totaling \$137,065.12 and that the warrants appear to be in order. Mr. Schmertzler moved that the School Committee vote to accept warrants in the amount of \$666,231.66. Julie Dobrow seconded the motion. All elected members voted in favor, with Ms. Gillespy concurring.

B. Establish Budget Guidelines and Timelines for FY '09 Budget Process

Buckner Creel and Mickey Brandmeyer memo in the School Committee agenda packet. The Superintendent highlight areas that need to be including in preliminary budget: such as: Class Size Policy, Task Force and Committees in goals and work plans will require consideration of budgetary impact. We will include placeholders in anticipation of recommendations next spring. Tech funding is stand alone item. Will need funds in operating budget for maintenance of all newly purchased hardware. Other items are similar to past years. Mr. Creel highlighted monitoring of energy consumption and increase funding for maintenance of facilities. Special Education needs careful planning for out-of-district placements. The Superintendent suggested that this memo outlines guidelines for the School Committee to consider.

Ms. Manos had a question regarding Math Materials Committee. She emphasized need for parent involvement and reaction. Will help with planning for that. Looking outside of ourselves beyond Lincoln and best practices beyond Massachusetts.

Ms. Manos: Foreign Language program. Observation – added a lot to curriculum. Major amount for instrumental music. Expanded Middle School foreign language program... haven't added hours in the day. People need to understand what the time trade-offs are—children's day in terms of fragmentation, etc. Julie Dobrow said we cannot give administration mixed messages - School Committee has brought up World Language as an issue in the past. We need to be clear among ourselves about what we ask administration to do. Tom Sander: summed up budget process and stated that nothing is given at this point in budget process – it is all under consideration. Superintendent prefers not to limit the thinking going into the process. The Superintendent addressed the Hanscom Representative regarding the differences in the budgeting process but the program priorities are the same for both campuses.

Mr. Creel highlighted steps in the timeline as School Committee develops a base budget and a preferred budget; negotiates with FinCom about the parameters.

Chair: The town information requested submission of operating budget by Nov 19th. The Superintendent commented on past practice and his intention to talk to FinCom about the school process.

Ms. Manos requested the Math Materials be included in the narrative.

Vote on guidelines for budget development: Chair moved to accept guidelines; seconded and approved 5-0.

C. Review Proposal for Capital Planning Committee FY '09

Buckner Creel highlighted the status of completion for each of the warrants.

Mr. Creel presented the proposed capital project list: highlights from the memo describing each project needed in the district.

Mr. Schmertzler had a question regarding the timing of tile replacement – Mr. Creel: should discuss these issues in the facilities subcommittee. Some things need attention now and can't be delayed. Mr. Schmertzler: let the town know these are failings in the facility and are in need of repair or replacement. These projects are not going to be insignificant. Superintendent: point well made – things that may be better taken care of in the context of a bigger project and deserve our consideration and planning.

Discussion: Suggest a placeholder item for an engineering study of an alternative access/egress in FY'09 and project money with a date to be determined. Mr. Schmertzler emphasized the urgency of budgeting for this issue.

Mr. Creel: Commented on Capital Project 5-Year Plan

Ms. Manos raised a question about repairs needed to Brooks stage. Mr. Creel stated that repairs will start in early October.

X. Old Business

A. Update: Emergency Access

Police Chief Kevin Mooney and Fire Chief Al Cotoni joined meeting to discuss the need for emergency access. Julie Dobrow reviewed background of Need for Emergency Access and meetings already held to address need. She asked Chief Mooney and Chief Cotoni to speak about this issue. Chief Mooney: it is an emergency and an alternative way to get into the school grounds because having one way in and one way out is not safe in an emergency situation. The school is also the Town shelter and the field is a designated landing zone for ER helicopter if need to move people in and out of this area. Concern also about large gathering at 4th of July.

Mr. Schmertzler: recognize need for this plan in case Lincoln Road were blocked. Asks: how finished should the access be? Chief Mooney: Hard packed gravel road that can be plowed. Chair: acknowledged we've been looking at a lot of issues: conservation, wetlands, etc. We have a lot of different options and want to update the SC as we will go forward to discuss with the community. Forum scheduled for Oct 9th will be publicized in all the usual ways. Ms. Manos expressed support and verified that Chief Mooney will be at the community discussion. The Superintendent underscored importance of the need for this plan for both town events and the school student and faculty population. Recognized that each of options before us has pluses and minuses so the criteria for the key issues that a plan must address should be clearly understood by the community. The Superintendent outlined those issues

Mr. Schmertzler will attend the CPC meeting on October 10th to discuss projects.

Ms. Manos: The roof is very important and has resulted in dangerous conditions for students playing in the field house. We should think about positioning the budget so that it is understood as a special project. Discussion about the Field House roof repair and longevity of Field House. Chair suggests moving discussion to the facilities subcommittee.

New Business

Ms. Dobrow presented a draft of the message from the School Committee for the October State of the Town Meeting. The focus will be on information regarding the Facilities Master Plan.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None

XIII. Information Enclosures

XIV. Adjournment

Julie Dobrow moved to adjourn at 10:10 p.m.; Seconded by Laurie Manos. Roll call vote to go into executive session: Al Schmertzler: yes, Tom Sander: yes; Laurie Manos: yes, Sharon Antia: yes, Julie Dobrow: yes, Sharon Gillespy: concurred.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Sterling, Assistant Superintendent