

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 8, 2007 – Open Session

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Laurie Manos (Vice-Chair), Al Schmertzler, Sharon Antia, Tom Sander, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative) and Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative)

Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Edward Orenstein (Administrator of Student Services)

I. Greetings and Call to Order – 7:04pm

A. Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Al Schmertzler and Julie Dobrow discussed the "State of the Town" that had taken place on Saturday, November 3, 2007. They noted that there was a low attendance of about 100 people. They had presented the information about the SMMA assessment and possible building scenarios but commented that there were not a lot of questions.

Al Schmertzler, Julie Dobrow, and Mickey Brandmeyer reported on the METCO forum that had taken place on Monday, November 5, 2007. Mr. Brandmeyer discussed the two major agenda items covered. 1.) Would METCO be affected by the recent Supreme Court decision on school desegregation? 2.) the need for more ways to gain greater levels of funding for METCO. Ms. Dobrow reported that the attorneys presenting at this meeting concluded that the Supreme Court case would not have an effect on METCO and that those convening the meeting were optimistic about greater funding for the program.

Al Schmertzler followed up by explaining that changes are pushing for the funding of METCO to come from the governor's budget which means it could only be removed by the legislature. He added that this would give METCO more stability. Mr. Schmertzler requested that everyone volunteer their time to approach the governor and other leaders that would be influential in passing this budget proposal.

Tom Sander reported that he was present at a meeting for parents hosted by Mary Sterling and Stephen McKenna on Monday, November 5, 2007, about the process of selecting math curriculum. The parents there were very interested and had lots of good comments and questions. Mr. Sander noted that Mary Sterling indicated that the current LPS curriculum "Investigations" was obsolete and the school needed to consider whether to switch to a different curriculum or switch to the current version of "Investigations" and explained the process in place and how the Task Force was considering this.

III. Public Comments

Julie Dobrow recognized Cindy Sweetser.

Ms. Sweetser voiced her strong support for smaller class sizes. Her belief was that the class size committee had done excellent work and that their recommendation should be taken seriously. She said she felt there were no legitimate reasons not to adopt the suggested policy and that, unlike some of the new initiatives suggested for the FY'09 budget, class size was a core community value that affects all children and should be maintained.

IV. Consent Agenda

None

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Discussion FY '09 Budget

Mickey Brandmeyer noted that there was an omission in Medicaid reimbursement. He also noted that the spreadsheet noting the overrides opposed or rejected in the last few years did not include amounts. Mr. Brandmeyer continued by explaining that the principals and program directors would present their proposal to the School Committee. He introduced Lynn Fagan (Preschool), Sharon Hobbs and Stephen McKenna (Lincoln), and Randy Davis and Mark Kaufman (Hanscom). He called Lynn Fagan to present first.

Lynn Fagan remarked that it had been a great start this year. She mentioned there were 69 students enrolled in 4 classrooms, adding that the maximum is 60 FTE (full time equivalents) and they have 57 FTE currently enrolled. She stated later that the reason that there can be more students enrolled than the maximum number is because students have different enrollment options (two, three, or five day enrollments). Ms. Fagan reported that eleven families are on the waiting list and three students are leaving. She felt that, even with only three families leaving, the preschool could accommodate four additional students once those vacancies came open.

Ms. Fagan suggested two new initiatives:

- 1.) To keep the DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment) program which used to be funded by a grant but will now have a yearly cost of \$1200.00 to continue. Ms. Fagan highly recommended keeping this program. She supported this request with surveys from parents and teachers.
- 2.) Preschool Playground – Ms. Fagan stated that with the expansion to 69 students, 82% of whom are under five years old, the playground needed to have age-appropriate equipment. She noted that the recess area is shared by three classrooms although only two are out there at one time. She felt that preschoolers needed to have equipment that works with their physical abilities and developmental stage. She added that none of the climbing structures are able to be used by the preschoolers. In addition to having age appropriate equipment, Ms. Fagan felt that there definitely needed to be more space.

Tom Sander recalled Ms. Fagan presenting in the fall and noting that all costs for the preschool were included in the expansion so he wondered why she needed more funding for the playground. Ms. Fagan noted that it was needed regardless of expansion; that it would have been needed for three classes. Mickey Brandmeyer responded by stating the Extended Day program was part of the expansion but that this is for the whole preschool structure.

Julie Dobrow commented that this is a high ticket item. She questioned how much of the shared places are actually used to the point of the preschool not being able to use them. She added that perhaps there could be some type of cost share with the Recreation Department or Magic Garden since getting a new climbing area would be mutually beneficial. Mickey Brandmeyer noted that the Strats Place is at the “end of its useful life”. He felt that there were more critical needs that should be focused on. He stated that this was a “conversation starter” but noted that not all requests would be done within this year’s budget. Sharon Gillespy asked why the preschoolers couldn’t use the Strats Place Playground. Ms. Fagan responded that, by law, any child under five could not use them.

Stephen McKenna and Sharon Hobbs presented three new initiatives for Lincoln Schools. Stephen McKenna started for the Lincoln K-4. He introduced three new initiatives.

- 1.) Expanding the Kindergarten program to full day. He explained the benefits as providing more valuable hours to allow for the full curriculum expectations to be met. With those extra hours, he added, the students could be less rushed and partake in traditional Kindergarten activities. It was noted that Hanscom already does full day Kindergarten therefore it would put Lincoln on the same schedule and parents of students in Hanscom Kindergarten could be used for feedback about the benefits.
- 2.) Request for a full time math remedial instructor instead of the current .6 position. This is an initiative from last year that was not approved.
- 3.) K-8 furniture upgrades which would be completed over a ten year span. If funded completely, three to four classrooms would be done on an annual basis.

Al Schmertzler stated that he thought the Governor was suggesting that all kindergarten programs be extended to full days. Stephen McKenna responded that it is a “discussion” but only ½ days are required now. Mickey Brandmeyer elaborated that the Governor is proposing full day Kindergarten but that the extra money to cover this would likely go to the school districts that do not have any full days whereas the Lincoln program is already an “80% model”. Therefore, the added 2 ½ hours would be considered full time. Sharon Gillespy inquired about the costs for the full time Kindergarten program. Stephen McKenna responded that with the additional teacher time and the offsets (drivers and eliminating half day buses) it would be uncertain.

Laurie Manos questioned if the furniture replacements would be a capital expense. Mickey Brandmeyer responded that it was not a big enough expense to be considered for a capital expense.

Julie Dobrow questioned if the additional .4 position for math remedial would be enough. Stephen McKenna responded that it wouldn't but that it is a small request for a larger need. He suggested that the teachers will get more training and resources to extend within the classroom.

Sharon Hobbs presented three new initiatives for the Lincoln 5-8.

- 1.) Literacy Coach for the 6-8 grades. Sharon Hobbs mentioned there was a reading specialist designated for the lower grades. She added that although there are guests that are brought in to demonstrate reading comprehension instruction, there is a need for someone to do this with the teachers all the time.
- 2.) Ms. Hobbs requested funding to maintain the drama program, which is currently funded by grants, to give the 6-8th graders who were not in band, chorus, or orchestra a place to do something different. She added that the 5th graders were going to drama once a week this year for the first time.
- 3.) Science equipment, especially computer software, was requested by Ms. Hobbs to extend the technology on the computer to go beyond just word processing and be used for scientific projects and lessons.

Laurie Manos asked if the drama expansion was an extension or a continued cost from last year. Ms. Hobbs explained that it became a cost due to the loss of a grant, which had runs its course. Mickey Brandmeyer elaborated that it would cost \$6,000 to replace the lost grant. But he noted that the remaining grants are still applicable and pay for the remaining costs of the total \$40,000 to maintain the drama program.

Laurie Manos voiced a concern about adding the literacy coach position for fear of having to cut that position later. She felt it would be better to maintain professional development. Sharon Hobbs responded that with teachers coming in, moving around, and retiring, you may give training one year but the staff is different by the next. Therefore, the teachers are not all on the same level or have the same skills as the teachers who received the initial training. The literacy coach would extend the training to the new staff members that missed it. Ms. Hobbs explained that the lower MCAS scores were partly due to students not being able to synthesize what the teacher was saying and comprehend what was being read. She elaborated that science is a certain language that a student may not get. She gave the example of a science teacher, who doesn't specialize in reading, may not have acquired the skills to teach these reading comprehension skills to a student. This is where the literacy coach would be beneficial in giving the science teacher strategies to help students read and comprehend scientific language better. Mary Sterling extended this thought stating that at the middle school level there is a different kind of development and that teachers have to be able to teach 2-dimensions simultaneously: content and reading. Julie Dobrow asked Sharon Hobbs to explain how the literacy coach would help with the students. Ms. Hobbs explained that it is for the students that need a "boost" but don't qualify for special education services.

Randy Davis and Mark Kaufman presented for the Hanscom Schools.

Randy Davis introduced eight new initiatives for the Hanscom Primary School.

- 1.) New Risograph, a high speed digital printing system (similar to a copy machine), that is more cost effective when making large quantities of copies.
- 2.) Furniture Replacement
 - a. Beds for the nurses office
 - b. 1st grade – organizational cubby
 - c. 2nd grade – kidney shaped table (for guided reading)
 - d. 3rd grade – teacher's desks
- 3.) Third grade level textbooks that are more grade level appropriate
- 4.) Second and third grade math intervention. A position is requested to help students with math in the afternoon from 2:15pm to 3:45pm instead of using the reading block during school hours.
- 5.) DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) for K-2 – a new edition is requested because the old ones are not as effective

- 6.) Software upgrade. Ms. Davis added that new software is needed for the new technology equipment in the school.
- 7.) Kindergarten “My Sidewalk” which is for struggling students. Ms. Davis feels there needs to be a more thorough program; not just the core program.
- 8.) Technology Equipment
 - a. Reading specialist requested own equipment
 - b. Physical Education/Health teacher asked for a projector and visuals
 - c. Library requested a scanner
 - d. Technology Specialist asked for digital cameras

Al Schmeitzler asked where the money comes from. Mickey Brandmeyer responded that there used to be future allocations based on the number of students in the prior year. Now, with the Hanscom housing contractors in question and the building project stopped, the numbers are questionable. Budget allocation for each year is based on enrollment in that current year on September 30th. He stated that the reserve fund at Hanscom helps. Louann Robinson asked if Hanscom gets grants. Mr. Creel responded that they do but some federal reimbursements are not allowed.

Julie Dobrow asked about the math intervention requests and if it would play into the teacher contract negotiations with regard to hours after school. Mr. Brandmeyer replied that this is something that goes beyond the contract for compensation.

Laurie Manos asked if any of these initiatives could come from the principal’s fund. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that historical spending for the principal’s fund is for supplies and other “catalog” items. He continued that new initiatives are for things that go beyond the principal’s fund and added that site based funds were for smaller purchases.

Mark Kaufman presented five new initiatives for the Hanscom Middle School.

- 1.) Instruction Materials – replacement texts for multiple grades, especially math materials for grade 6.
- 2.) Spanish books for grades 6-8 – replacement since textbooks are old and don’t tie into related technology.
- 3.) Kiln- noted the one at the school has been broken for two years and not repairable.
- 4.) Grade 5 reading materials
- 5.) Playground Equipment
 - a. Noted grades 4 and 5 are dramatically different from the other grade levels (especially at Hanscom Primary)
 - b. Explained that parents are very concerned and the PTO is trying to raise \$12,500. Mr. Kaufman requested the budget match or cover what is not raised.

Mickey Brandmeyer briefed the School Committee on the budget process noting that the November 29th meeting would give clarity to the budget gap. He elaborated that there would be “closing the gap” strategies discussed at that meeting but that decisions would not be made before then or at that time. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that the December 12th joint meeting (Finance Committee and the School Committee) meeting is actually December the 5th. He proposed a brief meeting for January 15th if there had not been a vote on the preferred budget.

**B. Department of Education’s Final Coordinated Program Review Report
(Document: D.O.E. Final Coordinated Program Review Report)**

Mickey Brandmeyer commented that the district was in good shape with being in compliance. He explained the process of the corrective action plan. 1.) address the issues and begin to change the program now. 2.) submit a plan to the DOE by December 12th demonstrating how these issues were going to be addressed and a summary on what was learned from the review. Tom Sander inquired when the final implementation had to be completed by. Mr. Brandmeyer explained that it depended on the issue but the district had to propose a timeline with the expected dates of implementation, and this had to be approved by the state.

Ed Orenstein commented that in the area of Special Education the CPR was a terrific report. He added that compliance and documenting helped. He reported the finding as 6 accommodations, 52 areas of full compliance, 7 areas of partial compliance, and no areas of non-compliance. Mary Sterling reported on the English Language Learner Program commenting that it was a good report for a “low incident” district. She noted 17 accommodations, 9 areas of full compliance, 8 areas of partial compliance, and no areas of non-compliance. Ms. Sterling added that she had met with some key people and that some small things had already been remedied. Mickey Brandmeyer reported on the areas of Civil Rights noting there were only two are partial compliance. The issues and remedies are as follows:

- 1.) Materials must be reviewed – LPS needed a systematic way to select materials that were in compliance prior to purchasing them.
- 2.) Teacher training on physically restraining students and reporting the incident – noted that some certifications had lapsed. Therefore, 2 to 3 will be trained for each school but it will require after hours training and compensation.

Julie Dobrow noted that one of the partial compliances requested materials in different languages. She questioned the cost implications. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that it was already in the budget. Mary Sterling added that there are websites that immediately translate that are free.

Julie Dobrow discussed the absence of *Vocation Education Programs* stating that they are not offered and the DOE review requires them. She wanted to know how to respond to that. Mickey Brandmeyer responded that the students having access to the Minuteman Vocational School and Shawsheen Vocational School should suffice but noted he would check.

Mr. Brandmeyer added that this review is a project that drains time but can be very beneficial. He noted that he appreciated everyone’s time on it. Tom Sander asked if there are any other subjects covered (other than Special Education Programs, English Language Learner Program, and Methods of Administration). Mr. Brandmeyer replied that this is about all they do.

C. Proposal for School Sign Replacement

Mickey Brandmeyer introduced the proposal for the Lincoln school sign replacement. He acknowledged the graduating Class of 2006 and the gift of a new school sign. He added that the parents had worked hard to raise the money but it would not be enough to cover all the costs. He noted that the parents have a specific plan for the sign to make it a cleaner, less wordy look. (drawings were passed out to the SC members illustrating the style, materials, and message for the sign). Mr. Brandmeyer noted the need to get this done in a timely manner but explained that, per conversation with Mark Whitehead (Town Planner), this would take almost two months due to the required public hearing, permits (which take 20 days to allow for appeals), and then filing at the Registry of Deeds. He added that the approaching winter would make it impossible to place the sign in the ground. He remarked that the PTA still had some money left that could be used for the landscaping. He felt that it would probably not cover the suggested carved lettering but that a raised vinyl letter could be a cost effective alternative.

VI. Superintendent’s Report

Mickey Brandmeyer mentioned that the PTO invited him to the Hanscom campus noting that he met with 30-40 people. Sharon Gillespy added that she was glad that Mr. Brandmeyer came since there have been many questions about the way the Hanscom schools are funded, stating that many felt the campus to be the “stepchild” of Lincoln. Mickey Brandmeyer continued that the talk was about all different topics and he felt it was a healthy and helpful exchange that lasted about 2 hours. Louann Robinson asked what was the main focus. Mr. Brandmeyer mentioned the facilities and Ms. Gillespy noted the 4th grade playground. Mickey Brandmeyer followed up that the playground was discussed and Mr. Creel had gone to the playground and took pictures. He noted their efforts in trying to obtain a grant to cover or help with the costs. Mr. Creel added that once the Hanscom mobile home park is vacated, the playground, if age appropriate, could be moved over to the school.

Mickey Brandmeyer noted that the Department of Defense facilitators asked what the needs of the Hanscom school campus was. He added that the facilities will continue to be addressed. Ms. Gillespy questioned what the emergency fund is for large facility projects. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that if it has

a cost of under \$50,000 then it is the responsibility of the School Department but if it is over \$50,000 then the Department of Defense pays.

VII. Curriculum

Mary Sterling stated she had a math evening at Hanscom and four people attended. In addition, they noted that the publishers have sent some proposed programs that are of interest to the district. Al Schmertzler asked if all the programs allow students to work at their own pace. Ms. Sterling remarked that it was a good question and noted the need for “Independent Extension” programs instead of the teacher always creating them.

Ms. Sterling commented that the deadline for volunteers for the task force on high achieving students was next Friday, November 16th. She noted that the information and request was printed in all educational and community news resources.

VIII. Policy

None

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

1. Al Schmertzler summarized topic and reason for vote.

2. On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Laurie Manos, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants in the amount of \$638,345.52.

X. Old Business

Tom Sander sent out an email demonstrating a new proposal that he had created for the proposed “Class Size Policy”. He still indicated that he wanted the Finance Committee to also review this proposal to ensure their willingness to maintain their commitment to fund an additional section if numbers merited this after the budget was set. Mr. Sander noted that he was in favor of smaller class sizes but that overall, looking into history, 88% of the time the class sizes have been at or below “target”. He added that comparing Lincoln to other communities, the class sizes were at or below their numbers. He stated his motivation for his proposal was to keep the numbers from “creeping” up. Doing this, he added, would avoid the budget gap growing from \$200,000 to \$300,000 and still keep the smaller class sizes. Mr. Sander’s proposal looked at the grade level class sizes over the past ten years. The goal of the proposal was to ensure that 6 out of the 10 years were at the “target” or below, making sure that no one student spends two consecutive years in a class that is over “target”. It also ensured that no cohort moving through the Lincoln Schools would be above “target” for more than two consecutive years. Mr. Sander showed that run against the past 12 years of Lincoln data there would not be a cost associated with his small class size proposal.

Al Schmertzler wanted clarification about the cohorts and how long they have to remain at or above “target” before they would get relief. Tom Sander replied that, for example, a Kindergarten student that was in a class at or below the “target” but above “target” in 1st and 2nd grades would be guaranteed relief in 3rd grade. Mr. Schmertzler then asked how to show the Finance Committee the previous 12 years for the review. Mr. Sander replied that a chart would be sent.

Sharon Antia wondered why the School Committee still wanted the feedback of the Finance Committee. She felt that their feedback should not influence the School Committee’s decisions. Ms. Dobrow responded that the Finance Committee was very clear about their role, and that in suggesting that Mr. Sander’s proposal be reviewed by the Fin Com he was only attempting to see if whatever policy the School Committee ultimately adopted, the Fin Com would stand behind their earlier commitment to fund an additional section if merited by the policy after the budget had been set.

Ms. Antia added that they requested the Subcommittee do all this work and then they override it with a new proposal as if their work was not important. Mr. Sander responded to Ms. Antia stating that the Subcommittee had received copies and he had already heard back from them. He added that while he was

very appreciative of all the work the Subcommittee had done, the subcommittee is not designated to make policy changes; this is the job of the School Committee. Laurie Manos offered some feedback from the Subcommittee. She thanked Mr. Sander for his proposal and asked that Mr. Sander meet with the Subcommittee to try to come up with a 3rd proposal that combines their thoughts and efforts.

Laurie Manos stated that there was another mechanism to add to it. She asked what if four children move into an area and now the class size is in the zone of 22-24 which is not okay. She felt that they should protect the students from a class of 24, not make them deal with it until the year of relief. Mr. Sander replied that there will always be fluctuation in the numbers in a small district. Mr. Sander noted that his proposal was not about “avoiding a cold day in June” but about stopping global warming (persistent patterns of class sizes above our “targets”).

Sharon Antia voiced her concern about involving the Finance Committee stating that it goes against Mr. Brandmeyer’s thought of not letting anything be budget driven. She felt that involving the Finance Committee makes it budget driven. Al Schmertzler responded that the SC has to be responsible fiscally about any policy therefore the budget has to be considered. Mr. Brandmeyer added that there are educational decisions to be made but that the SC has to be conscious of the costs. He added that he agrees with smaller class sizes but there are other initiatives that rank higher in importance than lowering the class size by one or two students; especially when classes are not consistently between the “target” and the “max number”.

Laurie Manos commented that she respects all initiatives but that they all need to be held to the same scrutiny as the “Class Size Policy”. She added that the “Class Size Policy” asked parents and teachers for their opinions but yet opinions on other initiatives have not been asked about.

Julie Dobrow reverted back to the requested input of the Finance Committee noting that there is no reason not to get information from them. She added that it is not just the parents that the SC represents but the whole community. Buck Creel concurred, adding, there is a comfort knowing that the Finance Committee stills gives support with the reserve fund. Al Schmertzler added that the Finance Committee is made up of different people from when the original agreement was made so it is important to know the current members still hold to that agreement. A motion was made by Al Schmertzler to refer to the Finance Committee and this was seconded and appointed by the School Committee.

XI. New Business

None

XII. Approval of Minutes

XII. Information Enclosures

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

XIV. Adjournment –

On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Tom Sander, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:37 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary