

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, August 21, 2008

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice-Chair), Al Schmertzler, and Jennifer Glass

Also Present: Michael Brandmeyer, Superintendent, Buckner Creel, Administrator for Business and Finance

Absent: Rob Orgel, Louann Robinson (Hanscom Representative)

I. Greetings and Call to Order – 5:30 p.m.

Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order by welcoming and thanking the parents who were in attendance then proceeded directly to Item II. Update on Parental Request to Restore Classroom Assistants.

II. Update on Parental Request to Restore Classroom Assistants

Julie Dobrow reviewed the series of meetings and requests that preceded the August 21st meeting, thanked the parents through Jillian Darling for their initiative to raise funds (\$20,000), and outlined some of the challenges associated with using gifts to pay for core personnel. Specifically that the School Committee does not have a clear policy on the use of gifts for personnel services.

Ms. Dobrow asked the Superintendent to update the Committee on the status of this issue since the July 1st meeting.

Mr. Brandmeyer indicated the he and his staff have continued to monitor personnel costs associated with hiring new teachers, student enrollment in kindergarten and special education tuition costs. He reported that staffing has been completed and on budget, kindergarten enrollment continues to increase but that he and Mr. McKenna are not recommending an additional classroom and that special education tuition continues to be of some concern.

Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that he and Mr. Creel have reviewed the FY09 Budget and that as a result of some unanticipated revenue believe that \$31,000 could be made available. The funds are the result of an E-rate reimbursement from the federal government, a reimbursement from the CASE Collaborative for facilities work and the pre-purchase of special education tuition.

Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that if the School Committee authorized hiring additional instructional assistant time with these funds that it would be assigned to early grades, kindergarten through two, and used primarily during instruction in literacy and mathematics. The School Committee expressed concern about the time allocated for supervision before school, especially after they negotiated to add instructional time to the school day. Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that time from his recommendation could be used the restore before school supervision. The School Committee indicated a desire to staff that time.

Julie Dobrow recognized Robert Steinbrook, Chairman of the Lincoln Finance Committee. Mr. Steinbrook indicated that while the Finance Committee has not met formally to discuss this issue, he was aware that members of the Committee are concerned about the use of gifts to fund personnel services well as the use of the unanticipated revenue to restore positions after the budget was presented to and approved by Town Meeting. He expressed concern that the integrity of the budget process be maintained.

Mr. Schmertzler asked if there was any way to fund the position while not relying on a gift for personnel. Mr. Brandmeyer suggested that it might be possible to ask the parents to hold the gift in an escrow account and possibly recoup the funds in the FY09 Budget through close monitoring.

Ms. Dobrow indicated that restoration of these funds should not indicate a commitment to include these hours in the FY10 Budget.

Ms. Dobrow motioned to authorize the Superintendent to use \$31,000 from the FY09 Budget for the restoration of instructional assistant as discussed. Mr. Sander seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

Ms. Dobrow asked Mr. Brandmeyer to describe the idea of an escrow account. He indicated since the district has ended each of the last several fiscal years with a small surplus and has been able to pre-purchase goods and services that it would be possible to hire \$20,000 of instructional assistant time and take the risk that funds would become available during the course of the year.

Mr. Sander expressed some reservation, since pre-purchasing has provided a small amount of flexibility each year and committing to staff would limit the district's flexibility. Mr. Sander commented that the budget process led to a decision to fund other initiatives and asked if this was a bridge to the future or if the restoration was really a bridge to nowhere. He stated that he was not sure it was a bridge to the future but was willing to try to restore instructional assistants for 2008-2009.

After further discussion, Mr. Sander made the motion to authorize the Superintendent to hire the additional instructional assistant time with the understanding that the parents would hold the funds raised in an escrow account and that the School Committee retained the prerogative to accept the funds in the event that the budget did not yield the funds to pay for the assistants or in the event that the School Committee wished to accept the funds so that it could pre-purchase for the 2009-2010 school year. Jennifer Glass seconded the motion that passed on a 3-0 vote.

Prior to the vote, Robert Steinbrook, Finance Committee Chair, asked the School Committee to carefully evaluate the action they were about to take and to understand the potential for long-term implications.

Ms Dobrow thanked the Superintendent and his staff for their work and the parents for their fundraising effort. She also indicated that she would ask the Superintendent to develop policy relating to the acceptance and use of gifts for the School Committee's consideration. This will be scheduled in the fall.

II. Update on Bedford School Committee's request to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lincoln School Committee regarding funding for Hanscom High School students.

Mr. Brandmeyer reported that he, along with Ms. Mattes, Selectman, Mr. Higgings, Town Administrator and Ms. Dobrow attended a meeting at Hanscom to discuss Bedford's initiative with Lt. General Bowlds. He also indicated that there are still several unanswered questions. The Committee agreed to have further discussion at the September 11th meeting.

III Warrant Approval

Julie Dobrow reviewed warrants totalling \$903,323.22 and made a motion to approve. Jennifer Glass seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

IV Adjournment

Ms. Dobrow made a motion to adjourn at 7:10 p.m., Seconded by Jennifer Glass, the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by,
Michael Brandmeyer, Superintendent