

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 25, 2010
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Jennifer Glass, Debbie John (Boston Representative), Deb Leister (Hanscom Representative), Joe Connell (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).

Absent: Rob Orgel, Cecily Murdock (Hanscom Representative).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Glass attended the Race to the Top meeting in Worcester with Mr. Brandmeyer. The Department of Education has whittled down the finalists to 16 states, including Massachusetts. She reported that it is a competitive process, and the meeting was an interesting start to the conversation.

Ms. John attended *Beauty and the Beast* and had a fabulous time. The students did a wonderful job, and she congratulated them and the teachers involved.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gift

The School Committee was asked to accept the donation of \$787.84 from the Friends of the Lincoln Library. The money was raised at their March book sale and will be used to purchase circulating and/or reference material for the Lincoln School Library. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to accept the gift. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the gift. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that the Friends have been very generous, and in their six years of having book sales on the Lincoln campus, they have donated a total of \$5,256.05 to the school. He will write a thank you letter.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Report on Food Service Program Changes

Mr. Creel presented Ms. Cathleen Higgins, Food Service Director. He complimented Ms. Higgins for turning the recommendations from the food service evaluation into an action plan. Some changes were straightforward to complete, and others will take longer to effect.

Ms. Higgins said that the short-term fixes are completed. They now offer fresh fruit and a wide variety of local fruit and the students love it. They are incorporating hot vegetarian options besides cheese pizza and macaroni and cheese into the menu. The portion-size changes and the grab-and-go lunches have been a big hit. They will even offer a non-kosher grab-and-go Passover meal this week.

Mr. Creel noted that the additional income received from raising the lunch price from \$2 to \$3 has enabled the new options. Ms. Higgins said they are working on a pizza bid with students and principals. She said they love the new POS [point of sales] system; it has turned their operation into a virtually cashless one in the elementary schools, although the middle school students use more cash. The system gives her greater contact with parents. They are working with the nurses and as part of the health advisory, and compiling a manual of ingredients in all items so others can access this. Mr. Creel said the manual is a tremendous level of support for food allergies. Lincoln is on the forefront on this issue. He said that Ms. Higgins was chosen to be the lead in the G4 food service group, and instrumental in reviewing Food Service operations. He expected an initial decrease in participation when the price increased, which is normal, but Ms. Higgins said they were pleased to find a substantial increase at Brooks and Smith, but a modest decrease at Hanscom. There has been a 4% increase overall. Mr. Creel explained that each site has a unique population. He likes the centralized kitchen set-up at Hanscom and suggested that maybe they could have a similar set-up when the Smith and Brooks kitchens are redone. He was delighted with the increased student participation. He noted that the enrollment process at Hanscom decreased the number of students at Hanscom who were eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Higgins and said that she's doing a fantastic job. Ms. Dobrow said there are no complaints about lunch from her family. She said

it was exciting that they have taken a holistic approach to meals. Ms. Higgins thanked her and said she loves the position. Ms. Leister asked where the manual of ingredients was; Ms. Higgins said it was in the schools and nurses' offices on each campus and said they are hoping to post it as an online pdf file.

Ms. Leister asked about the whole wheat pizza crust. Ms. Higgins said the students tried one and did not like it. They are working with Domino's corporate office to find vendors to make a multigrain crust, and she is looking at other options. Mr. Creel said they will do a taste-off with students of any pizza crust that they are considering.

Mr. Sander thanked her for all her efforts and for being such an incredible asset to the District; he asked her what has she done with the G4 group. Ms. Higgins said they are working together on their substitute labor pool, a purchasing group for foods, and assistance with the whole grain pizza crust. They meet in May and are considering meeting every quarter. Mr. Creel said it is great to establish ties with these people, especially if Lincoln has a school building project.

Ms. Murdock arrived at 7:25 pm.

Mr. Sander asked how to interpret the "Change in Hanscom Participation" graph. Mr. Creel said he's not sure that 2% is significant. Mr. Sander asked about the graph from a dollar standpoint. Mr. Creel said that only the number of meals was included in their participation statistics. He said they have a surplus this year, and it will be used to reduce the subsidy for Ms. Higgins salary. Mr. Brandmeyer said their long-term goal is to make the food service operation self sustaining.

Ms. Glass asked about the green initiative. Ms. Higgins said they are thinking of recycling as an option. They will do a composting and garden operation at Brooks and Smith. Ms. Glass asked what other schools do with their milk cartons. Ms. Higgins offered to find out. She thanked Ms. Higgins for attending the PTA meeting to discuss the Food Service. Mr. Creel mentioned there a few issues surrounding trash pickup. Ms. Dobrow thanked them for their report.

B. School Choice Hearing and Vote

Mr. Brandmeyer reported on the Massachusetts School Choice program and his recommendation not to participate in the program, consistent with Lincoln's history.

He recommended not participating for the following reasons: 1) to avoid a potential financial loss because of the significant discrepancy between the reimbursement figure and the actual per pupil cost in Lincoln; 2) to avoid additional special education costs; 3) to maintain Lincoln's small-class sizes; and 4) current classroom space constraints. Lincoln's lack of participation does not prohibit Lincoln students from going to other schools if they want to; two students attended other schools this year.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for the report. Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to withdraw from the Massachusetts School Choice program for the 2010-2011 school year. The Committee voted unanimously to withdraw from the program.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer said it was a bittersweet time of year to say good-bye to Ms. Dobrow, who is not running for re-election. He thanked Ms. Dobrow for her leadership. They have worked together for a long, long time on many important activities, and he remembered that she sat on the Committee that interviewed him for the Superintendent's position. He and the administration appreciate all of her hard work, and he hoped the community did too. Mr. Sander said the School Committee is also extraordinarily grateful for her service and that the School Committee would pay tribute to Julie's extraordinary contribution at Town Meeting.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for his appreciation.

VII. Curriculum

None.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$610,383.17 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$118,450.28 for a total of \$728,833.45. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. Update on Recent Flooding

Mr. Creel reported on the flooding that occurred from the unusually heavy March 10-14 rains. It was a rain that tested all systems. He said that it could have been much worse. They closed school Tuesday, March 16 and were able to restore school quickly, thanks to Michael Haines, who did a great job.

The Ballfield Road campus, built on a former swamp, sustained flooding in the basement, where the two boilers and their circulation pumps that provide heating to the Smith Building reside. They have two sump pumps and an emergency generator that can usually handle most floods, but the rain and rising water table proved too much for the pumps to handle. When Mr. Creel arrived just after 7 am, he measured 4'5" of water in the basement, and the heating equipment is only 3' off the floor. There was no heat in the Smith School on Monday, March 15. There were also 13 leaks at the Lincoln Schools, all in places where the roofs were installed in 1994. Brooks School septic system pump station was in alarm.

On the Hanscom campus, the Hanscom Primary School had faults in the alarm system, and they also had roof leaks. The roofs have received significant repairs, but they are now failing and need to be replaced. One classroom could not be used.

The School now possesses two Fire Department pumps as a contingency. The costs for fixing all the equipment and recovery are estimated to be \$18,600 at the Lincoln Schools and \$4,000 at the Hanscom Schools. The Town does not have flood insurance, so the monies will come out of the facilities budget.

The only good news is that Mr. Creel reported that the Field House remained completely dry inside thanks to the new roof.

Ms. Glass asked whether mold was an issue. Mr. Creel said they've not identified any yet, and they called in outside sources. There are no continuing damp areas, so there should not be any long-term problems. Mr. Sander asked about if the new pumps have a higher pumping capacity. Mr. Creel said they will increase the size of the sump pumps and increase the diameter of the outflow tube. They are supplementary pumps. Mr. Brandmeyer said they will check things more often. Mr. Creel said that the long-term solution is to move the boilers out of the basement.

Ms. Murdock asked about the fixes for Hanscom. Mr. Creel said there is now a catastrophic failure of the roofing membrane, and they are also afraid that the insulation is not working. They need to bridge the gap between what to do now and the major school building projects at Hanscom. They will need to adhere another membrane; patches won't work in the long run. Mr. Schmertzler asked if a spray-on fix would work. Mr. Creel said the underlying deck of the roof is the same as the Field House's. Mr. Brandmeyer said the Hanscom school buildings are not under their control; the Department of Defense has not contacted them yet about plans drawn up for the schools, but the Administration is looking for a short-term fix. Mr. Connell asked if they have been working with the garrison commander, because it's his sole purpose to make sure the buildings are maintained. Mr. Creel said that DODEA has to fund projects for Hanscom schools; the garrison commander does not receive money for the school buildings. Mr. Brandmeyer said there will be a discussion about the Hanscom school buildings in April.

Mr. Sander thanked them for their work.

C. Telephone Procurement

Mr. Creel reported that the Administration has been dissatisfied with the performance of the Comdial DXP phone system that was installed in the early 1990s, and Town Offices are experiencing failing phones with the same system. They have been working with the Town for two years to get a new telephone system, but the Town did not develop a timely common solution. They agreed with the Town that the schools would seek their own solution, but would develop one which has the flexibility to expand into Town departments if successful. The phone system will cover the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses. They were looking for a system that would work with the existing wiring networks but would replace the central processor equipment, software, and new phone instruments.

Mr. Creel found two strong contenders, CBE Technologies and Carousel Industries, which prepared proposals after visiting the school. Both companies provide hybrid digital voice-over-internet protocol [VoIP] solutions based on technology and equipment made from either Cisco Industries or Avaya. CBE's proposal was \$272,783.18, and Carosel's was \$128,248.17. Carousel's proposal includes using the existing HP Procurve routers that were purchased several years ago, which cuts the cost substantially. The system will be centered at the Lincoln schools with a node located at Hanscom. It

will have connectivity to hard-wired lines and can be expanded. Mr. Creel explained that they have enough funding for it; the costs would be split so that the Lincoln budget pays \$68,651.64 and the Hanscom budget pays \$56,169.53. If they get authorization tonight, their goal is to implement the system before June.

Mr. Schmertzler asked if they go ahead with the school building project whether they are able to keep this new telephone system. Mr. Creel said that since the functionality of this system is digital, the advantage is that they could use the same central processor. Mr. Creel said he was comfortable with installing this equipment in any new facility that might be built. Ms. Murdock mentioned that it can be a problem to dial off-campus; they have to dial 5 before dialing 9-1-1. Mr. Creel will ensure that they only need dial 9-1-1.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to authorize the Administration to enter into a contract with Carousel Industries to install the Avaya IP Office phone system as described in their proposal dated March 17, 2010 on both campuses for an amount not to exceed \$130,000. The Committee voted unanimously to authorize the proposal.

X. Old Business

A. Approve Town Meeting Presentation

The School Committee will make three presentations at Town Meeting: 1) the FY11 Budget; 2) Capital and Maintenance Warrants; and 3) School Building Feasibility Study. Mr. Brandmeyer went over the PowerPoint presentation for the Feasibility Study and asked for edits. He explained he will clarify the term “feasibility study”: i.e., there will be an independent assessment of the buildings required by the state. Developers and designers assess all systems in the buildings—heat, hot water, kitchens, bathrooms, etc. The MSBA will hire a project manager, and there will be options for community input into the process. Ms. Dobrow asked that he mention that the designs are developed, and the study may not cost the full \$650,000. 35% of the cost will be paid for by the state. The presentation addressed who was on the School Building Committee, and the members include representatives from other Town Boards.

Ms. Dobrow suggested that he mention that it takes time to get through this process, and nothing has been decided. There are many steps in the process to guard against overspending. She asked that the background slides have three big pictures. Mr. Brandmeyer said it would probably be a renovation project and would not be a brand new building. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that he add it would improve the shell of the school; Mr. Sander recommended that the graphic only highlight the Smith and Brooks buildings and point out how much of the school facility had exceeded its useful life. Mr. Creel suggested the presentation include that a “yes” vote does not commit the Town to a school building project; it is only a feasibility study. Ms. Glass asked that Mr. Brandmeyer include that they money that is approved can only be spent on the feasibility study.

Mr. Brandmeyer will rework the presentation and include their suggestions. Mr. Sander recommended he use more explicit photographs which Mr. Brandmeyer said he would locate. He reminded the Committee that they are meeting with the Finance Committee on Saturday morning at 8:30 before Town Meeting. Mr. Schmertzler said he expects a firm commitment and a vote from them and left a message for Selectman Gary Taylor.

Ms. Dobrow thanked him for his work.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Ms. Glass, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations, legal matters, and the superintendent's evaluation. Ms. Dobrow, yes; Mr. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes; Ms. John, yes; Ms. Leister, yes; Mr. Connell, yes; Ms. Murdock, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary