

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 5, 2013
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Jennifer Glass (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Tim Christenfeld, Jen James, Preditta Cedeno (METCO Representative). Also present: Becky McFall (Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services), Robert Ford (Director of Technology).

Absent: Al Schmertzler, Lisa Pizarro (Hanscom Civilian School Liaison Officer), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Glass, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Mr. Christenfeld said the 7th grade ELA class was asked to read the four-page Sherman Alexi essay three times and write about what they had in common with the writer. Mr. Christenfeld said it was revelatory on what good homework can be, and it showed the virtue of teachers using homework to get students to think.

Mr. Sander announced that four of five Lincoln Robotics Teams sponsored by the Recreation Department have won awards, and two of those teams will compete in the state championships in Worcester the end of December.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Continuation of FY15 Preliminary Budget Presentation

Documents: 1) Lincoln Public Schools, FY 2015 Preliminary Budget Book; 2) Memorandum to Lincoln School Committee and Becky McFall, Superintendent, from Buck Creel, Administrator for Business and Finance, Subject: FY15 Budget Guidelines, dated September 12, 2013; 3) Lincoln Public Schools, FY15 Budget Development Timeline, undated; 4) Memorandum to All Budgeting Agencies, Town of Lincoln from Lincoln Finance Committee, Re: FY 2015 Budget Guideline, dated October 11, 2013

Dr. McFall updated the Committee on FY14 staffing changes, especially with the science leader position. They had hired a .4 FTE science leader with a .1 FTE science enrichment position that is working well, but they have had to ask the person to teach more at Hanscom. The district received a Raytheon Engineering grant, and they cannot cut back on the position. They would like to increase it by .1 FTE retroactively to the beginning of the year and can cover the increase in the Hanscom budget for FY14

because they have not yet hired a literacy specialist. For FY15, they have built in additional FTEs for this science position in the improvement initiatives.

Dr. McFall said that Mr. Creel examined the history of how the class-size policy was carried out for the FY15 budget. Mr. Creel showed a PowerPoint slide on the cohort of students who entered kindergarten in FY08 and this year's 3rd grade class. The cohort was above the preferred class size in kindergarten. Looking at the October 1 enrollment reports, they cannot see where they exceeded the preferred class size more than once, but in FY11, the enrollment was over the preferred size by one student. Mr. Creel said the administration represented to the Committee that they had gone over the class size twice. Based on the October 1, 2013 enrollment figures, the preferred class size has been met but not exceeded. If they needed to open another classroom, it would cost at least \$70,000, and they may need to adjust the FY15 budget.

Mr. Sander said they have not violated the policy twice; the additional students arrived after the October 1 cut off. While they could change the policy, the projection is below the preferred class size. If it happens a third time, maybe they could open another section. He was inclined to leave it as it is now but suggested that they might rethink the October 1 deadline.

Dr. McFall noted that the class size increases from grade 3 to grade 4. At Hanscom, the federal government uses whole numbers, not decimals, to determine the average class size; the Hanscom Primary School class size is fixed at 18 students in grades K-3, and if there are 19 students, they have to open another section. Ms. Glass asked whether they need to be consistent across the district and use whole numbers, not decimals, on the Lincoln campus to determine the class size.

Dr. McFall said one other issue with the budget is with the CASE assessment, which is level funded in the budget. CASE is going through a transition and will become more like a business that charges differently for the programs used, whereas before they charged one price for the entire program. CASE has a surplus now, and the assessment is based on last year's students, but at the end of the year, they bill for current services. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE] ruled that CASE has to bill for services received in the same year. Mr. Creel met with the CASE Financial Director and will have the new assessments next Friday.

Mr. Creel noted that the Hanscom enrollment has increased a lot, CASE serves Hanscom students, and therefore the tuition will increase dramatically. He said they should set aside more money for next year for these services, but now they will have less certainty for future budgets. On the Lincoln campus, the need for services is not significant and the amounts may increase by tens of thousands, but on the Hanscom campus, the amounts may increase by hundreds of thousands. Mr. Creel noted that CASE wants to be the main source of placement for students. While there are students with high needs, a one-size-fits-all charge may not work to the district's benefit. He also noted that Ms. Powers does a good job assessing risk. Mr. Creel said they would use the Hanscom reserve fund to pay for CASE use on the Hanscom campus, and that they would know more in May and June.

Mr. Sander does not want to stockpile money in the budget, but wants to make the Finance Committee aware of the issue.

The Committee will vote on the FY15 budget at the January 23 meeting.

Ms. Glass thanked them for their work.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Document: None.

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$698,979.11 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$94,522.98 for a total of \$793,502.09. Ms. Glass said that Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants and recommended that they be approved. Ms. Glass moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Christenfeld seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

B. 2014-2015 School Calendar – First Reading

Documents: 1) General Information, undated; 2) Calendar Options for 2014-2015, undated; 3) Calendar Option 1; 4) Calendar Option 2; 5) Calendar Option 3; 6) Calendar Option 4; 6) Calendar Option 5

Dr. McFall said they are embarking on a larger calendar process to incorporate full community input. They have put together five draft calendars, some with a pre-Labor Day start and others with a post-Labor Day start. The Lincoln Teachers' Association [LTA] is in the process of conducting a vote on whether the district may start school before Labor Day. Dr. McFall wants to pare down the number of calendar options after they prepare a survey for the school and the community to give feedback. The survey will be available online from December 9 to January 2. On January 9, Dr. McFall will report the survey results, and on January 23, the Committee will vote on the 2014-15 calendar.

Dr. McFall said the state requires districts to schedule 185 days of school, with five of those days being reserved for snow days. Bedford and Sudbury have not yet voted on school calendars for next year. They have to consider whether school should be in session on Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Good Friday. Should they continue to give students a full day off for parent conferences? If not, the LTA would have to vote on that, and the issue was presented to them yesterday; they would probably hear by next week.

Ms. James left the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Ms. Glass asked that the survey be released after the LTA vote on a pre-Labor Day start. Mr. Sander asked that the full day of parent conferences be cut out as he worries it is not used. Mr. Christenfeld noted there was opposition to making the parent conference day a half day. Ms. Glass said there was a variety of opinion and asked that they leave the full day of parent conferences in for now. She also asked that December 24 be a full day off on all calendars and that Good Friday should be either a full day of school or full day off of school. She asked that calendar option 3 be taken out. She asked that a survey question such as "If Lincoln-Sudbury or Bedford start before Labor Day, does that change your answer on a pre-Labor Day start?" be added to the survey. Mr. Sander said that to manage expectations, there should be an explanatory paragraph at the start about the many moving pieces that go into determining the calendar. Ms. Cenedo has not heard any feedback from any parents yet.

The Committee wanted to wait until the LTA voted to release the survey and the draft calendars.

Ms. Glass thanked Dr. McFall for her work.

C. Technology Committee

Document: None.

Mr. Ford showed a PowerPoint presentation about the Technology Committee, which is taking up where the Technology Review Committee left off. Mr. Ford, Mr. Christenfeld, the librarians, classroom teachers from grades K-4 and 5-8, a student services person, parents, principals, and a technology staff member comprise the committee. There will be representation from the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses.

Mr. Ford said the strategic plan guides their work. The Technology Committee's charge is to develop a district-wide technology plan, to draft technology related policies, to discuss expectations for technological integration in the classroom, and to discuss best practices. The Technology Committee will evaluate the Lincoln School Foundation technology initiatives to see how well they have worked and will also evaluate the curriculum. Mr. Ford noted that it is part of the LTA contract that the district has this Technology Committee. They have met quarterly, but in January they will meet monthly, with meetings held after school. They have not yet set meeting dates. Mr. Christenfeld was concerned that the new committee meets often enough to support the efforts on technology.

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Ford for his work.

D. Data Systems Team Update

Document: None.

Mr. Ford reviewed the work of the Data Systems Team, which has met monthly since September, and the purpose is to determine the data collection and analysis needs. They surveyed faculty and are working with their feedback. They have started by asking the "Big Picture" questions: What data do we use? What questions do we need to answer? What information do we have to answer those questions? Are there gaps? Are we collecting data that we do not need? The purpose is to engage the faculty on what kind of data collection system is effective for them. The Data Systems Team will develop an evaluation rubric to apply to all data systems from the survey information.

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Ford for his work.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Document: None.

Dr. McFall attended the menorah and Christmas tree lighting at Hanscom. Students performed musical numbers that had a large impact, and she noted the events were nice opportunities for the community.

Dr. McFall said the administrative team has observed in Lincoln classrooms, and she, Ms. Powers, Mr. Ford, and other administrators gave written feedback after those observations. It is a good step forward in the new evaluation system process.

Ms. Glass thanked her for her work.

VII. Curriculum

Document: None.

Mr. Ford gave the curriculum report in Dr. Sterling's absence. Hanscom 6th graders were applying their learning on first person accounts to their "a day in the life" reports on early humans. Students created e-books with audio, video, and other visuals that demonstrated their learning in many modes. Students used Book Creator software, cited their sources, and were very invested in their projects. He thanked teachers Monica Albuixech and Janice Fairchild.

Ms. Glass thanked him for his work.

VIII. Policy

None.

X. Old Business

A. Lincoln School Building Project – Next Steps

Document: None.

Ms. Glass reviewed the next steps on the Lincoln School Building Project. The Town is waiting to hear from the Massachusetts School Building Authority [MSBA] on whether it will be invited to participate in their process. Is there work that can be done while they wait? What should the Town do if it is not invited into the MSBA process? Ms. Glass said they need to discuss these issues at the next couple meetings.

Mr. Christenfeld asked if a roof assessment is on the Capital Planning Committee's list of projects in case a building process is not starting. If we are not invited to the MSBA process, do they need additional physical assessments of the building to inform the decision making, or do they reapply for the next MSBA process? The Committee has to decide what to do and whether to go to Town Meeting to ask for money for another feasibility study.

Mr. Sander agreed with Mr. Christenfeld and suggested that they ask MSBA for guidance for future chances. The Town needs to consider how many times it wants to reapply to the MSBA. High level, middle level, and low level options for a school building project need to be presented, and they should gather data on the cost of those options for voters to choose. He asked that a time estimate be included if they go ahead with a feasibility study that is not related to an MSBA project. Mr. Creel said there were 11 options with the last MSBA process, and wondered what level of project development for a town-funded project is sufficient for making a decision. Mr. Christenfeld asked that they talk with other Town Boards and get on the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee agendas before they hear from the MSBA.

Dr. McFall wondered when they should develop another School Building Committee [SBC]. Ms. Glass said they would do that after they hear from the MSBA because the MSBA has certain requirements for who should be on an SBC. The SBAC subcommittee is a widely representative one, and Ms. Glass said maybe they should start

the facilities subcommittee again if the Town is not invited into the MSBA process. She will draft something for the Committee's first meeting in January 2014.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Glass, seconded by Mr. Christenfeld, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 pm.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 19, 2013 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte
Recording Secretary