

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Thursday, May 29, 2008

Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA

OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Sharon Gillespy (Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance).
Absent: Louann Robinson (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. Dobrow attended the songs program, and the kids did a good job of keeping the beat. She also mentioned that Recording Secretary, Christy Waters, had given her resignation because she got a teaching job at another school district. Ms. Dobrow thanked her for her work.

Ms. Glass said that she attended an Everyday Math meeting at Hanscom, and it went well. She thanked the PTA for providing refreshments at the reception that followed the meeting.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Accept Gifts from a 6th grade student to the Lincoln School Library

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to accept the donation of \$225 from a 6th grade student for purchase of non-fiction, high interest, low readability level books. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the donation.

B. Summer Hours

The Committee passed over this agenda item.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Discussion with Bedford School Committee about Hanscom Contract

Superintendent Maureen LaCroix and Anne Bickford, Chairman of the Bedford School Committee, presented the problem about the Bedford Public Schools. They provide educational services to the eligible military dependents residing at Hanscom Air Force Base in grades 9 through 12, but they need more money from the federal government to provide that education; they currently receive "impact aid" of \$1500 per student. There are 116-120 students from Hanscom who attend the Bedford schools, and they comprise 16 percent of their student population. Without these students, Bedford would lose its diversity, and they are concerned about these students. Bedford's funding arrangements have been in place since the 1960s.

Lincoln has a contract with the Defense Department and receives appropriated funding for the Hanscom schools. Lincoln holds one of three such contracts in the entire country; the other two are West Point, New York and Dover, Delaware. Ms. LaCroix asked whether the School Committee would join with them to help them get funding for Bedford's Hanscom students. Bedford has worked with Senator Kennedy to find a solution to the problem. Bedford wants to look at Lincoln's contract and consider the option of creating a Task Order to receive \$17,000 per pupil.

Ms. Bickford explained that there was another issue: the two towns' attorneys work for the same law firm. They would like the Lincoln School Committee to sign a waiver that establishes that there is no conflict of interest because the attorneys work for the same firm. They need to get through the process by the third week of June. The immediate item to complete is to sign the waiver.

Ms. Dobrow responded that we share concern for these students because they are our students too. In general, we want to support them and Bedford with the caveat that we protect Lincoln's interests and contract with the Defense Department. She wants Lincoln's attorney to look at things because situations change. She wants to make sure that there is a clear legal understanding, and they would like to have an independent conversation with Senator Kennedy's

office. She explained that they have also dealt with his office with their negotiations. She would like clarity that they don't think the memo would cause a problem with the negotiations they have had with the Defense Department.

Mr. Schmertzler said that he liked the idea of helping them in general. Mr. Sander and Mr. Orgel agreed. They said that the lawyers should work on a memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Brandmeyer also supports the idea of assisting Bedford in getting enough money from the Defense Department. He said that it would be a modification of Lincoln's contract with the federal government, but it would not have a financial impact on Lincoln's per student reimbursement rate. He stressed that they do want to cooperate; the legal counsel will hammer out an agreement.

Mr. Sander said that we should unite in spirit, but he wants to protect Lincoln in the memo of understanding. His concern is that if there is inadequate funding for Bedford, does Lincoln still receive all of its payment for educating students at Hanscom. His other concern was the waiver on the conflict of interest between the two towns' lawyers. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that the waiver gives the attorneys a chance to work together and get all of the questions on the table. It brings an opportunity to get the memorandum of understanding to the table.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that Bedford's proposal is not much higher per pupil than other Department of Defense schools. Ms. Dobrow said that one action item is for the Committee to approve the conflict of interest waiver so that the towns' attorneys could work together. Copies of the waiver were distributed.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Schmertzler seconded, the motion to approve the conflict of interest waiver. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the conflict of interest waiver.

Ms. Dobrow said that Mr. Brandmeyer should initiate contact with Senator Kennedy's office and the Department of Defense. The towns' lawyers will meet and put together a memorandum of understanding regarding the funding issue. Mr. Brandmeyer said that on June 5, the Committee could hold a special meeting and add the next step in the process to the next agenda. They will continue the conversation with Bedford.

B. Proposal for Placement of Portable Restrooms on Lincoln Campus

The Lincoln Youth Soccer Association, represented by Michael Rosenblatt, Vice President for Administration, presented the plan to install portable bathrooms on the school campus. Dr. Rosenblatt has been coaching soccer for four years. If the children need facilities, they use the woods. They are proposing to install the units in the parking lot at Brooks School. He explained that they would not cost the school money. He said that there aren't any facilities at the Town Hall either. Youth Soccer has \$5 per head in their budget to have portable bathrooms installed.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that they want the kids to be supervised. He's seen kids outside his office availing themselves in the woods. He has not researched the situation. He asked what would happen if vandals overturned the units. There are health and environmental issues involved. Mr. Schmertzler said that the company that provides the units does all the worrying and servicing of the units. The company is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dr. Rosenblatt said that many soccer fields have these units.

Ms. Dobrow asked where the units would be placed because the parking lot floods. She asked whether they had consulted with the Conservation Commission. Dr. Rosenblatt responded that Recreation Director Dan Pereira was going to talk to the Commission about the issue. He said that they could be placed closest to the entrance of the fields or on the far side of the parking lot. The units are construction-site quality. Mr. Creel said that there is a green and yellow dumpster on the corner of the parking lot. Mr. Orgel said that the spots mentioned will be eyesores, but he is concerned that they be visible from a safety standpoint. Mr. Creel asked if there would be exterior lighting around the units. He stated that the Codman Pool may insulate bathrooms. The outdoor facility belongs to the Town's Recreation Department, and they are presenting a proposal to the Capital Planning Committee for such a facility. Mr. Brandmeyer suggested that the Committee approve the use for one year because it solves a problem. Ms. Glass said she was concerned that kids would use them during the day. Mr. Brandmeyer said that it would be monitored. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that to make the units less of an eyesore, bushes could be placed around them. Dr. Rosenblatt said that they could place two potted shrubs near them. He said that they would install them for Labor Day until November 15, remove them, and reinstall them the first week of April.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Orgel seconded, the motion to approve the use of portable bathrooms for one year, provided that they get the sign-offs from the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health. The Committee hopes that the Recreation Department finds a permanent solution. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the motion.

C. District Goals for 2007-2008: End-of -Year Review

Mr. Brandmeyer said that their report is on page three. He said that they still owe the Tripod report, which is about the achievement gap and student engagement, to the Committee. They administered surveys to the students and are analyzing them to see how the students are engaged in class. They asked the principals to consider how to increase student engagement in the classroom. Mr. Brandmeyer stated that the principals worked hard on this, and the faculty was involved. He said he was pleased with the conversation with his colleagues about the topic. They have made progress on it, but he acknowledged that they are not yet finished and knows that they owe a report to the Committee.

Mr. Schmertzler asked about the recent email by former School Committee Vice Chair Laurie Manos and whether the email's contents were an issue. He stated that disruption in class indicates that there is a lack of cooperation. Which group affects the achievement gap? Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that there was a series of questions that the students were asked about whether they were teased or felt good to take risks. Are they encouraged to be smart or discouraged from it? He said it boiled down to whether we have the right climate for kids to be successful.

The subject is under a larger issue of social and emotional behavior. School Committee members said that they would like to have the discussion when Principal Sharon Hobbs was available; she is in Washington, D.C. now. Ms. Dobrow reminded the Committee members that as a procedural issue, if there are items they would like to discuss at their meetings, they should communicate them to her or to Mr. Brandmeyer. Mr. Schmertzler said that the issue with bus monitors is related to the issue with having cameras in the buses. Ms. Dobrow asked whether there should be communication with the public about the Tripod survey now. Mr. Brandmeyer said no. He wants to report to the Committee only when the report is completed. Mr. Sander asked whether the report would discuss how they used the data that was compiled. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they needed to work out the actions they will take, given the data they compiled.

Ms. Sterling presented review of the district plan for learning expectations and curriculum articulation. She explained that they need to know what the learning expectations are and put new ones in place before they fix the grading. They will design a different reporting system, which takes a lot of work to get a good report card. They are working on having the teachers teach the students those learning expectations. They have collected report cards from other towns. The changes will take another 9 to 10 months. Mr. Brandmeyer said that they should expect more conversation with teachers. There will be more parent conferences and a common understanding of the caliber of the outcome. Ms. Glass asked when they got to that point, will the school council get involved with it? Ms. Sterling responded that they will get responses to the drafts of report cards from the students and their parents. She agreed that the report cards needed to be user friendly.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have also worked hard on bringing Lincoln and Hanscom schools together. Ms. Sterling said that there have been many gaps in the standards for each school. They want to eliminate those disparities.

Mr. Brandmeyer raised the issue of MS Renew. He said that it's been an ongoing challenge since he arrived as superintendent. He said that they need a better strategy for it. He said that it feels like a dog chasing its tail. They need to wed the pieces of it together. He also mentioned the K-5 Math piece, the Task Force on High-Achieving Students too. He said that they were advertising again for a foreign language teacher and admitted that they were fussy. Ms. Sterling said that they want to stay picky to get someone who is up to the task. Overall, Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have made good progress on their work plan.

Ms. Dobrow suggested that as they work on the document for next year on MS Renew, there is much more work to be done. She registered frustration that she has not seen any action items on it. She encouraged them to ask the Committee as they put together goals for it. She said that MS Renew remains a high priority item. Please come up with a new strategy that has actionable items with goals that can be set and measured. She urged them to work with Principal Sharon Hobbs so that they feel forward motion and progress on it.

Mr. Sander raised the issue of the Task Force on High-Achieving Students. He realized that the deadlines have shifted, but asked if they could still roll out some items for next year on it. Can you use strategic avenues to make some headway? It is still a goal. Ms. Sterling responded that they are concerned too. The Task Force is providing a study. She said that they hope that their study of seven questions will be grounds for action in this area. The Task Force will recommend some short-term action steps and also do a long-range plan. Of course, there will need to be a discussion about funding allocations and what to do with their recommendations. She also said that there are so many pieces of the puzzle. The report will be out on June 12. This summer they will work on what they can do in the High-Achieving Students area. Mr. Sander asked what could they make some traction on in the next year. He suggested that would help.

The next district goal mentioned was about personnel. They have evaluated the teachers and the paraprofessionals. Ms. Sterling said that the team felt good about how far they have come and where they go next year. They asked how they could best implement the negotiations on ranking teachers. Teachers are now all evaluated using the same process. The administrators know how the teachers are evaluated. They will meet with the union about the evaluation system and about the number of teachers who are on improvement plans. The union and the administration have a common understanding that is healthy. The union is a professional association that speaks well. They must stay on this personnel issue.

Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have review meetings with all who evaluate teachers each year. He finds the conversations encouraging. The principals have a good sense of what is going on. They carefully consider the teachers who are in their first one to three years before they grant teachers professional status. Ms. Gillespy asked whether they were dropping the paraprofessional piece of the evaluation. Mr. Brandmeyer said they were not. Ms. Gillespy suggested that more of them need to have specific training, especially with Special Education. Ms. Sterling said that they are developing a survey for paraprofessionals so that they know their credentials. The survey will ask what they would like to learn more about. Mr. Brandmeyer stated that they have an opportunity with Stephanie Powers' appointment. She can follow-up on this. There will be more resources put to this task. The process of goal setting the categories reflect the goals to work on. The goal of the outcome activity is working. They have to look ahead a few years. They have many multiyear efforts going on at this time. He said they need to work on the vision and mission. They understand the vision and mission of the schools, but they need to build a program that supports the vision and mission. We will redouble our efforts to redo them. They know what they need to do and don't want to rehash them now. The aspirational goals are their vision; the operational goals are their mission.

Ms. Sterling said that they are developing a community at the school. They are hoping for that to grow by having morning meetings with teachers and students. They will build the meetings into their master schedule, and it will be a forum to work on the issues of respect for all members of the community.

Mr. Brandmeyer mentioned that they have worked hard on transitions. The Hanscom and Bedford transition has gone well. Sharon Hobbs and Eileen Spiro held a meeting for parents of kids going from 5th grade to middle school. The parents liked the meeting. Ms. Glass suggested that more of these meetings would be terrific. A good overview was presented at the meeting. The preschool's DECA program is also terrific for helping with transitions.

The last district goal under the rubric of Leadership and School Culture is emergency planning and crisis communications. Mr. Brandmeyer said they are making progress on this goal, and he thanked Bill and Jane Rizzo, who have granted an easement through their property on Sandy Pond Road to solve the emergency access road issue. On the communication piece, Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that while the PTA is wonderful, they cannot count on them for this type of communication in an emergency. People do not subscribe to District News, he said. They are going to resubscribe to ConnectEd for emergencies. Parents and students can register up to six phone numbers to be called in an emergency. Everyone is automatically enrolled and must opt out of this service. The school cannot use the Town's connect city system. The cost of ConnectEd is \$3 per student with a one-time start-up cost of \$1,300. He said that they have to have the phone system.

The next district goal under the rubric of Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety was presented by Buckner Creel. Mr. Creel explained that the FY 08 budget was active until July 1 at which point the fiscal year starts anew. By June 12 they will have the discussion about how to spend the remaining money and whether they should repurchase supplies, materials, and services. On the Food Service Program Review, the Smith School kitchen renovation has been wildly successful. Getting the money for it has paid off. The next item is to look at the Brooks School kitchen as part of the evaluation committee. Mr. Orgel indicated that they should set the bar high for the food evaluation. Mr. Creel said that Ms. Cathleen Higgins, Food Service Manager, deserves lots of credit for her work. Things at the Hanscom kitchen have also gone well this year.

Mr. Creel said the state's School Building Authority [SBA] has changed its process. The window will stay open until the end of July. He asked if there was enough time to prepare for this window, and he's not sure. The routine maintenance protocols have not been completed, but the routine maintenance will be done this summer. They are going to use the project money this summer for the Hanscom schools. There will be a big review of the heating units there.

Mr. Creel said that the Facilities Reservation System piece of the SchoolDude Implementation has not been implemented yet because it is hard to configure. It will be used to reserve information technology equipment, reserve common-use facilities, and to reserve common-use facilities after hours.

In terms of the health and safety piece, Mr. Creel said the Health Services Program Manual has been revised. All activities have been completed and will continue to be implemented, such as having the Automated External

Defibrillators [AEDs] installed and ready to use. They have a doctor who has reviewed the protocols. The AEDs will be ready to use by the fall. He said that Ms. Richichi, School Nurse, has done a good job. They would like a story about the units in the paper to contact parents about this issue.

Mr. Schmertzler asked if the school's facilities committee person would be a representative to join the Town's Green Committee. He also said that the school needs to have the facilities committee meet again because they do not want to build a \$70 million project; he does not think it would be funded. He asked if the facilities committee could look at what parts of the school could be salvaged. Mr. Creel said that the Statement of Interest [SOI] for potential projects that needs to be presented to the SBA is almost finished. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Schmertzler agreed that the facilities subcommittee needed to be re-engaged. Mr. Creel asked whether he should file a MSBA. He will ready it in format they have. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that he submit it. The fine points and the picture of what they want to do can be decided later. Mr. Schmertzler suggested that a meeting be scheduled for the facilities committee. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the Town's Green Committee will present at the next school committee meeting. He also said that Tim Higgins, Town Administrator, told them that the school needs to draft a piece for the town's master planning committee for any school building project.

Mr. Sander said he is frustrated that a number of the District Goals in the area of Facilities, Operations, Health and Safety have fallen through the cracks. He said that the administration has lost traction on them and asked what needed to be done to complete the goals and get on track.

Ms. Dobrow made a motion to accept the report; it was seconded by Mr. Schmertzler. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. Request for Enrollment of Non-Resident Students

Mr. Brandmeyer asked that the Committee vote on the requests that three students be allowed to attend the Lincoln Schools because their parents are Lincoln and Lincoln-Sudbury school employees. He recommended that they approve the students on the condition that their parents continue to be school employees. They would be enrolling two kindergarteners and one in sixth grade. He explained that there are currently three students across all other grades in the Lincoln schools.

Mr. Orgel asked whether the commitment was to the child until they graduate from the Lincoln school. Mr. Brandmeyer responded yes. Mr. Schmertzler asked how it would impact the class size, and Mr. Brandmeyer responded that it doesn't impact it. They had three seats for potential growth before they hit their class-size target. His projections include the three seats for these students. Mr. Sander asked whether it was reasonable to accept them if they can stay until they graduate. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that he thinks the school has enough room. They commit to the kids who come to the school in kindergarten that they can stay until they graduate. Ms. Dobrow asked whether they need to alter the policy for kindergarten through 3rd grade class size on a space-available basis for next year. Mr. Sander said he thought it was fine to take the students on a space-available basis as long as the students' parents remain school employees.

Ms. Dobrow said that she was mindful of what occurred at Lincoln-Sudbury. There was a problem with the override passing in part because there was a perception that the school was taking too many students from other schools. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether it was reasonable to review the admissions on an annual basis, depending on space? Mr. Brandmeyer responded that with this policy, the school commits to the student as they do with the METCO program. Once they come into the school, they can stay the whole way through. If they enter kindergarten here, they can graduate in eighth grade.

Mr. Orgel asked whether there would be a problem with class-size if there were three kids who entered the same grade in one year. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that he thought the policy should be referred back to the policy subcommittee to look at again.

Ms. Dobrow moved to approve the enrollment of the three children of employees at the Lincoln School beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, subject to the continued employment of their parents as required by School Committee policy. Mr. Sander seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the enrollment.

VII. Curriculum

Ms. Sterling presented the report on Learning Expectations and common assessments. She said that their goal is to eliminate any disparity in programs on the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses. She is frustrated and would like more time to be spent on the learning expectations piece, but she stated that they are making progress. They do not

want to put together work that is not of good quality. She attended all of the April faculty meetings. They are working toward a standards-based student learning by asking about the outcomes. What are students learning? They are keeping in line with state educational standards. Their focus is on key outcomes. They do other things, but the key outcomes are most important. How can we get students to reach the standards? How can we keep students learning? She said that the curriculum link on the website, www.lincnet.org, will reflect the Learning Expectations that have been completed. Parents can see what their children being taught and are learning. Math is the only subject for which they have completed the common assessments. The assessments raise the level of accountability.

Given the assessment, Mr. Sander asked how the high-achieving students could be pushed beyond the common assessments. Ms. Sterling responded that with the common ground, they can focus on groups of students on their learning. She said that it takes time to write the matrices so that each group of students can get the attention they need. Local assessment is important, she said. Mr. Schmertzler thought the presentation on the new math program was good. He thinks that students will have the ability to go beyond. Mr. Orgel responded that there was plenty of curricula in all school subjects that high-achieving students could work with. He said that the issue was the commitment to deliver the extra material. He hears that students who can do more are not loud about the fact that they are bright and want to do more. We have to set high expectations for them. Ms. Sterling responded that they want to put more information on the website so that students and parents can access it; they are working on getting the information up. She wants the Committee to publicize that the website has more information. Ms. Dobrow said that Ms. Sterling has done lots of great work. We need to let parents know about that work through many channels. Mr. Orgel said that he likes the science example. He said that it's good that parents can understand it and that it is not as abstract as many of the discussions about school subjects. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the examples help parents talk to their children about their classes and is a good thing. Ms. Glass asked whether the curriculum plan would be on the website. Ms. Sterling said that the plan is an internal document, but they will make an overview by years on the site. Ms. Dobrow said that they need to write a letter to parents that shows forward movement. Once that is completed, there will be less pushback from people. She also suggested that they put the information at the Town Library, publicize that it is available with a mini-link on the website, with the PTA and PTO, and in the *Lincoln Journal*. Post the reports and the information that we have here on the school website. Ms. Gillespy asked what the standards mean? Mr. Orgel said on the public relations front, most of the detail is beyond people's interest. Can't we create executive summaries that give an overview but give interested people the information they need if they want to get into more detail.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Sterling for the work and the report. She moved to accept the report. The motion was seconded by Mr. Schmertzler. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$593,545.20 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$537,440.22 for a total of \$1,130,985.42. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Ms. Dobrow moved to approve the warrants, with Mr. Sander seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

A. School Committee Meeting Dates for 2008-09: First Discussion

Mr. Brandmeyer said that they have scheduled two meetings per month. More meetings can be scheduled if needed. He will be at a conference on November 5-7. He asked that the Committee hold these dates on their calendars.

Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the meeting dates. Ms. Glass seconded it. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the meeting dates.

B. Schedule for Next Week's Meeting

Mr. Brandmeyer said that at the next meeting on June 5, one item on the agenda was an update on the Lincoln contract negotiations. Another item may be the Hanscom-Bedford contract, discussed earlier in the meeting. Ms. Gillespy said that she cannot attend the June 5 meeting. Mr. Sander and Ms. Glass cannot attend on June 12; Mr. Orgel may not be able to attend on June 12. Mr. Brandmeyer mentioned that whoever can meet should; they do need a quorum of members to vote on anything. The next meeting is scheduled for June 5 at 7 pm. He said they will have their packets by Tuesday, June 3.

XII. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Dobrow said that she has the edits of the minutes and will have Recording Secretary Christy Waters complete them. The Committee decided to pass over approving the minutes from the April 10 and May 1 meetings.

XIII. Information Enclosures

None.

XIV. Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Dobrow, seconded by Mr. Sander, the Committee voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiations. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Temporary School Committee Recording Secretary