

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 1, 2007 – Open Session

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

Laurie Manos (Vice-Chair) – 7:18pm arrival

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 – 7:09pm

- A. Julie Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:09pm
- B. Introduction of new recording secretary, Christy Waters, by Julie Dobrow

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

A. Tom Sander noted attending a 3rd grade poetry project evening with poet and resident Jesse Brown, commenting that it was a great event.

III. Public Comments

A. Julie Dobrow mentioned this will come later in the evening due to the significant interest in the class size policy discussion.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Acceptance of \$2500.00 donation from the Lincoln PTA to support the Lincoln School grade 5 Thompson Island trip.

1. On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the donation from the Lincoln PTA.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Presentation of Preliminary FY '09 Budget

Mickey Brandmeyer introduced the budget discussion. He started with what he feels is the motivation and foundation for everything the School Committee works towards which are the "Missions and Goals" for the Lincoln Public Schools. The "Budget Guidelines" specified items such as keeping smaller class sizes, maintaining resources for curriculum and professional development initiatives, and the same level services. Mr. Brandmeyer stressed that there cannot be a cut in the budget for maintenance to meet the budget needs. He added that the schools must be prepared for unknown/unplanned events; i.e. – weather related structure damage, etc.

Buck Creel explained the "Budget Assumptions" noting that the Finance Committee gives a growth guideline of 3% but for both the Lincoln and Hanscom Schools to provide level services with what has been experienced this year would require an increase need of over 6% due to fixed cost increases such as salary contract and transportation contract increases. He also covered the potential budget "drivers" for FY'09 which include the following:

- Contract negotiations with Lincoln Teachers' Association and Custodians' Union
- Solicitation for transportation services
- Potential Impact of "Class Size Policy" change (Lincoln)
- Increasing costs for Health Insurance (Hanscom) – contract agreement-14% increase
- Special Education Transportation Assessment – which is projected to be higher in the upcoming year
- Cost of Utilities – contract negotiations are not until Oct. 2008 and, for planning purposes, will assume last year's costs

Buck Creel explained the "Site Based Fund", which is the cost for the instruction support materials based on a per-pupil allocation. These figures do not include any administrative items such as copiers, faxes, etc. The list below reflects the "SBM Allocation".

1. Preschool: \$13,296 (69 students)
2. Lincoln: Grades K-4 - \$68,478 (339 students); Grades 5-8 - \$98,908 (316 students)

3. Hanscom: Primary - \$96,346 (259 students); Middle - \$127,920 (240 students)

Buck Creel noted that the 2007-2008 enrollment for Hanscom is 558 students. The maximum anticipated enrollment has been 575 students. He stressed that although there were some changes with the housing contractor, American Eagle, on Hanscom AFB, he did not foresee any direct impact on the enrollment. If anything, he concluded, the enrollment would stay around the same. The way the current contract with DDES is written, the Hanscom Schools' budget is based on enrollment bands, so the number of students actually enrolled becomes very important, but this is often not known until school begins in September.

Buck Creel covered the "Revenue: Total Operating Budget" by giving a breakdown of each source and revenue and proportions to the budget. The list below reflects that chart.

1. Lincoln Town Appropriation	43.3%
2. DOD Contract	48.7%
3. Reimbursement Programs (Medicaid, ERATE, etc.)	1.4%
4. Grants (State with exception of METCO)	4.3%
5. Tuition and Fees	2.2%
Total	100%

Continuing the budget forum, Buck Creel covered the "Budget Requests" by explaining the following:

Lincoln:

Base Budget	\$9,172,894
New Initiatives	\$365,731
Finance Committee Guidelines	\$8,974,364
Base Budget Gap	(\$198,530)
New Initiative Gap	(\$564,261)

Hanscom:

Base Budget	\$10,446,633
New Initiatives	\$243,410
Contract Allocation (501-550)	\$10,073,511
Base Budget Gap	(\$373,122)
New Initiative Gap	(\$616,532)

Ed Orenstein covered the "Student Services Program" portion of the *FY '09 Preliminary Budget* beginning with the "Federal and State Requirements" which focused on "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)", "Chapter 766", and the "Coordinated Program Review". Mr. Orenstein was pleased with the results of the review, which began last spring with the DOE. The DOE discovered NO areas of non-compliance and only seven areas of partial compliance. Although all seven partial compliances are being addressed, Mr. Orenstein insisted the results were very satisfying. He explained the "Team Evaluation Process" for placement of a student into special education services. Mr. Orenstein covered the number of students enrolled in special education in Lincoln noting:

- The low percent of "Out of District" PK-8; "District Total" for percentage of school (12%) is lower than the state average (17%) based on last year's statistics.
- up to 80% of special education students are in full inclusion programs; increase due to Lincoln's implemented programs and "welcoming" atmosphere

Continuing, Ed Orenstein stressed the importance of inclusion and its role in today's culture. He noted the budget "drivers" for special education as:

- Personnel
- Out of District Tuition and Collaborative Assessments

- Transportation – increasing cost due to increase enrollment and out of district placement
- Contracted Services
- Extended School Year Programs

The new initiatives for “Student Services” presented by Ed Orenstein were “Automated External Defibrillators”, “Office Support” (i.e. - add more administrative days), and “Facilities Improvement (i.e. - coordinators office at Hancocm).

Mary Sterling covered the “Curriculum Office” portion of the budget presentation. She began by emphasizing the importance of teacher quality. She expressed gratitude for the extensive efforts throughout the schools for continued education and professional development among the faculty. With that, Ms. Sterling mentioned the need for consistency across campuses. She continued by noting the advancements in technology. She felt they are wonderful ONLY if the teachers get the training to use them.

Mary Sterling stated the focus for curriculum areas as music, math and science and the need for these curriculum areas to meet and exceed standards and expectations. With that, she introduced the new initiatives which included:

- Mathematics Materials K-5 (“top priority”)
- Achievement Gap and Student Engagement (more “focused teaching”)
- Needs of high achieving students
- World Language Expansion (2nd largest amount – added classes to both campuses)
- Community, Leadership, and Citizenship
- Standards-Based Reporting System (grading consistency)

Mr. Brandmeyer continued with the enrollment projections. He stated these are based on October 1 enrollment and are projected using a three year cohort. Following, he noted that Kindergarten enrollment (although sometimes skewed by children who stay home for the first year and those with birthdays close to the cutoff) is based on census data for age eligible resident children. He added that in May, projections are adjusted by the “actual” enrollment.

Mr. Brandmeyer covered the charts that illustrated the projected class size for the Lincoln campus based on the “**current**” policy; stressing the importance that the “target” number of students is the true goal and how that number is rarely, if ever, higher. The charts are as follows:

<u>Lincoln</u> Grade	Target # of Students	Max. # of Students	FY ‘09 Projected #
Grade K	18	20	18.3
Grade 1	20	22	21.2
Grade 2	22	24	19.9
Grade 3	22	24	18.3
Grade 4	24	24	22.1
Grade 5	24	24	21.1
Grade 6	24	24	25.2
Grade 7	24	24	19.1
Grade 8	24	24	18.6

Next, Mr. Brandmeyer demonstrated the projected class size compared to the “**Proposed Policy**” and the “**Preliminary**” base budget. The chart is as follows:

<u>Lincoln</u> Grade	Maximum # of Students	FY ‘09 Projected #
Grade K	20	18.3
Grade 1	20	21.2*

Grade 2	22	19.9
Grade 3	22	18.3
Grade 4	24	22.1
Grade 5	24	21.1
Grade 6	24	25.2
Grade 7	24	19.1
Grade 8	24	18.6

*Mr. Brandmeyer made sure to note the already planned added additions in FY '09 for first and third grade.

Mr. Brandmeyer then demonstrated the projected class size comparatively with the **“Proposed Policy” with the additional class**. The chart is as follows:

<u>Lincoln</u> Grade	Maximum # of Students	FY '09 Projected #
Grade K	20	18.3
Grade 1	20	15.9
Grade 2	22	19.9
Grade 3	22	18.3
Grade 4	24	22.1
Grade 5	24	21.1
Grade 6	24	25.2
Grade 7	24	19.1
Grade 8	24	18.6

Continuing, Mr. Brandmeyer showed the “Enrollment Capacity” at Hanscom Primary at 288 and Hanscom Middle at 322. Again, he noted that there has not been an official analysis of American Eagle, the housing contractor at Hanscom, and how its recent activities could affect the enrollment of these two school’s enrollments.

Mr. Brandmeyer concluded with the “Staffing Summary” noting that overall there is a –0.6 position change which leaves the staffing “pretty much the same”.

Mr. Schmertzler asked how Mr. Brandmeyer would expect to modify the budget if the School Committee requested that any of the new initiatives be added in. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that he would have to discuss this with the administrative team, but clearly anything added would mean something else taken out. Mr. Schmertzler asked if the proposed class size policy increased the budget gap, what would have to be taken out. Mr. Brandmeyer said he was not prepared to answer that at this time, but would have to speak with the principals.

Sharon Gillespy asked about how one would steer away from the preferred budget given the enrollment isn’t there. Mickey Brandmeyer replied that no one wants to hire staff for one year and then release him/her for the next year. It is best to review a month after the September 30th date to find a balance between the base and preferred.

Laurie Manos questioned, from a page of the *Superintendent’s Preliminary Budget for FY '09*, “How is it if we are down by two classrooms the budget demand is over \$600,000”? Mr. Brandmeyer replied it is due to faculty upgrades, raises, supply and material cost increase due to a rise in the cost of living. Ms. Manos requested the column be changed to percentages instead of simple figures. Mr. Brandmeyer and Mr. Creel noted her requests.

Finance Committee Chair, Robert Steinbrook, noted:

1. Budget Guideline Memo – 3% growth, backout out fixed costs

2. Base Budget is definite
 - a. can put together preferred budget
 - b. override is uncertain; cannot predict or guide at this time
3. Finance Committee has no position on class size
4. Moving items from the preferred budget to base budget is fine; almost recommended to do some different things from year to year
5. Reserve Fund
 - a. has been 7 or 8 years since it was needed and used to fund an additional class section after the base budget for the schools has been set

Sharon Antia asked about whether it might be possible to alter the middle school model and collapse sections to achieve somewhat larger class sizes. Sharon Hobbs replied that this would be difficult to do both because we have a team model and because of teacher qualifications and licensing requirements that are subject specific.

Due to the presence of individuals who had come to the meeting for certain portions of the agenda, some items were shifted.

B. Middle School Renew Report: Communications

Presenting: Sharon Hobbs, Principal, and Gina Halstead (MS Renewal Team)

Sharon Hobbs discussed the “Recommendations for Communication” noting it was based on a survey of the students, teachers, and parents. This “school to home” communication included but was not limited to: more communication of Open House, distribution of communication documents more widely (email, websites, handbooks, etc.), whole school communications, and “hotlists” for each grade level. Some “two-way” communication was included but not limited to: expectations and guidelines for communication between school and home, welcoming parent and teacher communication, and communicating events to students. Gina Halsted noted using technology (email and website) as resources for faster and more efficient communication.

Laurie Manos complimented Sharon Hobbs for the “tone” set at her school. Julie Dobrow agreed, adding that grade level teams should share information with other grade level teams to make sure all teachers are communicating and working together to help the pupil.

On the motion of Laurie Manos, seconded by Julie Dobrow, the School Committee voted unanimously to accept the ***Middle School Renew Report: Communications***.

Sharon Gillepsy inquired if this information was being shared with Hanscom Middle School. Sharon Hobbs responded that they had not yet met with the principal but would make sure it was passed along.

C. Lincoln School: School Improvement Plan

Stephen McKenna and Sharon Hobbs presented the Lincoln School Improvement Plan noting the seven goals. The goals were as follows:

1. To build a balanced literacy program
2. To ensure continuing education of student achievement in the area of math
3. To monitor the science related home school collaboration developed in 06-07 to ensure continued opportunities for families to participate in the learning experiences of their children both in school and at home
4. To review the current homework practices Grades K-8 to ensure that assignments are designed to extend learning in an appropriate amount of time
5. To effectively integrate technology in instruction and assessment
6. To monitor the work of the middle school renewal initiative
7. To establish a school environment characterized by collaboration, tolerance, respect, and celebration for all groups

Goal #2 was questioned by Laurie Manos as to why the percentage for students achieving proficient or advanced status on the math MCAS was 80% and not 90%. Stephen McKenna replied that this was a two-year program and the 80% was the first year's expectations but it would be higher for the second year.

Goal #3 stated guidelines for science expectations for home-schooled collaborations around science expectations so that parents could participate and support learning from school at home. Laurie Manos reverted back to Goal #2 for how it sets a percentage standard for the math portion of the MCAS and wanted to know why there is not a science percentage goal. Sharon Hobbs explained there was a shift in focus to math. Al Schmertzler stated he agreed with Manos that there should be some type of measurement for science. Stephen McKenna replied the focus is for more participation in science such as science projects and fairs.

The discussions of Goal #7 lead to a suggestion of the *Teaching Tolerance Program* by Al Schmertzler. Sharon Hobbs replied she was familiar with it but unaware there were programs that could be implemented. She advised she would look into it.

Julie Dobrow emphasized the importance of ensuring that middle school curricular areas to be checked against expectations from Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School so that matriculating 9th grade students from Lincoln would have easier academic transitions.

On the motion of Julie Dobrow, seconded by Sharon Antia, the School Committee voted unanimously on to approve the *Lincoln School: School Improvement Plan*.

***Skip to VIII – C – Class Size Policy

VIII. Policy

C. Class Size Policy: Second Reading and Vote

Julie Dobrow opened the floor for public comments.

A number of parents spoke in favor of keeping class sizes small, the importance of small class sizes particularly at the lower grades, and their beliefs that smaller classes foster strong relationships and engagement with learning. One parent voiced an opinion against changing the policy due to impact it would make on the budget to only change the class size by potentially one or two students.

Julie Dobrow wanted to clarify that if two additional sections were to be added for next year, the projected cost of this would be about \$200,000. Mr. Brandmeyer concurred but noted that due to the projected numbers he is planning for an additional section of third grade in the base budget so the incremental cost would be \$100,000.

Discussions continued concerning the Finance Committee and their willingness to maintain their commitment to fund an additional section if numbers merited this after the budget was set, even if the School Committee voted to change its class size policy. Robert Steinbrook reiterated that he was unable to speak for the committee since they have not met and discussed the School Committee's proposed policy changes. He commented that if the School Committee requested that the Finance Committee review the proposed changes in the policy, then they would be willing to do so to see if the Finance Committee would continue its practice about funding an additional section. He reiterated that the Finance Committee holds no position on the "Class Size Policy Change".

Mickey Brandmeyer stated that he thought there were only two reasons for policy changes: law changes or to address a significant problem. He stressed neither are present in this case, and especially not enough for a class reduction of, on average, two pupils per grade. He added that the student count among the classroom is already low and that Lincoln classrooms have rarely been at the maximum number defined in the existing policy.

Laurie Manos and Sharon Antia stated that there should not be additions or changes made at the last minute due to fear of overrides or based on a financial aspect alone. Ms. Manos mentioned a survey of over 280

parents, most of whom supported a class size reduction. Julie Dobrow replied that the survey was generated from parents and not the larger community, whom the School Committee also represents. Ms. Dobrow added that in the survey done with teachers, most teachers said that only a reduction of 3 or 4 students in a classroom would make a big difference in what they did, not the 1 or 2 students in the proposed policy change.

Tom Sander requested that the Finance Committee review the proposed policy changes and give feedback about their willingness to maintain their policy of funding an additional section from the Reserve Fund if merited by the policy after the budget was set, and that this occur within a couple of weeks to assure that the School Committee conducted the vote with all resource information available.

On the motion of Tom Sander, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Sander's motion.

Break – 10:55pm – 11:05pm

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mickey Brandmeyer reported the meeting that he and Julie Dobrow had met with the Finance Committee, noting it was a positive meeting. Laurie Manos suggested that in the future the entire School Committee should be informed of these scheduled meetings to ensure that anyone who wishes to attend can do so. Mickey Brandmeyer and Julie Dobrow agreed to her request.

Mickey Brandmeyer noted the METCO Legislative Forum that was taking place on November 5, 2007 for anyone who wished to attend.

VII. Curriculum

Mary Sterling noted she attended the Nancy Boyles training that Stephen McKenna had mentioned earlier. She praised the professional development that was provided. She also provided MCAS information for everyone to look over (copies were provided).

VIII. Policy

A. School Health Services: Second Reading and Vote

1. Mickey Brandmeyer summarized the topic and reason for vote.
2. On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Laurie Manos, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the *School Health Services* policy.

B. Students with Life Threatening Allergies Policy: Second Reading and Vote

1. Mickey Brandmeyer summarized the topic and reason for vote.
2. On a motion by Al Schmertzler, seconded by Julie Dobrow, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the *Students with Life Threatening Allergies* policy.

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 Julie Dobrow, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants in the amount of **\$887,556.51**.

X. Old Business

A. Update Long Term Agenda

1. Mickey Brandmeyer summarized the topic and reason for vote.
2. Sharon Antia asked about the Tripod Project noting that it "seems to be on the back burner". Mickey Brandmeyer replied that reports just came in 7-10 days ago therefore, it will be reviewed.
3. On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Al Schmertzler, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve, with the new revisions, the updated long-term agenda.

XI. New Business

Mickey Brandmeyer noted the “State of the Town” that was planned for Saturday, November 3, 2007, from 9:00am – 12:00pm if anyone was interested in attending. He noted that Julie Dobrow and he have an estimated ten minutes at the beginning of the meeting for their presentation.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None

XIII. Information Enclosures

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

XIV. Adjournment – 11:32pm

On a motion by Julie Dobrow, seconded by Tom Sander, the School Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 11:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Christy Waters, School Committee Recording Secretary