

MINUTES OF THE LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Thursday, September 10, 2009
Hartwell Building, Lincoln, MA
OPEN SESSION

Present: Julie Dobrow (Chair), Tom Sander (Vice Chair), Al Schmertzler, Rob Orgel, Jennifer Glass, Lt. Col. Randy Robertson (Temporary Hanscom Representative). Also present: Mickey Brandmeyer (Superintendent), Mary Sterling (Assistant Superintendent), Buckner Creel (Administrator for Business and Finance), Stephanie Powers (Administrator for Student Services).

I. Greetings and Call to Order

Ms. Dobrow called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. She welcomed everyone back and gave a special welcome to Lt. Col. Randy Robertson from Hanscom. Lt. Col. Robertson noted that his job is like being a town manager for the Base and that he also serves as the school liaison officer to Hanscom. He looks forward to working with the Committee and is looking for a Hanscom representative. Ms. Dobrow said the Committee is seeking a Boston representative too.

II. Chairperson's and Members' Reports

Ms. Dobrow attended the teacher orientation and said that Mr. Brandmeyer and Ms. Sterling planned a full, wonderful day that opened the school year nicely. She reported that the spirit was great and there was a buzz in the air. They embraced the new faculty members and the returning teachers were excited to be back. Ms. Glass attended the PTA meeting, where they discussed the communications plan. Ms. Glass and Ms. Dobrow welcomed the new PTA President, Laura Regrut. Ms. Dobrow said they appreciate the PTA's work. .

III. Public Comments

Ms. Dobrow said they want to run the meetings more efficiently and end at a more reasonable hour and hence will watch the clock. The Committee thus wants to change the way the public comments part of the meeting runs. The documents will be posted ahead of time so that interested parties can read them in advance. Comments will be limited to agenda items, and there will be a three-minute limit per person with an overall limit of 10 minutes. She said that they have allowed public comment during other agenda items, although they are not required to do so. No spontaneous presentations will be allowed. There were no other public comments.

IV. Consent Agenda

None.

V. Time Scheduled Appointments

A. Opening Day of School and Enrollment Update

Mr. Brandmeyer said on Wednesday, they welcomed 1,052 students to school. He reported that the energy was high and the spirit good last week and this. It has been a wonderful start: the faculty is feeling great, a carryover from the work they did during the summer. He will update the enrollment figures later in the month. He reported that the class sizes are within class size policy limits, and Lincoln school projections were accurate. Hanscom enrollments, however, are down, and they are concerned. The preschool has 56 students and is full.

Mr. Orgel asked about the Hanscom enrollment and whether they were at a band boundary, which affects how much money the federal government pays the District. Mr. Brandmeyer responded that they are below the lowest band now. The Department of Defense is visiting on September 18 for the first time since Mr. Brandmeyer has been superintendent. He said that there has been no discussion of lowering the federal contribution in the future, but noted that the District did not open some of the classrooms they had planned to open to be conservative. They are staffed appropriately and have the funding to support it.

B. New Faculty Report

Ms. Sterling said they had teacher orientation on August 26 and started the mentor program for new teachers. The mentors are site-based and mentor teams of teachers. She reminded the Committee that they have a thorough screening process for teachers before they get hired, with many applicants for every position. The process includes extensive reference checking and a teaching demonstration. All the new teachers put their best feet forward; four of them are new to teaching (although they bring expertise from their fields), and eight of them are experienced teachers. Erich Ledebuhr, the new Hanscom Middle School principal, has brought a good spirit to HMS.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether they had many industry applicants, given the economy. Ms. Sterling said that they see some, particularly in math and technology. She said the key is what teacher preparation courses they have taken, which shows their commitment and preparation. Ms. Dobrow said the teachers were impressed by the welcome and the mentor program. Ms. Sterling said both pieces make an enormous difference in retaining quality teachers in the District. Ms. Sterling said they have new mentors, and she is impressed that so many veteran teachers are spending time mentoring new colleagues. Mr. Orgel said it was an impressive list.

Ms. Dobrow thanked her for the report.

C. Extended School Year Program Report

Mr. Brandmeyer introduced Kathleen Browning, the co-director of the Extended School Year (ESY) Program, who has been an intern. Ms. Powers explained that the ESY program is for students with disabilities. There are three criteria that must be met for a student to be eligible to enroll: 1) students who would regress over a summer break; 2) the nature of a student's disability; and 3) whether the students were on the cusp of learning something new. ESY services are required by federal and state mandates. Students are found eligible by their individualized education program [IEP] teams. The program lasts for six weeks. Ms. Powers said they used lots of data to find overlap among student needs. Student needs fell in three categories: 1) academic, 2) social/emotional/behavioral, and 3) related services, such as occupational and physical therapy. To meet these needs, they provided academic tutoring and they had a therapeutic program with the Recreation Department, seeking an integrated experience for students to be with peers.

Ms. Browning was program director for half of the program, which she said was a wonderful experience. Ginny Flaherty was the other director. Ms. Browning reported they had 10 students in the Recreation Department Camp, 17 students who received tutoring (some of them also participated in the Camp), and 19 students in preschool. The parent, student, and staff survey she administered revealed that the program was a big success. Improvement recommendations include: 1) changing the Hanscom student schedule so they leave at 12:45 instead of 11:45 and can eat lunch with other students; 2) Increased professional development with the Lincoln camp counselors concerning special needs so they could interact more effectively; and 3) increased structure to the adventure camp. Ginny Flaherty, the other director, met with Recreation Director Dan Pereira, and he was positive about the collaboration and would like to further the relationship.

Mr. Schmertzler asked whether the students with disabilities interacted with the other students. Ms. Powers said that the students who attended the Recreation Camp were integrated with the other students. The Preschool and tutoring programs were for students with disabilities. It was new this summer to have Hanscom students take the bus to Lincoln. Mr. Sander asked what they did in the past for students with social and behavioral issues and what range of students they included. Ms. Powers said students had recreation components before, but now they have a fuller partnership with the Recreation Department. The students had a broad range of needs, and those with more significant needs were often prepared in advance as to what they could expect, given some social skill to work on that day and have some strategies modeled for them that they could then practice in the camp setting. Special needs staff work like talented waiters observing the interactions, knowing when to be there to help and when to let the student handle things. Ms. Glass commented that it was good that they used a uniform way of selecting the students. Ms. Powers responded that they carefully considered the right group of students. They can always make adjustments if the students regressed. Ms. Browning noted that the students said they felt prepared to start school in the fall.

Ms. Dobrow asked what type of professional development would be appropriate for camp counselors, who tend to be college students. Ms. Browning said they wanted to have one adult for at least every two special-needs students. The counselors did not know when to step in with the students, and they want to introduce the concept to the counselors so that they focus more on the students. They will

meet some mornings before the students arrive for the day. Ms. Powers said they would share the goals for each student with the counselors so that they would know when to praise the students, even for behaviors that the counselors normally would not have seen as praise-worthy but may have been very significant for the children. Ms. Dobrow noted that college students benefit from an overview of special education issues and how to deal with disabilities. She also said time management is an issue with college students and she suggested they address those. Ms. Dobrow thanked them for the report and praised Ms. Browning's suggestions.

D. Update on Lincoln Middle School Schedule and Program Changes for 2009-10

Dr. Sharon Hobbs addressed the Committee about the middle school schedule. She likened the scheduling to Sudoku puzzle with all the rows and columns having to be in balance. She made sure that she had perspectives from all teachers and administrators involved. The goals were augmenting the core academic time (last year they added 15 extra minutes to the school day) and adding the technology and engineering program for grades 7 and 8. While they would have liked to continue to offer electives that had been available once a week for 45 to 47 minutes, they had to drop them from the school day schedule. They revised and streamlined the amount of passing time between classes and slightly increased lunch time. To make these things happen, they did various things, such as integrating health and PE, integrating the "Facing History And Ourselves" course into social studies, and integrating the Bridges class into another class. While there is no elective, students continue to have a balanced program that includes art, music, and technology. They are wrestling with how to keep the virtual high school [VHS], although all of the current VHS students have been able to continue to take VHS classes since they were not taking band, chorus or orchestra. They may in the future offer items like VHS in a shorter block after school. The goal was to have core instructional time go up, and it did.

Mr. Orgel asked what feedback they've received. She said she's not had any yet except the teachers like hearing fewer bells, which have been discontinued since the blocks are no longer the same for every grade. Ms. Glass asked whether the three-minute passing time was realistic and Dr. Hobbs noted that last year they did it in two minutes. Ms. Glass noted that students reported that the extra three minutes for lunch seem to make the period seem significantly longer. Ms. Glass and Ms. Dobrow asked whether times could be included on the students' schedules. Dr. Hobbs said most teachers post the schedules in the classrooms. Dr. Hobbs observed that students color-code their schedules so they know when they have a certain subject, but that they would try to put times on the student schedules. Ms. Dobrow said that last year parents felt that they were not informed or part of the conversation, and Dr. Hobbs whether she could address the schedule at one of her coffees. Dr. Hobbs said that things change sometimes, and she noted that there was a misunderstanding about which subjects were considered electives, but she will do the coffees again. Ms. Dobrow said participating parents were grateful for the coffees, but Dr. Hobbs should also look for other ways to get the information out. Dr. Hobbs said there will be no big changes for a while, and she will ask how the current schedule was going. Mr. Schmertzler asked her to get out the information.

Mr. Brandmeyer said the scheduling issue is not unique to the Lincoln Middle School. They want to lock in the schedule so that they know the number of staff people needed to teach the different things. Their model of lots of academic time and room for other things leaves them in great shape. Ms. Dobrow said she understood the rationale for integrating the Bridges material into another class, but she's sure that the Facing History material lends itself to being integrated with another class, and it has a good track record that required teachers to be trained to teach it. Dr. Hobbs said Jennifer and Steve, the trained teachers for Facing History, are weaving Facing History into their other programs, and she said that they don't want to lose it. Mr. Sander asked if they have a creative solution to communicating with parents how to get their students involved in the after-school electives. Dr. Hobbs said teachers have talked about it, but they aren't far into the school year yet but she will aim to get that information out to parents.

Ms. Dobrow thanked her for her report.

E. Pandemic Flu Planning: Preliminary Report

Mr. Brandmeyer noted that H1N1 (Swine) Flu is on its way back. Anyone with the flu should be excluded from school for 3 to 5 days instead of the 7 days recommended last year. He has convened a Pandemic Planning Team, and they are discussing how the community needs to be updated on sick people and how to protect their privacy at the same time while maintaining school if many people get sick. Some school districts are sponsoring flu clinics to ensure that students, faculty, and staff are vaccinated, but the

Lincoln Board of Health does not recommend that the school have a flu clinic. He will write to parents and tell them to please have their children vaccinated for H1N1 and influenza. The recommendations for those who should be vaccinated for H1N1 are for those with compromised immune systems and children ages 6 months to 24 years.

The Commissioner of Education indicated that the state will not grant many waivers to the requirement that schools be in session for 180 days. Mr. Brandmeyer said the District has scheduled 185 days, but if there are more than 5 snow days or flu days, the District will need an alternate strategy to making up these days other than simply lengthening the school year into July. He proposed developing two alternate calendars to bring before the Committee next meeting for a vote. Whether either of these alternate calendars would be implemented would depend on how many missed days the District had by March 31: one calendar would make up the days by having two school Saturdays and another calendar that needed to make up more days would have school several Saturdays plus canceling some or all of the April vacation. He will tell parents shortly so that they are able to plan.

Ms. Glass asked if there were laws about having school closed on legal holidays. Mr. Brandmeyer said yes, they can't have school on legal holidays. Mr. Orgel said he liked that they were telling parents early, and he agrees with the way Mr. Brandmeyer framed the issue. Mr. Brandmeyer said they will align schedules with Lincoln-Sudbury and will try to coordinate with Bedford. Ms. Dobrow said it was good to do outreach. Lt. Col. Robertson said the Base is working with the towns, and they also have to deal with flu plans on the national level as they are a military base.

Mr. Sander and Mr. Schmertzler recommended that Mr. Brandmeyer get clarification as to why the Lincoln Board of Health does not want the school to have a flu clinic. Mr. Brandmeyer said that the liability issues for flu clinics in schools have been addressed. Mr. Schmertzler said his wife Peggy discussed the flu clinic for seniors, and the Board of Health has said that seniors do not need to be vaccinated for H1N1. Mr. Brandmeyer said all plans are on hold, and he will send information home to parents. They will focus on prevention and keeping the school healthy. He will put the information on the website and District News. If there is a crisis, they will use the phone message system. He asks parents who do not have access to electronic information to let the school know, and they are keeping a list of those who do not. Mr. Sander asked Mr. Brandmeyer to survey parents on their preferences on when to have additional school days if necessary, but understands that this preference would need to be balanced against teacher preferences. Ms. Dobrow and Mr. Sander recommended putting the health information about H1N1 out to parents and enabling people to make their own decisions. It is voluntary to get the vaccine. Mr. Brandmeyer said they are not going to put together a primer on flu and will direct those interested to the cdc.gov/flu [Centers for Disease Control] website. Ms. Dobrow thanked him for the report.

F. Update on Status of Negotiations with Magic Garden for Extension of Hartwell Lease

Ms. Dobrow has been in contact with Tim Christenfeld, the President of the Magic Garden Board, to start the negotiations to extend the current lease for one year. Mr. Creel, Mr. Orgel, and representatives from Magic Garden will meet on Tuesday, September 15. She noted that last spring, they convened a fact-finding group on RFP issues and will get it started. The group is comprised of Ms. Glass, Mr. Creel, Magic Garden representatives, Town Administrator Tim Higgins, Selectman Sarah Cannon-Holden, and Finance Committee representative John Koenig.

VI. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Brandmeyer reiterated that the school year was off to a great start. He will add more reports to the long-term agenda that comes up later in the meeting. He will also finalize the district work plans for the next meeting.

VII. Curriculum

A. Report on Summer Curriculum and Professional Development Activities

Ms. Sterling attends one class per week. This week she attended an eighth-grade engineering class. Using a skateboard as an example, the students learned about the universal design model and how any systems have input, process, output, and feedback components. The students were very engaged in the class.

(Mr. Orgel had to leave the meeting at 8:35 pm.)

She reported on the 2009 Summer Work Projects (professional development). She said they had the highest ever number of projects this summer with many teachers involved. One project they worked on was differentiation of teaching to meet the range of learners in the classroom. This year, teachers will be able to be more flexible with the *Everyday Math* curriculum as it will be the second year of using it. The teachers will be working with the math specialists. Grace Kelemanik will return in two weeks to work with the math specialists. Judy Merra, content specialist in English Language Arts, offered a differentiation seminar on writing and teaching writing on several levels.

Ms. Sterling reported that they got expert guidance this summer and were very pleased to have Faye Ruopp, co-author of the new 6-8 middle school curriculum *Impact Mathematics*, offer two sessions attended by the math specialists, METCO academic advisor, special education teachers, and math teachers. They will have also two parent sessions this fall.

Ms. Dobrow said it was always very exciting to see the scope and range of professional development activities and asked what was being done to close the achievement gap. Ms. Sterling responded they have re-allocated funds to address the achievement gap, and they held a one-day session with Allan Alson, a nationally-recognized consultant, to learn about the action research process to find strategies that will enable students who are not proficient in subjects to become so. Mr. Alson will return monthly to work with them. Ten teachers discussed their concerns, perceptions, and assumptions about the achievement gap. Mr. Alson explained the action research model that teachers will use to find out what causes the gap and how they can modify their instruction to intervene and evaluate whether they are making a difference. They will share results and start a second cohort of teachers in the spring. Mr. Schmertzler asked whether engaging parents of students with achievement issues is a major element to closing the gap and how these parents can become involved. Ms. Sterling said engaging and keeping parents involved is a piece of the project. Ms. Glass said that Principal Steve McKenna reported that the Responsive Classroom training went very well. Ms. Sterling said 20 teachers participated and have already followed through with it. She noted that fortunately they have reached a critical mass of teachers who have been trained with the program. She thanked the Committee for its support of teacher professional development and said it is great that they do it; it makes a difference with the teachers.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Sterling for her leadership and stewardship and thanked the Lincoln School Foundation [LSF] for the grants used for professional development.

VIII. Policy

None.

IX. Facilities and Financial

A. Warrant Approval

Mr. Creel presented the payroll warrants totaling \$1,725,743.16 and the accounts payable warrants totaling \$1,446,064.15 for a total of \$3,171,807.31. Mr. Schmertzler reviewed the warrants. Mr. Schmertzler moved to approve the warrants, with Ms. Glass seconding the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the warrants.

B. Facilities Projects Report

Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Creel for all of the work done at the schools over the summer. She said it looked terrific for the returning students, teachers, and administrators. Mr. Creel responded that their investments have paid off. Mr. Brandmeyer noted a chart of projects not included in the packet but available on-line and at the table. Mr. Creel reviewed the capital projects, which were March 2009 Town Meeting Warrants. They replaced the asbestos floor tile with easier-to-maintain tile, and students noticed that the Brooks space was more attractive. The design for the Hartwell Curtain Wall is on hold. The Field House Roof was replaced with a durable roof design that bonded the roof tiles together seamlessly. The flashing collar was replaced, but there is still some leaking around the flashing and the contractors are working to fix these. Mr. Schmertzler asked if there were any safety issues with waiting on the curtain wall project. Mr. Creel said the wooden windows are exposed but not rotten. They will use a portion of their money for preventative maintenance to do some painting. This summer they completed more projects than cleaning. Mr. Creel walked the school building roofs where seams are separating. They are experimenting with putting strips of material over the seams to extend the roof life. Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Creel for doing something about the locker rooms. The locker rooms have been gutted and have new ceilings, easy-to-maintain floors, and new partitions. Mr. Creel noted that the lockers and benches have not

arrived yet and will be installed once they do. . They will not be ready for a couple weeks. Mr. Schmertzler asked about outsiders using the locker rooms and damaging them and asked if it was true. Mr. Brandmeyer and Mr. Creel said yes. Mr. Brandmeyer said they have a proposal to monitor the locker room use better and are putting protocols in place to solve the problem. It's clear they need the spaces maintained.

Mr. Creel gave Michael Haines credit for monitoring the projects. Mr. Creel noted that on the Hanscom campus, the Department of Defense contract requires a 5-year plan on maintenance, and they have contract plan projects, which are a corollary to the classroom rehabilitation projects. They have annual inspections and certifications on both campuses. They want to replace the roofs at Hanscom, which were installed in 1973. They renovated the Home Ec lab and made it into a computer lab. Now they have two computer rooms; the computers were replaced, and they have smart boards. In the previous five years, they did interior painting only. This summer they painted the exterior. Mr. Creel reported on a gas leak problem that occurred two days before school was starting on the Hanscom campus. He said the Base responded well to the problem, high quality repairs were made on 2300 feet of piping, which was installed in the 1950s. Some of the piping was missing. Mr. Sander praised Mr. Creel on all the summer projects and noted that the new Lincoln signs seem to be forthcoming; Mr. Brandmeyer indicated that the signs should be installed shortly.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Mr. Creel for the reports.

C. Status of FY 2010 Budget

Mr. Brandmeyer referred to the Finance Committee's memo that he received on September 9, which was on the table. There will be a Special Town Meeting on Saturday, October 17. Mr. Creel presented his August 31 memo about the FY10 budget. He said that the Deaconess Project was drifting, but they do have funding. The Finance Committee projects a shortfall for the Town of \$400,000 to \$450,000 now, but they knew it was a possibility. Mr. Creel said they can make \$243,071 available to the Committee to reduce the shortfall. The money comes from unspent balances on the Brooks Asbestos Tile Replacement of \$49,471 and the Reed Field House Roof Replacement of \$32,000. They prepaid Special Education expenses in the amount of \$125,000 in June 2009, and have placed two FY10 Capital Warrant Projects, Door Hardware Phase 2 for \$15,600 and Curtain Wall Design for \$21,000 on hold. This would not reduce the money to the school programs. The school will need to come up with additional savings of probably \$80,000 but the Administration's goal is to create savings without cutting staff. Mr. Brandmeyer said they would craft a plan to protect their program and have it ready for the next meeting. They will talk with Town Administrator Tim Higgins and collaborate with the Town. He warned that the state may make mid-year cuts.

Mr. Schmertzler said that the state spent stimulus money in FY09 that should have been spent for FY10 and FY11, which will create a funding cliff in FY10 and FY11. Mr. Creel said that the Finance Committee may ask all the Town departments for a zero-growth budget. Mr. Brandmeyer said the Finance Committee may allocate free cash, and he said it was better to use free cash to absorb any mid-year cuts from the state. Mr. Creel said the schools have been lucky, and they should try to help out the Town.

Ms. Dobrow thanked them for the report.

X. Old Business

A. Report on School Committee's Communication Plans for 2009-10

Ms. Glass thanked Mr. Brandmeyer, Ms. Sterling, Mr. Creel and others who prepared reports in time to post them on-line and brief the *Lincoln Journal*. They plan to continue this effort. At the PTA meeting, they discussed strategies to get people to videotape the School Committee meetings. They wondered if they could pay students to do it, or whether the Tax Work-Off Program for senior citizens would give credit to seniors videotaping meetings. Ms. Dobrow said Lincoln-Sudbury students can get needed community service credit, and she suggested that they talk to Paul Sarapis, although it may be difficult given that high school students are busy. Mr. Schmertzler suggested Minuteman Tech students as a possibility. Ms. Glass said there will be a new school website in October, and teachers can have their own websites. She noted parents can pay for student lunches through the website. People need to sign up for SCNews and District News on-line, and they can get meeting agendas. Mr. Brandmeyer noted that they have changed their IT team, but they do have more parent e-mail addresses than last year. Ms. Glass will attend PTA meetings, and asked people to let her know their ideas.

Ms. Dobrow thanked Ms. Glass for her memo and asked her to make sure she works with METCO and Christina Horner, and Ms. Glass noted that she has been working with Ms. Horner. Mr. Sander asked if they could get a tripod and camera to do the videotaping if they could not find a person to do it. Mr. Brandmeyer said they could, and he will work with Ms. Glass to coordinate, but he wants to ensure that the quality is good enough that it is watchable and audible.

Ms. Dobrow thanked her for the report.

XI. New Business

A. Special Town Meeting and State of the Town, Saturday, October 17

Ms. Dobrow said the report for the Special Town Meeting on Saturday, October 17 needs to be in to the Town by Monday, September 14. She circulated a draft using a similar format from prior years, but with new content. The committee added several bullets to her report.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Ms. Glass seconded, the motion to accept the report for the Special Town Meeting with the edits. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report with thanks to Ms. Dobrow for drafting this.

B. Draft of School Committee Long-term Agenda for 2009-10

Mr. Brandmeyer explained that the long-term agenda was the first draft, and it will be updated periodically. He asked whether they have captured the things the Committee wants to discuss. Ms. Glass asked when the Committee would hear about upshot of the District's efforts to close the achievement gap through Action Research Teams. Ms. Sterling and Mr. Brandmeyer suggested that they have a presentation to the faculty in February and invite the Committee members to it. Mr. Sander asked that Hartwell Space RFP for 2010 and beyond needs to be on the agenda since we are currently negotiating a one year extension for Magic Garden for 2009-2010. Mr. Brandmeyer said that December would need to be the end date for the discussions currently occurring around costs and he would add it to the schedule. The Committee tentatively scheduled its meeting in Boston for October 22.

Ms. Dobrow moved, and Mr. Sander seconded, the motion to accept the long-term agenda with the edits. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the long-term agenda with the edits.

C. School Consolidation in Sudbury

Ms. Dobrow said interest remains high in Sudbury to talk about consolidating schools. Mr. Brandmeyer convened a group of Superintendents and School Committee Chairs from Sudbury and Wayland. They have a consultant to facilitate productive discussions on consolidating and sharing resources. Lincoln-Sudbury, Wayland, and Lincoln want to continue the dialogue and will update the committee next month.

XII. Approval of Minutes

None.

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. Ms. Dobrow, yes; Mr. Sander, yes; Mr. Schmertzler, yes; Ms. Glass, yes. The Committee would not be returning to open session. The open session adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah G. Marcotte, Recording Secretary