

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Wednesday, April 9, 2014**  
**Cary Memorial Building, Battin Hall**  
**1605 Massachusetts Avenue**

**PRESENT:** Dr. Paul B. Ash, Superintendent; Margaret Coppe, Chair; Alessandro Alessandrini, Jessie Steigerwald, Judy Crocker and Mary Ann Stewart

The Meeting Minutes were taken by Jean M. Curran, Recording Secretary

The Meeting convened at 6:00 p.m.

**I. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order and shared that she had received two questions in emails (i) what is the timing for getting any kind of construction, whether modular or brick or mortar (or portables) and Dr. Ash will address that issue; and (ii) Thomas Martellone, Principal, Fiske Elementary School will provide an update on the 5<sup>th</sup> grade option.

**II. Agenda:**

1. Discussion of Fiske Overcrowding

Dr. Ash presented the Lexington Public Schools Master Plan Update. Primary discussion is what to do about next year. Dr. Ash focused on what will happen in the coming years. Dr. Ash discussed what would happen at Fiske School (i) June 2014 – request for funds for a multiphase LPS Master Plan Update and includes for Funds to evaluate options for adding capacity at Fiske School. Dr. Ash reviewed the three phases: Phase I – capacity analysis; Phase II – begin to add capacity to a specific school (modular or conventional); and Phase III – specific options to accommodate long-term population projections. Dr. Ash then reviewed the Fiske School construction options and timetable for September 2014, November 2014 and March 2015.

Thomas Martellone provided an overview and background of the Co-Teaching Model. Mr. Martellone then presented what the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade would like. Mr. Martellone met with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade team and then met with specialists and all were supportive of the idea with the intent that it would be an interim solution. The request is to have each classroom have an additional .55 certified licensed teacher five days a week. During their time that additional support would be in math, science, social studies and language. Mr. Martellone feels comfortable bringing forward because of the collaborative nature of the teachers.

The Chair invited public comment:

Cerise Jalelian, 5<sup>th</sup> grade mother, member of Town Celebration Committee and Lextended Day Program feels the proposal to consolidate 84-86 children into 3 classrooms marginalizes children and families. Ms. Jalelian spoke in support of one modular for one year immediately at Fiske.

Meredith Flynn-Ripley, 21 Colony Road, agreed with Ms. Jalelian and supports having a modular this fall at Fiske. Ms. Ripley requested the Committee to poll the Fiske parents on having either a modular or the co-teaching model. Ms. Ripley has a petition with 41 signatures that are in favor of getting a modular classroom.

Suzanne Abair, 6 Mill Brook Road, parent of a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader, Town Meeting Member in Precinct 6 questioned why 83 students must bear the brunt of an untested co-teaching model when there are other classroom options. Ms. Abair is in support of using the art, music or library space as classrooms.

Carla DeMaria, 25 Adams Street, parent of a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader, echoed what Ms. Abair said and made a brief statement regarding the overcrowding situation and co-teaching model. Ms. DeMaria feels that if the co-teaching model is used there will be (i) limited one-on-one instruction; (ii) classroom discipline issues; this rising 5<sup>th</sup> grade has a history of discipline; (iii) struggling students might fall behind; (iv) strong students may tread water and should have the opportunity to rise; (v) lower MCAS scores already showing in 2013; 1 in 4 below proficiency in Math and 1 in 5 in English; (vi) provide support for co-teaching and strategies must be met and addressed; (vii) overall noise level will increase and this means more distractions; and (viii) limited technology availability; wants school to purchase more technology.

Jennifer Voss, 10 Hancock Avenue, mother of a rising 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grader shared that both her children will be affected. Ms. Voss shared her thoughts on people's opinions based upon conjecture and feels that this situation has happened at other schools. Ms. Voss feels that she cannot make an informed decision because she doesn't have enough information. If there is research that shows one solution will work better for the kind of students in Lexington, please provide that evidence to us to make confident decisions.

Tama Leventhal, 2 Sedge Road, has 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade risers. Ms. Leventhal shared her concerns regarding student-teacher ratios. There is evidence that shows that lower class size has a favorable impact on students. Ms. Leventhal offered to provide papers evidencing these reports.

Kathy Sullivan, 25 Thoreau Road, her son is graduating Fiske this year and agrees with Ms. Leventhal regarding the student-teacher ratio. Feels that overcrowded classrooms can become disruptive.

Diane Gamble, 7 Adams Street, has a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader and questioned why four classes are being reduced to 3 classes. Ms. Gamble feels that there must be other options and recognizes the difficulty of the situation.

Daniel Abramson, 11 Hancock Street, has a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader and a child at Diamond Middle School and feels that art on a cart does a disservice those students whom art and music are important ways to learn. Mr. Abramson is glad to know that this was not a top choice and is glad to hear teacher opinions. Mr. Abramson also agrees with Carla DeMaria about the need for assessment, evaluations, improvement and ongoing communication.

Courtney Christensen, 12 Hancock Street, has a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader and a daughter who graduated 5<sup>th</sup> grade last year. Ms. Christensen understands there would be the part-time teachers, but is concerned about being in a crowded classroom for long stretches of time.

Tom Brennan, 25 Adams Street, has a rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader, reiterated other points that other parents had made this evening. Mr. Brennan is concerned that this group of students already have had issues in the past, lower scores than other schools and behavioral issues and questioned why the Committee and Dr. Ash would choose to go to larger size classrooms. Mr. Brennan feels the Committee needs to focus on 5<sup>th</sup> grade class transitioning into middle school and take into account their past history and keep their best interests at heart.

Diane Biglow, 15 Bellflower Street, shared her thoughts on class size and the how the Hastings Elementary School has had overcrowded classrooms for at least 10 years. Ms. Biglow feels it might be worth visiting Hasting to see how they are coping with the situation.

Jeanine Ferrick, 123 Grant Street, will have a kindergartener in 2015 feels that not enough has been done for enrollment figures. Ms. Ferrick shared her thoughts on apartment developments in town. Does not want to wait until September before a decision is made on how the school will handle the enrollment issues.

Kate Colburn, 49 Forest Street, asked if there was any way the Committee could ask for a special town meeting before June.

Margaret Coppe shared that the Board of Selectmen have to call a meeting and a warrant has to pen and close and then be publicized. June is the earliest they could arrange for a Special Town Meeting to obtain design money.

Alex Tsouvalas, 77 Grant Street, kindergarten parent and his heart goes out to parents of this incoming class. Mr. Tsouvalas shared that in the short time of being a member of the community he is impressed with Mr. Martellone and feels that everyone is working hard to find a solution and it sounds like instead of aides there will be qualified teachers. He is looking forward to reviewing the Master Plan.

Margaret Coppe will work with Dr. Ash and Tom Martellone on questions she wrote down during the public hearing. Ms. Coppe thanked the Town Moderator and Town Manager for use of Battin Hall.

The School Committee will recess until 7:30 p.m. and reconvene in Battin Hall for the purpose of discussing Annual Town Meeting Articles.

*Meeting Materials: Meeting Agenda; Report on Fiske School Overcrowding dated March 11, 2014; Fiske Enrollment/Classroom Shortage Survey Summary Report by the Fiske School PTO dated March 11, 2014; LPS Master Plan Update dated April 9, 2014*

Voted by the School Committee June 10, 2014