

**LINCOLN SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021**

7:00 PM

GOOGLE MEET

Present

Ellen Joachim, Chair; Carole Kasper, Vice-Chair; Harold Engstrom; Cara Endyke-Doran; Kevin Matthews; Candace Miller

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal; Kirsteen Patterson, Director of Business and Facilities; Joshua Gilman, Teachers' Association; Riya Misra, Student Senate Representative; Leslie Patterson and Martha Wall, Co-Chairs Racial Climate Task Force; Philip James, Matthew Baird, Judy Merra, members of Racial Climate Task Force.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Director of Finance and Operations Report

Kirsteen Patterson reported on the Executive Summary Financial Report update on second quarter expenditures through January 4, 2021. 95.61% of the FY21 Budget has been spent or encumbered which includes all salaries. COVID19 expenses are included which are supported by four federal and state grants totaling \$483,223 which are encumbered or expended. A FEMA reimbursement and second round of federal funding are expected which will support temporary part time staff and COVID testing expenses. Projected overage of \$1.2 million for pending placements continue to be held in reserve. All utilities are coming in on target. Continue Monitoring of state and federal aid continues as it relates to the LS budget.

Ms. Miller inquired about the cost of substitute teaching this year. Ms. Patterson reminded the committee that the hybrid model and use of instructional aides made a comparison to a typical year difficult to assess. However, federal funding has supported substitute teaching costs.

The FY22 Budget Timeline has been updated reflecting that the Public Hearing for FY22 Budget will be held on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 following the Lincoln Budget Workshop on February 23, 2021. The timeline has been updated to reflect the new date for Lincoln Town Meeting which will be held on May 15, 2021.

Presentation by the Racial Climate Task Force

Ms. Wong introduced the members of the Racial Climate Task Force including co-chairs Leslie Patterson and Martha Wall as well as student Matthew Baird, LS parent Judy Merra, and Faculty representative Phillip James. Martha Wall expressed gratitude to the LS School Committee for their statement in June 2020 regarding their commitment to improving the racial climate at LS. Goals of the Racial Climate Task Force dovetail with Strategic Plan objectives and include:

- Connectedness – to create an inclusive, collaborative school climate that fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Curricular and Programmatic Engagement – to create, maintain, and deliver meaningful, robust, current, accessible curriculum.
- Narrow the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps – achieve equity and excellence.
- Student and Staff Well-being – to prioritize student and staff well-being and positive self-identity development as essential components to sustainable growth and life-long learning.

Additional initiatives are:

- Recruiting, hiring, and retaining educators of color
- Providing professional development for staff
- Hearing from students and responding
- Reviewing curriculum to make it current, relevant and culturally responsive.
- Fostering family/community engagement

Matthew Baird and Judy Merra addressed the role of the Racial Climate Task Force Steering Committee which includes students, parents, and LS faculty and uses a shared leadership model addressing the Needs Assessment Report. Action steps include identifying bridges and barriers, implementing family and community engagement in the process, creating subcommittees to address different aspects, sharing the film “I’m Not Racist...Am I?” Ms. Wong commended Judy Merra and Pamela Jones for writing grants and fundraising to bring the film to LS for viewing by the LS community. Discussion ensued regarding participants in the racial climate task force surveys. Plaudits for the work of the task force including the facilitator training and the diversity workshops.

Recognitions

Ms. Wong recognized Danielle Weisse and Susan Frommer, co-leaders of the Martin Luther King Jr. Action Group, for their work in assisting students to prepare for Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrated on January 19, 2021. Danielle Weisse and Susan Frommer worked with students Henry Ganz, Alyssa Immonem, Alex Kornblum, Zoe Littlefield recited a poem by Nordette Adams “Remembering a Life”. Henry Ganz, Alyssa Immonem, Alex Kornblum, Zoe Littlefield, Abigail Hedlund, Mia Gullotti, Clara Enache, Devon Das, and Emily Chen who worked together to create an interactive MLK website which includes songs, movies, quotations, poems, myths about Martin Luther King Jr., black-owned businesses to support, a treasure hunt, and a petition.

Aida Ramos managed a state review of all student services which occurs every six years. The review includes all aspects of Student Services: counseling, ELL, special education, homeless

support, academic support, tutoring, and out of district services and took place on January 6-7, 2021. The review included surveys of parents, interviews with administrators, Ms. Wong, faculty and students. The review by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Department was very positive. It involved a great deal of organization and effort by Ms. Ramos and will result in a report that will be shared with the School Committee. The initial verbal review stated that LS exceeded standards set by DESE.

Ms. Wong recognized the Musicians Union who performed a concert on January 15, 2021. The funds raised by the concert were dedicated to the Cambodia School, the LS Memorial sister school. Dan Schuler is the faculty advisor for the Musicians Union.

Ms. Wong also commended the school nurses for their work in contact tracing surrounding incidents of positive COVID tests. Their work involves investigating close contact, informing families, sending out letters to families of close contacts. The work has been added to their regular work within the school. A great deal of the COVID work has necessarily taken place over weekends. In addition, the school nurses must monitor the positive cases and authorize students' return to school.

Senate Report

Riya Misra reported that the Senate has been discussing mental health and student engagement. The result of the discussion was a recommendation to faculty that classes be dismissed on time so that students have an opportunity to reset before the beginning of the next class. The Senate also discussed the ability of students to upload notes and to screenshot during class so that students can refer back to class moments and information. The Senate representatives also reported that students appreciated teacher requests and inquiries for feedback.

METCO Parent Representative Report

There was no METCO Parent Representative Report.

Teachers' Association Report

Joshua Gilman reported that teachers are focused on grading for the end of semester and preparing for the beginning of Semester 2. Mr. Gilman appreciated the information presented by the Student Senate Representative.

Chairperson and Liaison Reports

Ms. Joachim confirmed that the February 23rd meeting has been rescheduled to February 24th so that members can be present at the Second Budget Workshop of the Lincoln Finance Committee. Ms. Joachim has spoken with Silvia Nersessian and Tara Mitchell regarding a Tri-District Legislative Forum at some point this spring. Ms. Joachim suggested that members consider whether to resume Listening Sessions virtually.

Carole Kasper reported that the Strategic Planning Steering Committee met on January 14, 2021. The four broad strategic objectives continue to be fleshed out: connectedness and

belonging, narrowing the achievement gaps, student and staff well-being, and curricular and programmatic engagement. The Lincoln Town Meeting has been rescheduled to May 15, 2021.

Superintendent/Principal Report

Update on Testing

COVID Testing continues and students are able to join the testing program. Ms. Wong extended her thanks to the Sudbury Foundation and the LSPO for their assistance for financial support for student testing when needed. Test results are received 36 hours after test kits are received from students. Seven rounds of testing have been completed to date. 1100 people are registered to participate. DESE is now offering six weeks of free pool testing to schools with districts able to pay for additional testing. LS anticipates receiving additional COVID assistance stimulus funding. State offered pool testing requires a Binax antigen test for all members of a pool which includes a positive test. That is not a requirement for the LS testing. Ms. Wong contacted DESE to inquire if a credit would be offered to schools that had already engaged in regular COVID testing. Her request is under consideration and if offered funds will be used to extend LS testing.

LS has applied to receive free Binax antigen tests and has been approved. The antigen test is now considered acceptable by some in place of a PCR test. It will be used to test students exhibiting symptoms. Project Beacon is the platform that will record positive results which will be transmitted to the Department of Public Health. The antigen test is a nasal swab test. Consent will be requested at the time of testing.

The number of LS students working remotely remains relatively stable at 260 students. Half of our student positive COVID results have occurred since mid-December. There were no cases among LS staff until the latter part of December. Ms. Wong thanks Skylar Weirnick for creating the graph which illustrates LS COVID Surveillance Testing.

General Updates

The OPEB Trustees will be meeting on January 26, 2021 at 6pm and School Committee members are invited to attend but may not deliberate on the subject at the meeting.

Ms. Wong presented a proposal to close the funding gap of \$465,000 in FY22 Budget which has been reduced thanks to the change in Health Providers and thanks to the LS Teachers' Association offering to forego a Cost of Living Increase for the next year. The extra out of district tuition expenses will result in an increased circuit breaker reimbursement of approximately \$200,000. The expense of bus monitors will be removed because the new transportation provider offers bus monitors as part of the contract with Van Pool. Ms. Wong proposes adjusting the OPEB contribution from \$383,109 to \$250,000. While it is important to maintain the OPEB Contribution, Ms. Wong asks to decrease the OPEB contribution given the current expenses for FY22. Ms. Wong asks permission to increase Mandarin offering by .25 FTE and also Computer by .25 FTE to increase the mandated increase in computational thinking course opportunities required by DESE. Ms. Wong feels it is important to support students in improving the academic program especially during a time when students are working hard to

address their own education during this unusual time. Ms. Patterson supports the use of OPEB funds to close the funding gap for FY22. Ms. Wong offers to discuss the proposal further with School Committee members. She has sent the proposal to Town offices in both Lincoln and Sudbury. Mr. Matthews expressed his concerns regarding decreasing the OPEB contribution. His opinion is that LS is experiencing a structural deficit that will only be managed by a bold move which may require an override because expenses continue to grow – out of district tuitions continue to grow, COVID related expenses continue to grow, and mental health issues will continue to grow. Ms. Joachim opined that further cuts to programs or staff are not advisable at this time when the Teachers' Association has offered a great deal in changing Healthcare Providers and not requiring a Cost of Living Increase for the coming year and when student needs are likely to be higher after the pandemic. A great deal has been asked of the faculty and staff so while contributing to OPEB is important, the demands of the coming year are more important.

The Town of Sudbury is requesting Warrant Articles for Capital Items to be placed in the Town Warrant. The Warrant Article requested from LS is for the Stadium Field replacement. This will require a vote by the LS School Committee. Members expressed concern that the warrant article was sponsored by the School Committee rather than the Town.

VOTE: Kevin Matthews voted to approve the language of the Warrant Article: "To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, or transfer from available funds, the Town's 50% share of \$337,500 for the total estimated project of \$675,000, whereby, the Regional School District has authorized the transfer from the School's Excess and Deficiency Account for its 50% share of \$337,500; or any other sum, to be expended under the direction of the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School Committee, for the purpose of replacing the Community Stadium Field Turf located on the property of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School; and to determine whether said sum shall be raised by borrowing or otherwise; or to act on anything relative thereto." The motion was seconded by Candace Miller. There was no further discussion, all were in favor via a roll call vote.

Information and Discussion

Second reading of the 2021-2022 LS School Calendar. September 1 would be the first day of school for all students. The last day of school would be June 21st with no snow days.

Action Items

VOTE: Kevin Matthews moved to accept the 2021-2022 LS School Calendar as presented. Carole Kasper seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and all were in favor via roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

Carole Kasper offered a motion to accept the LS School Committee Minutes from December 1, December 8, 2020, and January 5, 2021. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.

Future Agenda Items

There were no future agenda items.

Public Comment

Where can parents find and review the Equity Survey results ?

What is the RCTF definition of “person of color” ? Some definitions are more expansive than others. What is the current ratio of educators of color at LS ? **Brenda Hart**

Adjourn to Executive Session

On a motion from Carole Kasper, seconded by Candace Miller, the Open meeting was adjourned at 9:42pm and the members entered Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation because to do so in Open Session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the School Committee and to review and approve Executive Session Minutes. All were in favor via roll call.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale

To view video of the meeting, please go to: <https://sudbury.vod.cstus.tv/vod>