

REGULAR MEETING OF THE LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

October 1, 2008

The regular meeting of the Lowell School Committee took place in the Council Chambers, City Hall, at 7:00 pm, on the above-mentioned date.

ROLL CALL

On roll call at 7:07 pm, all members were present, namely: John J. Leahy, James D. Leary, Connie A. Martin, Mayor/Chairman Edward (Bud) C. Caulfield, David J. Conway, Jacqueline A. Doherty and Regina M. Faticanti

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Spotlight on Excellence: Summer Reading Program

Mayor Caulfield acknowledged Jean M. Franco, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

Deputy Superintendent Franco stated that this was the second year of the Grades K-8 Summer Reading Program. This summer parents, guardians and caretakers of our grades K-8 students supported them in extending and enriching their literacy skills by encouraging daily summer reading. The students were challenged to read daily, and were also challenged to maintain their own Summer Reading Log containing their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. This year the total number of books that were read reached 16, 183. All participating students received a certificate, and they were entered into a drawing, whereas, three students were picked from each school. These students were here tonight representing their school. Superintendent Franco read the following names while Mayor Caulfield presented each of the following students a **\$25.00** gift certificate from Barnes & Noble Bookstore:

SCHOOLS

STUDENTS

| SCHOOLS | STUDENTS |
|--------------------|---|
| Bailey | Richard Davis/Adrianna Ayers/Juan Serrano Jr. |
| Bartlett Community | Andrew Often/Felicia Kim/ Mala Vooun |
| Butler | Hanna MacKinnon/Naro Kang/SeophaoLy |
| Daley | Melissa Ngeth/Matthew Trani/David Crueger-Cain |
| Freshman Academy | Elizabeth Thach |
| Greenhalge | Jasmine Andrea Del Llano/Emily Marrero-Gath/John Mendonca |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Lincoln | Daniel Purpura/Ann Men/Shyan Yen |
| McAuliffe | Destany Medina/Abigail Pino/Eliomar Cruz |
| McAvinnue | Jacob Flynn/Heer Patel/Jennifer Gonzalez |
| Moody | Rafael Garcia/Ana Santiago/Fernanda Cassiano |
| Morey | Jaren McFaline/Anida Seng/Schiavone McKenzie |
| Murkland | Tori Hannon/Charlynda Pang/Nikita Keo |
| Pawtucketville | Elly McMeniman/Kyle McLeod/Thomas Dean |
| Pyne/Arts | Kaitlyn Sullivan/Jessica Sullivan/Ashley Carbonneau |
| Reilly | Caleb Hong/Kaleigh Dunham/Jack Leahy |
| Robinson | Daniela Escobar/Julie Kheoloung/Haley Anderson |
| Rogers | Saphon Chantha/Isareliz Elias/Prohours Thang |
| Shaughnessy | Ryan Cronin/Elexia Keung/Thetiya Phath |
| Stoklosa | Isaac Andrade, Jacob Andrade/Chandavy Mao |
| Sullivan | Jillian Pattershall/Katherine Coughlin/Sotheany Leap |
| Wang | Martina Umuma/Taylor Beane/Keith Stead |
| Washington | Kate Dyson/Mitchell Ou/Victoria Morin |

Parents took pictures of their children shaking hands with Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent and Mayor Edward C. Caulfield.

Ms. Faticanti moved:

For a five minute recess; seconded by Ms. Doherty. APPROVED

For the record, the time being 7:25 pm, this meeting recessed.

ROLL CALL after **Recess**

On roll call, after recess, at 7:30 pm, all members were present.

2. Pre-K-16 Pathway Presentation by Superintendent Chris A. Scott, Middlesex Community College President Carole Cowan, and University of Massachusetts Lowell Chancellor Martin Meehan.

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent stated that the Pre-K-16 Pathway Presentation she was going to show tonight was a draft put together by Chancellor Meehan (UML), President Cowan (MCC), and herself.

A video was shown entitled, *The Pre-K to 16 Pathway for all students attending Lowell Public Schools*. The Pathway will expand the partnership between the Lowell Public Schools, Middlesex Community College, and the University of Massachusetts Lowell. The proposed Pathway represents all the key components of the Readiness Project put forth by the State of Massachusetts. The Pathway will be a pilot project for the important educational initiative of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (formerly the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Department of Education). The Readiness Project students attending Lowell Public Schools, after the completion of the Pathway, will have a grade 12 diploma from Lowell High School, an Associates Degree from Middlesex Community College, and they can proceed on to the University of Massachusetts Lowell. During vulnerable transition time in the students' academic careers, a Safety Net is offered to the K-12 students through the coordination of support systems and community agencies, namely: Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI), Department of Social Services (DSS), the Lowell Police Department, the district Attorney's Office, the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA), and others.

Dr. Scott stated that details still had to be worked out, such as where the money will come from, but she was very enthusiastic about the Readiness Pathway. It would lower the drop-out rate; more students would receive high school diplomas. All students would earn an Associates Degree upon graduation at Middlesex Community College. After that, they could go on to the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Students will receive support going on to college and/or entering the business world.

Both President Cowan and Chancellor Meehan expressed their enthusiasm and support of the Readiness Project stating that Lowell would be the first in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Lowell would set a precedence.

All Committee members sincerely thanked President Cowan and Chancellor Meehan for coming tonight and for their hard work putting the Readiness Program together. They spoke in favor of the Readiness Program, but were concerned about the financial amount.

A lengthy discussion followed.

Ms. Faticanti moved:

For a **Suspension of the Rules** in order to bring in a motion; seconded by Ms. Doherty.
Suspension APPROVED

Ms. Faticanti moved:

To send the concept of the Pre-K through 12 Readiness Pathway to the Subcommittee on Curriculum for their review, breakdown, suggestions, and recommendations; seconded by Mr. Conway. Unanimously approved on roll call. APPROVED

Mr. Leahy moved:

For a ten minute recess; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. APPROVED

This meeting recessed at 8:25 pm.

ROLL CALL after RECESS

On roll call, after recess, at 8:35 pm, all members were present.

For clarification, we are on the following:

MINUTES

- 1. Regular School Committee Meeting of September 3, 2008

Mr. Conway moved to approve; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. Minutes APPROVED

PERMISSION TO ENTER

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent, presented and recommended the following contract for School Committee approval:

 CHRISTIANSON BUS CO., LLC ----- **\$ 10,400**
 6 Burning Tree Road
 Chelmsford, MA 01824

To provide special education transportation services for a student from Lowell transported to Mass Hospital School in Canton, Massachusetts

Funding provided by the Special Education Transportation Budget

Ms. Faticanti moved:

To accept the recommendation of the Superintendent and to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. Unanimously approved on roll call. APPROVED

MEMORIALS - The Committee as a Whole stood for a 'Moment of Silence' in memory of the following:

(by Regina M. Faticanti)

1. Nilsa Carmona, sister of Aide Colon, Lincoln School Paraprofessional

MOTIONS

1. (by John J. Leahy) - Request that the Superintendent contact the appropriate City Department to see if they can assist in relocating the playground equipment from the Varnum School to another school in need of this equipment; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. APPROVED

Ms. Faticanti stated that the playground equipment was donated by the daughter of Mary Ann Recka in her mother's memory. Mary Ann Recka had gone to the Varnum School when she was a child. Ms. Faticanti stated that there was a plaque at the Varnum School stating the name of Mary Ann Recka and the dedication date (April 27, 2000). She wanted to make sure the plaque was moved along with the playground equipment.

Mayor Caulfield stated when the school is determined (where the playground equipment will be moved); he would make sure the city workers moved the plaque also.

2. (by David J. Conway) - To ask the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of extending the Christmas vacation by two additional days for the purpose of realizing cost savings in the areas of energy consumption; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. APPROVED

In discussion, Mr. Conway stated that this was done in the past to conserve energy; right now, with the high cost of fuel, it should be done again.

Mayor Caulfield concurred with Mr. Conway.

3. (by John J. Leahy) - Ask for an update from Food Services comparing recent changes with previous years for healthy lunches at all schools; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. APPROVED

Mr. Leahy stated that he was looking for the changes that were implemented to serve healthier lunches, and how the changes were working out. Also, some of the bubblers in the school weren't working. Perhaps bottled water could be added.

Mayor Caulfield asked if there was a bidding process for food services to the schools?

Roger (Jay) Lang IV, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, stated that Lowell schools use a lot of government USDA foods as well as food items that are bid. The bidding is home-based in Lowell.

4. (by Jacqueline A. Doherty) - Request the Lowell School Committee discuss impacts of Question 1, a ballot initiative to eliminate the state income tax. Passage of Question 1 could cut the state budget by more than 40%, cause massive reductions

in local aid to cities and towns, and result in drastic reductions in school programs; seconded by Mr. Conway. APPROVED

Ms. Doherty stated that she had a conversation with Senator Steven C. Panagiotakos. He stated that it was closer to 50%; not 40%. About 85 percent of our (Lowell School Department) budget is funded by us. The rest comes from the state. The passage of Question 1 would be devastating to us.

Ms. Faticanti stated that she had a problem telling the taxpayers how to vote.

Mayor Caulfield stated that the motion wasn't telling the public how to vote; the motion was merely stated the effects and concerns School Committee members have. This was a very important issue. Lowell receives over 300 million dollars from the state: 150 million in aid and 118 million from Chapter 70 funds. For a City like Lowell, the passage of Question 1 would be devastating. Without local aid, Lowell could not survive.

5. (by Jacqueline A. Doherty) - Request the Superintendent provide a report on High School Health A & B courses, specifically providing information on the sex education component of the curriculum as well as including numbers of students taking it during freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior years; seconded by Ms. Martin. APPROVED

Ms. Doherty stated that there is a discussion in the middle school, but in her research, she found that the high school wasn't really doing very much about sex education until the sophomore year in Health B courses. Research shows that the most teen pregnancies occur from 15 to 19 years. Ms. Doherty stated that the high school should teach sex education in the freshmen year, and they should be doing it soon.

6. (by John J. Leahy) - Request the Superintendent provide a full explanation on why the sophomores are not offered the Pre SAT Test this October; seconded by Ms. Faticanti for discussion.

Mr. Leahy stated that he received calls from parents. The Pre SAT was offered in the past, and this year it wasn't. Parents wanted to know why, and some parents even offered to pay for the Pre SAT Test out of their own pockets. He couldn't answer parents, because he didn't know, at the time, why the test was eliminated. The test gave students a feel of what the real SAT test would be like their junior year.

Mr. Leahy stated that he did receive a report from Headmaster Samaras, prior to this meeting, stating that the grant that provided funding for the Pre SAT Test was eliminated; therefore, he eliminated the test. Mr. Leahy stated that the School Committee should have been involved in that decision; it was a lack of communication that Committee members were not notified. The Committee should have been involved with this decision; they are the ones that receive calls from parents.

Ms. Faticanti stated that the report from Mr. Samaras did not give enough information. The amount of cost for the testing was not stated, and the number of sophomore students affected was not stated. The School Committee was never notified, and they should have been notified that the Pre SAT Test was no longer available. In fact, the School Committee should have been notified before the final decision was made.

Ms. Martin concurred with her colleagues. The preparatory test helps students prepare for the SAT they take during their junior year. It was important to parents. The School Committee could have come up with another plan if they were made aware that funding was lost. The Committee was never given that chance.

Mr. Conway stated that the Guidance Counselors should have been part of the discussion to remove the Pre SAT Test. He felt the Headmaster should not have come to any decision regarding the Pre SAT Test without consulting the Guidance Counselors first. They work with students all the time advising them. They are experts. They know more than anyone else how important the Pre SAT Test is to students and their parents.

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent, stated that she doesn't believe the Guidance Counselors were polled. She did go to Headmaster Samaras to make sure he knew her position was that she is to be notified before he can make any decision about eliminating any testing.

Ms. Faticanti stated that, in turn, the Superintendent notifies the School Committee, because the School Committee is the policy makers. That is procedure!

Dr. Scott stated that she would ask Headmaster Samaras to forward all the information regarding Pre SAT Test to her. She would disseminate this information to the Committee.

Ms. Faticanti moved for a **Substitute Motion:**

To refer Mr. Leahy's motion to Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent; seconded by Ms. Martin. **Substitute Motion** APPROVED

SUBCOMMITTEE

1. Joint Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Meeting - Report and Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of September 18, 2008, by James D. Leary, Chair of Finance and John J. Leahy, Chair of Facilities

Mr. Leahy stated that the following issues were discussed:

Review of the Regulations Governing the Use of School Facilities

Mr. Leahy stated that Roger (Jay) Lang IV, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, and Michael Cassidy, Assistant Business Manager, reviewed the current regulations governing the use of school facilities. The Lowell Highland Basketball

Organization (LHBO) discussed plans for expanding age divisions to allow older boys and girls the opportunity to play basketball; this may qualify them for the Shannon Grant. The Lowell Highland Basketball Organization is sponsored (as they always have been) by the City of Lowell Parks and Recreation Department; therefore, fees are waived for weeknight use of the Lowell Public School facilities.

Grant Writer Consultant

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent, updated Subcommittee members with the planning efforts pertaining to the development of a draft job description for a grant writer consultant. This will be discussed further at the next Joint Finance and Facilities Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Faticanti moved:

To accept the Joint Finance and Facilities Subcommittee Report as a report of progress and to place on file; seconded by Ms. Martin. APPROVED

REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent, presented and recommended approval of the following reports:

1. Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Standards (MCAS) Results

Mayor Caulfield acknowledged Paul Schlichtman, Coordinator K-12 Research, Testing and Assessment.

Paul Schlichtman gave a detailed report and breakdowns of Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Standards (MCAS) results in English Language Arts and Mathematics (ATTACHED TO AND MADE PART OF THESE MINUTES).

Mr. Leahy stated that Lowell has the highest rate of second language learners in the state.

Ms. Doherty requested that the Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Standards (MCAS) test be posted on the Lowell School Department's website.

Ms. Martin thanked Paul Schlichtman for an excellent report and breakdown. She requested a breakdown by schools for her Curriculum Subcommittee.

After discussion, Ms. Faticanti moved:

To accept the report as a report of progress and to place on file; seconded by Ms. Martin. APPROVED

2. The Massachusetts Accountability System

Ms. Faticanti stated that the report was very clear and easy to understand.

Jean M. Franco, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, stated that James Neary, Coordinator of School Improvement, completed the report.

Ms. Faticanti moved:

To accept the report as a report of progress and to place on file; seconded by Ms. Martin.
APPROVED

CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

The Superintendent presented and recommended approval of the following convention/conference requests:

1. Overnight Field Trip Request: Phil Maia, Marybeth McKenney, Patrick Sweet and the Boys and Girls Indoor Track and Cross Country programs to attend events: October 11, 2008 *Manhattan College Invitational* held in Yonkers, New York; January 9, 2009 to compete in the *Dartmouth College Relays* in New Hampshire. Total expenses will not exceed \$700 and will be paid by the LHS Athletic Department. Cost of \$100 for one substitute/one day and will be paid by the LHS Individual School Account.
2. Student Support Service staff members Susan E. Smith and Attorney Jane Mosher-Canty to attend the *National Association for the Education of homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)* held in Washington, DC from October 31 to November 3, 2008. Cost will not exceed \$1200/per person and will be paid thorough the McKinney-Vento and Title I grants.
3. Overnight Field Trip Request: 4th grade students and their teachers of the McAvinnue School request permission to attend the *Museum of Science Camp-In Program* in Boston, MA on November 14 & 15, 2008. Transportation will be paid by the Student Activities account. The cost is also funded by student donations, Museum of Science Scholarship and school fundraising. No cost to the School Department budget.
4. Overnight Field Trip Request: LHS Foreign Language and ELL Chairman Stephen Gervais, along with four chaperones and 24 LHS students to travel to *Japan* during April vacation, April 18th through April 26th, 2009. Participants will be paying their own way. No substitutes will be needed.

Mr. Leahy moved:

To accept the recommendation of the Superintendent and to approve all four requests; seconded by Ms. Doherty. Unanimously approved on roll call. APPROVED

RECESS – Ms. Doherty moved to **recess** to go into **Executive Session** and to **adjourn** from there; seconded by Ms. Faticanti. This meeting recessed at 9:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Chris A. Scott, Superintendent and
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee

CAS: jms

Enclosures