



Lunenburg Public Schools

Dr. Kate Burnham, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING NOTICE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, February 5, 2020
Regular Session, Town Hall, 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

School Committee

Heather Sroka, Chair
Wendy Bertrand, Vice Chair
Brian Lehtinen, Secretary
Carol Archambault
Jim LaVeck

Student Representative

Claire Delaney - Absent

Superintendent

Dr. Kate Burnham

Business Manager/ HR Director

Michael Cassidy

Recording Secretary

Susan Somers

Guests:

- A. *In accordance with the requirements of Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast over the Lunenburg Public Access channel.*
- B. *Mission Statement: The Mission of the Lunenburg Public Schools is to provide all students with the skills, confidence, and passion for life-long learning so that they may find their own paths to successful careers, active citizenship, and rewarding lives.*
- C. *Pledge of Allegiance is Recited.*
1. **Call to Order** - Ms. Sroka, 7:00pm
2. **Chair's Report** - none
3. **Presentations** - none
4. **Public Comment-Agenda Items** - Mr. LaVeck commented that he is appalled at the Board of Selectmen and their discussions regarding school issues. He finds the comments extremely negative regarding the proposed 5 year plan. The Board of Selectmen are trying to insist on their inclusion in the LEA negotiations, and they have been reminded that it is not in their purview. He would encourage others to watch their meetings and their over-reach into the schools, the budgeting process and understanding what the needs are. And into the town itself and regarding who allocates funds. Ms. Sroka commented that she believes there are two seats up for re-election and perhaps someone else can run? Mr. Lehtinen advised that the public needs to know that a lot of cuts have been made in recent years and we need some things back. Ms. Sroka feels that we need a better working, more symbiotic relationship. Mr. Lehtinen commented that if this keeps going (the cuts) students will keep leaving, people will sell their houses and property values will go down. All affecting the town. Mr. LaVeck concurred that the school system is absolutely a drawing factor. The committee heard from Peter Beardmore of 32 Pleasant St. Mr. Beardmore stated that he had attended three consecutive Board of Selectmen meetings, and while he agreed that the negativity was inappropriate he felt that the Selectmen had stumbled across some key points that deserve discussion. Are we going to stay in debt service for the next several years? Can we reduce taxes? Or are we going to spend millions updating buildings and taking on more debt? The reality is that we can't continue to take on debt and support the programs that are needed in this town. There needs to be an open / honest / strategic discussion focusing on the budget. We need to get back into conversation about the issues.
5. **Review and Approve Warrants, Line Item Transfers** - High School wishes to transfer \$219 from general supply to the High School furniture line to purchase stools for the auditorium control room. \$1,389.32 reconcile a slight increase to a student's out of district tuition cost from SPED private to collaborative tuitions. \$16,380 from health insurance to transportation for a unique transportation issue that needs to be solved at the moment (small bus). Ms. Archambault moved to approve line item transfers, Ms. Bertrand seconded, all agreed.
6. **Review and Approve Minutes**

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- **Regular Session 1-22-20** - Ms. Archambault moved to approve, Mr. Lehtinen seconded, all agreed.

7. **Superintendent's Report** - Again, now that it is February we are in registration month. All information is up on the website at multiple links. Dr. Burnham and Mr. Cassidy were present at the Board of Selectmen meeting for the Q&A regarding the 5 year forecast. Recent student lunch forms in the month of January. Topics included the homework free breaks; the transition from 8th to 9th grade seen as difficult. Students at the High School are working on guidelines/orientation. Takeaways are that the students really appreciate the homework-free time. Some kids report that some High School teachers front or back-loaded on homework. Hopefully this could be alleviated if teachers have ample notice. Bullying discussion - it is not physical. Tends to take the form of verbal/sarcastic humor. Another issue to address is social hosting - ie: adults who host a gathering of minors, but turn a blind eye or even provide alcohol. How to approach this? Had a conversation with the District Advisory Council about ways...Is there a need for another committee, or do we already have solutions in place to help educate? SADD, Wellness Committee, behavioral health advisory, Middle and High School advisory councils. ROAR due to be at the Wellness Committee in March. We will see if we can partner up about some presentations that can benefit the community at large. District advisory councils in discussion about parent teacher conferences. They are interested in having the school advisory councils take this up. The feeling is that ten minutes is really not enough for anyone. How to reimagine? April 2 - April 5 Boston National Science Conference. We have been awarded a civics teaching/learning grant of \$38,250 (us and a number of other schools). This will fund professional development in civics. Student Opportunity Act - school plans must be submitted by April 1st. Dr. Burnham to attend webinar. Regarding school safety: Dr. Burnham noted that the questions on school safety had a focus on "Do you feel you belong or fit in?" 75% said yes (meaning 25% said no). Also If you need help are there adults you could go to? Almost 20% said zero adults. This is concerning, and we take this seriously. We have data from a Department of Education survey that 5th, 8th, 10th grade students take when they take the science MCAS test - students perspective of school climate. We will compile and present to you.

8. **Student Representative's Report** - Student rep not present. Ms. Bertrand asked about reaching out to each school for a report. Something that the school rep could submit ahead of time.

9. **New Business**

Action

- A. **FY21 School Choice** - 143 (8th grade). Typically lose 20 to Monty Tech. Support 10 seats next year for Grade 9, support 9 seats for Grade 10. Mr. LaVeck motion to accept. Ms. Bertrand seconded, all agreed. Applications to be posted tomorrow. There will be a lottery if we have more applications than we have seats.

10. **Budget Question & Answer** - The committee again heard from Peter Beardmore of 218 Pleasant St. Plan for a 2.5% increase. Superintendent 4% increase. Dr. Burnham indicated that this can be firmed up once we Get health insurance costs at the end of the month. Getting a second school psychologist is necessary. A school psychologist tests students for special ed. This affects many students at the primary level. There is a great need for solid tiered support. It's not clearly articulated at this point. School Psychologists also chair IEP meetings - both the initial meeting and the re-evaluations every three years. Primary school having Pre-k through 2nd grade has more chairing and testing. These things are all compliance-driven. If we have a full time person they are more available for the supports (things such as skill groups, support response team, etc.). Discussion ensued regarding open positions (Assistant Principal, School Psychologist) possibility of reducing teacher FTEs. There are 6 K classes, and each has a paraprofessional. May have to move to sharing a paraprofessional between two classes. We can't reduce the special ed paraprofessionals. Possibility of cutting back FTEs in IT, adjusting maintenance, grounds, etc. Each of these would reduce health insurance costs and lead us to a more level funding expense. We will see what the baseline numbers are for kindergarten at the end of February. The committee heard from Peggy Proctor of 141 Gilchrist asking Do we run the risk of losing teachers with these cuts. Dr. Burnham agreed that yes, we anticipate a highly competitive climate. Perhaps there is the possibility of recruiting retirees? Ms. Proctor thanked the committee for fighting for the schools. This is a critical need, and if we let our schools erode - we're done. In a small town the school takes a majority of the budget. It's the law that we provide services, and the need is increasing. We have a responsibility to meet this need. Mr. Lehtinen added that it is imperative that people understand the difference between the budget and the 5 year plan. Dr. Burnham agreed - the 5 year plan nis projection. The plan included a wish to expand the foreign language program down to the 5th grade. But this was the only thing that was not based on need. As with every year, we will be prioritizing our list. Ms. Archambault agreed - It is our responsibility to put the needs out there. We understand we won't get all of this. Mr. LaVeck added that this increases the level of transparency as to what is needed to educate our kids. A 5 year plan was not available before. This puts the town on notice. Dr. Burnham noted that if additional funding sources become available - a grant, for example - this may assist with some of these costs. Ms. Bertrand asked for more discussion of the student opportunity act. More Chapter 7 money that is earmarked. Dr. Burnham indicated that the money is phased in over a 7 year period. Mr. Lehtinen added that the money is going to high-need districts. Mr. Cassidy advised that Lunenburg is receiving \$155,000 (2%). Last year it was 2.5%. The only thing certain is Chapter 7 money. To which Dr. Burnham added - And new reporting requirements. Mr. Lehtinen asked if we can talk about the timeline? Dr. Burnham advised that at the end of February we will be receiving health insurance costs and that this will put us in a better place for numbers. Potentially March 1st meeting? March 12th hope to present a budget endorsed by the committee. Q&A March 18th. It is agreed to move the March 4th meeting to March 11th.

11. **Public Comment-Open** - The committee again heard from Peter Beardmore. Mr. Beardmore congratulated and thanked the committee for their approach and asked that we please continue and pursue and advocate for our kids. He encouraged the committee to attend selectmen and finance committee meetings. Our presence and our absence is noted. Some members need to know that parents can be mobilized. Middle/High School programs are important. Spending at lower levels is important. My own (Mr. Beardmore's) child availed of resources. Mr. LaVeck asked - How do we handle a member of the committee sitting in the audience as a member of the public? What if we are asked a question? How do we handle it? Refer all matters to the Superintendent? We are limited as to what we can discuss outside of this meeting. Mr. LaVeck commented that he attended the MASC Safety in Schools workshop and he found it very informative. He will be sharing information soon. Mr. Lehtinen added that we have amazing parents, PTO, paraprofessionals, volunteers - we need to make sure that we are not fighting ourselves for money. Trust the administration team to make decisions. We need to work together. Ms. Bertrand added that LEA representation was great at the last meeting. Mr. LaVeck had great feedback when he was stopped at Hannaford by a parent who commented that he was thrilled with the middle school basketball program. Dr. Burnham added that the tone at the Finance Committee was much more thoughtful than the Board of Selectmen. It was a very different experience and much appreciated.

12. **Topics for Future Discussion** - Ms. Bertrand asked that school registration and verifying residence be added to the future agenda. Also the student rep working on getting information to the committee before the meeting. Mr. Lehtinen added that the information would be good for letters for the Lunenburg Ledger and goals follow up.

13. **Executive Session:** *To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with union personnel.*

Roll Call

Heather Sroka - Yes

Wendy Bertrand - Yes

Jim LaVeck - Yes

Carol Archambault - Yes

Brian Lehtinen - Yes

14. **Adjournment** - 9:00pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Somers