

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020**

7:30 pm

Google Meet

Present

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

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal; Joshua Gilman and Paula Myers, Teachers' Association; Monica Singletary, LS METCO Parent Board

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:31pm

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Presentation

There was no presentation.

Recognitions

Ms. Wong recognized the extraordinary efforts

Student Representative Report

There was no Student Representative Report

METCO Parent Report

There was no METCO Parent Report

Teachers' Association Report

Joshua Gilman reported that teachers have begun Phase III of online learning and are finding that the synchronous meetings are working well. Students are working on assignments and attending synchronous meetings. Mr. Gilman recognized the student class advisors for their efforts in supporting students and teachers in all phases of online learning.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Joachim extended her thanks to fellow School Committee members for their flexibility in scheduling additional School Committee meetings. She reminded the members of the EDCO school committee roundtable on May 14th at 9:30am. The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for May 12 and will start at 7pm. The auditing firm of Powers and Sullivan will be presenting the results of their audit that evening.

Liaison Report

There were no Liaison Reports.

Superintendent/Principal Report

NEASC Update

Ms. Wong reported that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges awarded Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School continued accreditation on April 29, 2020. LS must submit a growth plan to NEASC; the growth plan is currently due in July 2020. NEASC has agreed to accept the LS Strategic Plan as the growth plan. Visitation to LS will be from October 24-27th 2021. The Strategic Planning committee does not yet have a draft of its report. School closure and remote learning has delayed work on the Strategic Planning although plans have been initiated to resume work on the plan. Individual work groups have been contributing their results to Leslie Patterson and Dan Conti who will be working on assembling the plan.

Racial Climate Task Force Update

Work continues on the Racial Climate Task Force during their weekly meetings. Leslie Patterson and Martha Wall are the chairs for the Task Force which also includes Phil James, Jim Berry, Sarah Greeley, Lori Hodin, and Ms. Wong. The goals of the task force are: recruiting, hiring and retention; professional development; student voice, and community engagement. Ms. Wong is pleased to report that recruiting and hiring has gone well with strong candidates hired. The professional development faculty meeting on bias scheduled for March 17th has been postponed having been deemed a complicated and important topic that would be less effectively covered remotely. The community forums were completed before school closure and results will be part of the forthcoming RCTF Update sent to the School Committee, parents, staff and students. Candace Miller inquired about scheduling a virtual meeting with the broader task force members including students. Ms. Wong responded that plans for a virtual meeting will no doubt be set up before the end of the school year.

Personnel Updates

Hiring processes were begun before school closure and completed via video communication. Darius Green has been hired as West House Associate Principal. Kirsteen Patterson has been hired as Director of Finance and Operations. We have hired 1.5 FTE teachers in Math; a .75 FTE Spanish teacher; and a 1.0 FTE in History. A 1.0 FTE hiring for Wellness is in process; a 1.0 FTE is posted for FATA; and a 1.0 FTE Counselor position is in process. Hirings are predominantly to replace personnel lost through attrition or leaves of absence. Kevin Matthews inquired if thought should be given to defer additional hires due to the uncertainties for the FY21 budget. Ms. Wong responded that for each hire, a re-evaluation has been considered regarding the absolute necessity of completing the hire.

School Closure

Phase III for remote learning began on Monday, May 4th. The Phase III plan has accommodated feedback from students and staff. In Phase III, students are expected to follow a schedule with teachers regarding synchronous meetings. Teachers had begun teaching new content during Phase II. Departments are working together to prioritize subject matter to prepare for student

re-entry in the fall. Credit/No Credit will be employed to assess student performance. Patty Mostue inquired whether or not students are managing the time commitment for online classes. Ms. Wong replied that there was a range in student responses – some students able to manage the time commitment, others finding it a bit more difficult. Candace Miller inquired if it would be possible to survey students on their thoughts regarding remote learning. Ms. Wong replied that it might be possible to gather information. Teachers have been relaying student participation. The importance of student participation lies in its indication that students are contacted. Cara Endyke-Doran affirmed the desirability of tracking student data and continuing to monitor the significance of that data. Carole Kasper suggested that the school may be able to trend certain fundamental data sets that have already been assessed, such as: student class participation, assignment completion, and basic wellbeing on a general basis. This information collected during this first foray into remote learning may become the basis for possible continuation of remote learning with a higher expectation for student education in the fall semester. The School Committee members were conscious that faculty and administrators are working hard to implement the online learning and hoped that presenting data would not be overwhelming.

Senior Celebrations/Graduation

Associate Principal Sandy Crawford is responsible for this year's graduation despite having also handled last year's graduation in order to give new Associate Principal Tracy Ryan time to become acclimated to her new role. At the recent class meeting, it was clear that a survey of parents and students was necessary giving three options: graduation postponed; a virtual graduation; a socially distant graduation. Ms. Wong had met with the Sudbury Board of Health last week and the Board of Health indicated that a live graduation in June would be out of the question. The results of the survey for 375 graduating students yielded 200 student responses out of a total of 429 responses. The first choice was graduation as has always been held; secondly a postponed graduation later during the summer. Once recommendations are developed, Ms. Wong will present the recommendations to the School Committee.

There is a newly formed Senior Celebrations Committee that is tasked with creating special student oriented experiences for our graduating seniors. Members of the committee are: Kathleen Thompson, Art Reilly, Leslie Patterson, Sandy Crawford, Charles Despotopulos, and Shari Idelson, 13 students, and 5 parents. The celebrations are meant to create fun events for our graduating seniors. Candace Miller urged parents and students to check the Mass.gov website regarding the gravity of Covid19. Bella Wong affirmed that of primary concern would be the safety of students and families.

Kevin reported regarding rumors that postponing graduation beyond June would present legal and liability issues. Ms. Wong responded that as of June 7th, the students would be *graduated* from high school. LS is open to holding a postponed graduation after the month of June but before the first graduating senior departs for college. Final transcripts will be sent to colleges by mid-June. Because the students will have graduated, they will no longer be under the jurisdiction of the School Committee. Consequently, the Towns of Lincoln and Sudbury, the Boards of Health, Safety Officers, Town Managers, and the broader community must be engaged and in agreement in order to make this happen, keeping in mind the safety of students

and community members. The underlying concern is not the effort involved or disarrangement of schedules but it is most certainly about the safety of all students, student families, and extended family members as well as community members that will be involved with the event. Candace Miller pointed out that no incidences of COVID19 infection exist in our school populations because schools are closed. If schools were open, this would very likely be different.

EDCO

As reported at a past LS School Committee meeting, the EDCO Board is projecting a deficit for FY20. At the last meeting, the EDCO Board voted to assess each member school to cover the projected deficit. LS's share for this assessment is \$10,859. In addition, EDCO has requested that members prepay the fee for FY21 to enable EDCO to provide courses for the coming year and to increase cash flow. The total fee for LS for FY21 is \$7400.

FY20/FY21

Ms. Wong expressed her appreciation of LS FinCom liaisons who inquired whether or not LS would require additional funding for FY21 to cover unexpected costs related to the pandemic. In FY20, out of district students were not able to attend their schools from the moment of school closure onward. This resulted in a tuition surplus of about \$500,000. In addition, the LS School Committee had voted to support bus drivers during school closures but the SPS School Committee voted not to make such payments and it has since been learned that the drivers are receiving unemployment. Consequently, \$200,000 that would have been allotted to cover bus driver salaries will no longer be expended. This results in a net surplus of \$700,000.

Opposing this unexpected savings is an unexpected expense for FY21 revealed to Ms. Wong last week in the form of additional students coming to LS who will need to be educated out of district. The total expected tuition for these students is \$600,000 which leads to a projected shortfall for FY21. Ms. Wong has requested that Peter Rowe pay the remainder of tuition owed this year with savings described above rather than use Circuit Breaker funds. This would result in the circuit breaker fund reserve increasing to approximately \$1,000,000 to roll into FY21.

In FY21, we were expecting \$1.5 million in circuit breaker reserve. However, the state legislation is reconsidering the current reimbursement based on a 70% rate. The state is permitted to decrease the amount based on a 45% rate although Ms. Wong does not anticipate that this will happen. Building up the circuit breaker reserve this year will help mitigate the possible loss of funds for FY21.

Expenses Resulting from COVID19

It is unlikely that transportation costs will increase as a result of COVID19 because there are not enough buses nor bus drivers to accommodate additional busing to support double sessions. However, there may be other expenses related to the pandemic such as purchase of Personal Protective Equipment, or a summer program for students vulnerable to regression over the summer to support their re-entry to school in the fall. Ms. Wong is particularly concerned with students with intensive therapeutic needs but it is difficult to determine at this point what form such a program would entail. As a result, it is difficult to quantify the financial needs presented

by COVID19 at this point. Ms. Wong will seek LS School Committee approval to approach the Sudbury and Lincoln Select Board Members to affirm access to the Excess and Deficiency Fund for up to \$300,000 but restricted to unanticipated tuition needs or unanticipated support services for students that is COVID19 related. Ms. Wong would endeavor NOT to access such funds unless absolutely necessary. The end of June deadline for Excess and Deficiency expenditures holds true for all uses of E&D funds, including COVID19 related expenses.

Kevin Matthews inquired if thought has been given to a possible significant drop in class size as a result of the pandemic. He followed up with the query if \$300,000 would be sufficient for worse case scenarios to provide for elasticity to meet unforeseen circumstances. He suggested that perhaps a higher request to the Selectmen would be wise to ensure in the case of any eventuality. This is particularly important since the E&D funds will not be available after the June 30, 2020 deadline.

Excess and Deficiency Fund Actions

The first request for the E&D Fund is for replacement of the Stadium Field. The Stadium Field turf is original to the building of the school in 2005, now 15 years ago. Sports played on this field are high impact and the field experiences high use. Replacement of the field to ensure adequate cushioning for the safety of student athletes is necessary and E&D Funds are requested to pay for the LS share of the cost which is \$337,500. Approval must be granted within this short window of time – June 30, 2020 for replacement in the summer of 2021.

In addition, Ms. Wong requests use of E&D funds for possible COVID-related expenses. E&D can be used for large capital expenses and for support in the budget for ‘unexpected emergent circumstances.’ The current balance of the E&D fund is \$1,133,615. If we use a total of \$837,500 (\$337,500 Stadium Field, \$500K for COVID related expenses) then \$296,115 would remain in the fund. Ms. Wong believes that it is most appropriate to use the E&D Funds for these expenses because it permits the Towns of Lincoln and Sudbury to hold their emergency funds for other entities that may be in need as a result of the downturn expected from the pandemic. Ms. Wong appreciates the support of our member towns to support education at LS despite additional costs and would like to reciprocate by avoiding an additional request to the Select Boards of our member towns. Kevin Matthews believes Ms. Wong’s point of being a good partner to the other cost centers of both towns is well taken. Ms. Wong responded that she takes very seriously the responsibility of spending wisely to provide a cushion for future uncertain budget years.

VOTE: Kevin Matthews moved “that LS Regional School Committee appropriate a total of \$500,000 of certified Excess and Deficiency Funds to be used for the following purpose: to cover unanticipated expenses related to tuition or other special services required in anticipation of decreased state revenues and or cost-related to the special circumstances of COVID 19. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, all members voted in favor via roll call. These funds would need to be expended by the end of FY21.

VOTE: Kevin Matthews moved that the Lincoln Sudbury Regional School Committee appropriate a total of \$337,500 of certified Excess and Deficiency Funds to be placed into a capital account to be used for the following purpose: 50% of the cost of replacing the Stadium Field. Patty Mostue seconded the motion. Kevin Matthews noted that there was no certainty that these funds would be expended since the Town would have to match the funds in order to replace the field. Carole Kasper noted that this item is about student safety. Once the funds are in a capital account, they will carry forward into the future. Ms. Wong stated that the funds would be ear-marked for this specific use and would be able to carry forward. The necessity of stadium field replacement involves student safety particularly as it relates to incidence of concussion during play and the long ranging impact on student safety. The cushioning of this replacement is of a very high grade providing extra protection to athletes. There was no further discussion. All members were in favor based on roll call vote.

Ms. Wong reported that the Sudbury Board of Selectmen cannot hold a Town Meeting before July 1, per guidance of the Sudbury Board of Health. Lincoln may have Town Meeting before July 1, but the Town of Sudbury will NOT have a meeting before July 1st. LS requires a budget approved by both towns. Consequently, LS will need to accomplish the following steps by June 1st.

- 1) The School Committee must authorize the Superintendent/Principal to request letters of affirmation from the Boards of Selectmen which state how the apportionment of costs will be done. The alternate assessment in the regional agreement will be used to apportion the budget.
- 2) The Superintendent/Principal can then send the letter and additional information to the Department of Education by June 1st which will empower the Commissioner to authorize access to 1/12th of the FY21 budget beginning July 1st and access that month by month until both Towns have held their annual Town Meeting to approve the FY21 Budget. There are many revenue sources such as federal and state grants that go into a budget, Ms. Wong is not expecting any grant monies to be available beginning July 1st. Salaries paid over the summer will be drawn from the FY20 Budget.

VOTE: Candace Miller moved that “the LS School Committee authorizes the Superintendent/Principal to seek letters of affirmation regarding the apportionment method from the Select Boards of Lincoln and Sudbury for submission to the Department of Education. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved based on unanimous roll call.

Director of Finance and Operations Report

Peter Rowe was not present. He was attending a Sudbury Board of Selectmen Meeting to represent LS.

Information and Discussion

Carole Kasper reported that the Lincoln Town Meeting is legally required to be held within 30 days of the state re-opening because the town was so close to its original town meeting date at the time of the statewide lockdown in mid-March, and the Lincoln Town Meeting warrant for

March 28 had already been signed at that point. The current interim date is May 30th but it is a conditional date.

Action Items

School Committee Communication. Carole Kasper requested that a public written announcement be made reporting the renewal of Ms. Wong's contract as Superintendent/Principal by the LS School Committee. Patty Mostue volunteered to write the announcement. An announcement regarding hiring Kirsteen Patterson will also be included.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Future Agenda Items

There were no future agenda items.

Approval of Minutes

Candace Miller offered a motion to approve the LS School Committee Minutes for April 14 and April 21, 2020. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. There was no discussion. A roll call was taken and all were in favor.

Calendar

LS School Committee Meeting	May 12, 2020
LS School Committee Meeting	May 26, 2020

Public Comment

There was no public comment

Adjourn

Candace Miller moved to enter Executive Session to comply with a general law, specifically M.G.L. c. 268a, Sect. 23(c) (2), and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, not to return to open session. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. All approved via roll call. The open meeting was adjourned at 9:34pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale

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

