

Regular School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 9, 2016

Lyme Elementary School

approved as is, 12/8/16

Board Members Present: Jay Davis, Elizabeth Glenshaw, Heidi Lange, Sam Levey, Paul Mayo, Steve Toulmin, Alicia Willette (8:30 PM). Staff Members Present: Jeff Valence, Mike Harris. Other attendees: Sue Merrill, Vicki May, Scott May, Lynn Sheldon. Recorded by R. Lohr

1. Call to Order

Chair Glenshaw called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Agenda Change

Business requiring action was moved earlier in the meeting.

3. Business Requiring Action

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made and seconded (Sam Levey, Jay Davis) to approve the Lyme School Board regular meeting minutes for October 20, 2016 as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded (Sam Levey, Jay Davis) to approve the Lyme School regular meeting minutes for October 27, 2016 as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded (Jay Davis, Sam Levey) to approve Lyme School nonpublic meeting minutes for October 27, 2016 as submitted and amended. The motion passed unanimously.

The Lyme School Board and meeting attendees introduced themselves.

4. Communications and Reports

A. Superintendent Report

A1. High School Requests

Superintendent Harris stated that he had received requests for Lyme students to attend Lyndon Institute and Sharon Academy and he had been looking into the requests to make a recommendation to the Board as per Policy JBCCA2.

Superintendent Harris reported that he spoke with Lyndon Institute administrators and that the school accepts public money and admissions are open. The school is approved for all 12 categories of special education. Lyndon Institute also runs a technical/vocational program.

By policy, a six-month notice is required for a new school to be accepted and the request was made on September 1. Funding could begin for the second semester

beginning in February. The family making the request must show proof of residency and the superintendent would need to finalize an agreement with Lyndon Institute.

The tuition was found to be \$14,713 (listed on Google). The Board concern was about its policy with regard to open admissions at Lyndon Institute. The Board discussed the probationary period of one year. Superintendent Harris recommended that Lyme students be able to attend Lyndon Institute.

A motion was made and seconded (Heidi Lange, Jay Davis) to approve the Lyndon Institute as a high school accepted for Lyme students to attend contingent on a negotiated contract and assurance that all students are able to attend the school. The motion passed unanimously.

The request for approving Sharon Academy was denied by Superintendent Harris because the school is limited to accept only two of the twelve areas of special education (specific learning disabilities and other health impairments). Sharon Academy now has an open admissions process. The superintendent expects that Sharon Academy will become certified in more of the special education categories in the future. Principal Valence commented that Sharon Academy has a good educational program that would make it an attractive option for Lyme students in the future. The school tuition is about \$14-15,000 per year.

A2. Budget Preparation

The budget books should be distributed to the Board on November 17 and can be made available via email. The budget should remain steady but will depend on staffing decisions and whether full day kindergarten is incorporated. It was expected that the full day kindergarten program would need to be passed in a warrant article, which would not be included in the proposed 2017-18 budget. The roof project should be covered by reserve fund monies and/or a separate warrant article. It was suggested that different budget scenarios be presented to the Board.

B. Principal Report

Principal Valence commented about the dialogue with and among the students regarding the election and he felt that the conversation was constructive. He also spoke about conversations with students regarding what is going on with other current events.

5. Nonpublic Session

A motion was made and seconded (Jay Davis, Paul Mayo) to enter nonpublic session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II a and b. The motion passed unanimously.

The roll call was conducted, and the Board entered nonpublic session at 7:52 PM.

The Board reconvened public session at 9:00 PM.

6. Business Requiring Discussion

Strategic Priorities Update Forum and Full Day Kindergarten

The Board discussed the public forum topic list and expected that full day kindergarten could dominate the public discussion. It was suggested that Tuesday, November 29 be the date of the public forum. Other issues to be addressed at such a forum include curriculum coordination, differentiation, science focus, and superintendent retirement/replacement. An update of progress on the strategic plan would be given so that information on each issue was reviewed. There are budget implications on the Strategic Plan initiatives.

The Board discussed the potential dialogue in a public forum about the full day kindergarten (FDK) issue and the timing of the proposed public forum. There is concern that the forum could be dominated by the full day kindergarten topic because it is likely that the FDK proponents would be in the majority of attendees.

It was stated that FDK is not expected to be in the proposed 2017-18 budget, but it will likely be a warrant article, which would call for funding FDK. The Board members had been previously polled about their priorities and FDK was not among the top few topics. The Board is split on perspectives for the need for FDK at this time at the Lyme School and whether the Board should submit a warrant article for the public to vote on the matter.

One view was that a good faith gesture should be made for the FDK parent group by giving an update of the Board consideration of FDK. It was suggested that an explanation and progress report of the Strategic Plan priorities be given at the public forum to show that other priorities are still not fulfilled. The Strategic Plan is slated to go through 2018 and some of the priorities have not been initiated because of budget constraints.

A point about the FDK issue is that there may be other models that could save expenses. If the FDK program adds an afternoon component that is play-based, perhaps a certified teacher would not be necessary in the afternoon. A broader program for kindergarteners or even younger Lyme children might also be considered.

The Board discussed the need for it to present a Board warrant article on FDK. There was concern that control of the full day kindergarten program specifics (for example, how much academics might be taught in FDK) might be lost if the parent group presented their own warrant article and also made the case for a specific program at the annual school district meeting. Board members then made feelings known regarding the warrant article and the majority of the Board clearly wanted the article to be submitted by the parent group. A comment was made about the importance of assuring parents that they can decide to have their child attend or not attend a full day kindergarten program.

It was suggested that Board representatives and school administrators meet with the parent group to discuss the FDK program issues and the school district decision making on such specifics. It was felt that there should be trust with the parent group. There is interest to develop a program that is high quality at a low cost, but that does not mandate what is specifically taught during the day. Offering a program that had extended hours through the end of the work day was an example of a different priority compared to simply adding two hours at the school to the kindergarten day.

It was decided to meet with the parent group next week to ask about whether they want to have a public forum. The public forum about the Strategic Plan progress could be planned for early 2017. The Board would inform the parent group that the school district is willing to look at the FDK program more dynamically, particularly if it could be a smaller impact on the school budget.

The Board does not unanimously support doing its own warrant article for FDK, but it is willing to help the parent group formulate the article and the Board will continue to explore options for a cost effective kindergarten program. It was felt that the Strategic Plan issues and progress on those initiatives can be presented at a later public forum meeting.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded (Sam Levey, Paul Mayo). The motion was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM.

The next Lyme School Board meeting will be on December 1, 2016 at 7:00 PM.