Lunenburg Public Schools

Dr. Kate Burnham, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, February 28, 2024
LMHS Collaborative Room D132
6:30 - Hybrid

School Committee
Carol Archambault, Chair - here
Brian Lehtinen, Vice Chair - here
Anthony Sculimbrene, Secretary - here
Peter Beardmore, Member - here
Laura Brzozoski, Member - here

Superintendent
Dr. Kate Burnham
Business Manager/ HR Director

Recording Secretary
Courtney Fuller

Guests: Julianna Hanscom, Director of Special Services

In accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg Public Access channel, on Facebook Live on the Public Access Facebook page. (http://www.facebook.com/Lunenburg-Public-Access-Cable-157427270975305/) and will be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube after the meeting.

The agenda lists all the topics which may be discussed at the meeting and those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Votes may be taken as a result of these discussions. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by Open Meeting Law

1. **Call to Order by Carol Archambault at 6:30 p.m.**

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Public Comment – Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to extend public comment past 10 minutes, Ms. Brzozoski seconds the motion all in favor**
   Mr. Lehtinen comments, that he missed the last meeting as he was on vacation with his family, but would like to thank the committee and everyone for all of the work that everyone has been advocating.

   Sophia Mulè, 139 Cove Road I want to address the issue with intervention regarding the music department. I know that time is being used to help people who might need more help get that help in classes like English and Math whatever, it may be especially to preserve good MCAS scores. Lunenburg usually perform very well with MCAS, so we know we're a pretty well performing town in terms of MCAS and if we wanted more time to do that. That's perfectly understandable and relatable but when you're good at something you push yourself to do even better because improvement is good and it's positive and we want to see that in our lives. I can relate to that as well working as a team to better ourselves to achieve a greater goal encouraging one another to pursue what you're passionate about more and more. When you're in a band that's actually exactly what happens, it's exactly what happens so you can add that extra time to better those already pretty great scores if you feel that's necessary but know that it is at a huge expense if that means that kids can no longer do band, you'd be stripping so many kids of the opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves, to work hard as a team just as any good sports team would, which here in Lunenburg we have no shortage. So please if you would just consider how big of an impact cuts this program would be. The fifth grade band right now has some 30 plus students it would be highly detrimental to the Middle School bands in terms of numbers and interest if those were to just disappear. There are two posters in the middle school and high school band room right now, one of them says “Hard Work Beats Talent If Talent Doesn't Work Hard” and the other one says “Oh the Places You'll Go” and I'm going to be honest I look at those every day and I have looked at those every day since I started here in sixth grade, and they're they remind me that what I do is not for nothing and that in my life I'm going great places. My hard work isn't nothing and that being a part of something, it just makes me feel like I am part of something that means something. We did a show a couple years ago in marching band and it was titled ”Passion” and it was all about how people have different passions in art, dance, and music. We worked so hard on it just to

show, that we were passionate. Every time I see my high school band director in the hallway he salutes to me and I salute back because I honor my position as the drum major this is passion and this is real and so I'd like to strongly thank the members on the school committee who have taken the time and effort to listen and understand where me and my peers are coming from. So why are you content with getting rid of something like that in our school district?

Jude Pancholi, 622 West Street I am in the fourth grade. In the third grade my teacher Mr. Cavaco let me and my friends start a band, I got hooked on music, my mom has been paying for very expensive music lessons for me. I've been looking forward to fifth grade band. My class has missed out on a lot like field trips, class plays, kindergarten graduation, and now we don't get health class. Taking band away will be another big loss for my grade and future students. Music improves everything, being in a band will help students be part of a team, make new friends, and help us think in new creative ways

Shoshana Mulè 139 Cove Road I just want to thank the committee and the superintendent for responding to my email with questions about the scheduling of fifth grade band. I know that this conversation has evolved and I'm still very interested in preserving all of the school budget, as are all of you and there are many important things and a lot of people will speak for that so I have to continue to speak for the music program. The suggestion is that because of scheduling of intervention and specials at Turkey Hill Elementary it might be doable to put some form of fifth grade band in the morning before school. The problem with that is the quality of the instruction, the time on the learning and the equity issues are not addressed adequately. Additionally making the fifth grade band a stipend position rather than a full-time in school instruction position demeans the importance of that position and we'll just repeat that. Obviously this point to FTE does not have a major impact on the budget I understand that this conversation has moved beyond paying for it and is really about how the fifth grade day is structured. I also want to say that it is important for students who are falling behind to get extra help. The fifth grade music teacher made clear that if kids need to go to intervention they do not have to come to band. I don't see how it's not a workable compromise and then the kids who can't be there before or after school can have the opportunity.

Krista Dimatopolis, 53 Whiting Street I am also a seventh grade teacher here at Lunenburg Middle School. A little background I grew up in Lunenburg, I went through the Lunenburg school system. I have worked in the district for the last nine years and I've been a resident since May of 2022. I know that we are going to be discussing an override tonight I wanted to share my thoughts and feelings about this potential proposal. Being a resident and also working for the school I obviously have a lot vested in these decisions. I've been following the school committee meetings very closely, obviously because they directly affect me, first of all I want to thank all of the parents and residents of the town who have spoken in support of the teachers, the positions, and the programs of the school, it is such an incredible community and I personally have felt very supported by many. I also want to thank the school committee for their time and patience through this entire process and their willingness to hear everyone's opinions and perspectives and take them into consideration. I want to be clear I am not against an override, I know that we have done it in the past and I would do anything to support our schools, however at this point I don't think it's fair to ask the residents of Lunenburg for an override when I feel like there is more that we can do. I don't feel like we have exhausted all of our options at this point, it seems to me that we are cutting most where students are affected, positions seem to continue to be reworked at the administrative level, and the educator and paraprofessional positions are the ones that we are losing, I can share that this process has impacted the morale of the staff, educators are working tirelessly each day to best support our students and we are at a loss that our numbers are cut and we will be asked to do more with less. I'm not against an override but I would like to see a budget where those who work with the students are not the most impacted. I understand that this is a very difficult process, and I just want to say I'm very appreciative of all the hard work and the time that everyone has put in and to try to solve these issues.

Anna Lockwood, 91 Main Street I am going to read off some numbers which I asked the town manager for her latest line item budget, so if my numbers are not exact matches to yours, it's probably because she has been tweaking the numbers. She sent me this information last Friday from her data, the combined budget increase that we will have for FY 25 is $8,809,402, that's an average of 1.94% and I think we are not seeing the 2.5% or a little over because we lost $342,000, so that's why the total school budget after pro-forma recap was $24,825,018. Her preliminary budget was $24,867,000 that's a 2.98% increase, which I think is the common number. That increase in the school budget $7,117,649. All the other departments and other needs including the allowance and the payment is $2859, making her budget $22,312,018 which is an increase of $171,700 for the .79 of the overall budget increase for that section, the school's budget increase of $7,117,649 represents 8.69% of the budget increase we are seeing this year. All of her departments account for 99.31%, while I hear that and see that, the 2.94 proposed budget increase is not sufficient for the level of education Lunenburg is known for, I am not sure we have enough money in the budget to offset the many cuts proposed by the 2.94%, even if the most modest budget increase allocated to the town departments were directed to the school budget, it wouldn't adequately address education concerns stemming from this budget, the failure of the last override had significant repercussions in 2011, notably affecting the music department with lasting consequences, for instance when my daughter joined the music marching band there were over 60 students involved however, when she left her senior year there were less than 40. I believe a reasonable override is attainable

both in town meeting and on the ballot, however, the schools must conduct the budget assessment to eliminate excesses and relocate resources. A modest override such as a 2% equivalent to just under $800,000 would impact the average single family home in Lunenburg approximately $150 annually or $12.50 monthly. Furthermore, I urge this committee to collaborate with others adopting a confrontational stance towards other town departments and committees, it fosters an "us vs. them" dynamic that hinders progress instead I propose a request to override and seek a meeting with the select board to gain their support. Cooperation with both boards and the town manager in effective communicating with residents is crucial for success, with the passing of the override.

Mr. Beardmore asks Ms. Lockwood to forward her numbers to him, as they do not line up with the information he has and would like to dig deeper.

4. **Chair's Report** It has been a very busy couple of weeks, we've met with our state delegation, and they do not paint a rosy picture regarding additional state funding. They have suggested submitting an earmark proposal that would help albeit, limitedly, with our budget. Three proposals have been forwarded to the select board for consideration. The Finance Committee voted to organize an override effort after looking at the state of the entire town. We thank them for their leadership and we'll discuss this further in the evening. I would like to congratulate the girls track team on their second place finish at the division 5 state championship, well done!

5. **Review & Approve Minutes** - None

6. **Review & Approve Warrants & Line Item Transfers**
   a. **Warrant Total 2/1/24 – 2/21/24 $356,137.65** – No questions, Ms. Archambault has signed

7. **Superintendent's Report Kindergarten** registration has been ongoing since early January, currently we have 90 kindergarteners enrolled for next school year. A reminder that the pre-k registration for next year opens this week March 1st, extended day registration for summer program starts Monday April 2nd ,the extended day before and after school for next school year registration will open on Wednesday May 1st, and the Early Learning Center registration will open on Monday May 20th

   Reminders
   March 6th School Committee Meeting, Hybrid Town Hall 6:30
   March 14th Budget presentation to Finance Committee
   March 15th No School for Students – Staff PD day
   March 20th School Committee Meeting Hybrid LMS 6:30

8. **Student Representative Report** - None

9. **New Business**

Discussion

   a. **Circuit Breaker Presentation** Ms. Hanscom shares her presentation on Circuit Breaker. This is available online. Mr. Sculimbrene asks "what is a collaborative" Ms. Hanscom replies it is a consortium of surrounding districts that have public day school, we are a part of Keystone Collaborative, but have also placed students in the CAPS program. Mr. Sculimbrene asks "Why does the school have a duty to pay these costs? What is the last day a student can enter the district. Ms. Hanscom answers this is determined by IEP's we currently have 9 out of district students and next year we will have 9. April 1st is the deadline, if a student enters the district before this date our school incurs the cost, if it is after this date the sending school assumes the expense for the rest of the year and the following year. Ms. Brzozoski regarding the 14% increase in tuition, when did we find out about this?

Action

   b. **Override Discussion** Ms. Archambault reports at the last finance meeting, they did vote to organize an override, what we need to do is first agree as a committee that we need an override, and second we need to come up with the number we request for the override. Generally the select board would agree to put the warrant on. Second there is a citizen's petition where you need 10 signatures and it will make it to the warrant. This needs to happen by March 18th in order to pass to town meeting and the ballot. It is most beneficial to everyone if our number is determined tonight. Fincom will be discussing this tomorrow and the Board of Selectmen will be discussing next week. We are looking at three budget (1) Level Service budget which is everything we have today stays the same (2) Level Service minus ESSER – this is what we knew was going to happen (3) Superintendents recommended budget. Mr. Beardmore states the chair of the Finance Committee deserves a lot of credit. I have said I think we need an override. Our revenue and expenses do not line up. There are many apparent gaps, I would not go out and fight for school funds at the detriment of other town departments. If we do not know what our budget numbers are, how do

we determine an override amount? Out of the three options, the level service minus ESSER makes the most sense. Mr. Sculimbrene agrees we need an override, and I do not agree with the earlier citizen that we need to find more solutions, I believe we have done that. Ms. Brzozoski shares we have not passed an override since 1992, it wasn't for the school, it was for the library and I believe we should go for the override and that it should be for the school budget only. Mr. Lehtinen thanks the Chair of Finance for all the help, a lot of people have shown up to meetings, and I think we have a lot of people ready to invest and entertain the idea of an override. Ms. Archambault comments, that she has said that she does not think this is a good time for the override without the town support. I am behind doing an override with the town. I think if it's for the school only there will be less support. One of the school committee goals is 80% improvement academically by the end of this year, if we take away intervention teachers, we will not be able to meet those goals. Everyone wonders why we need curriculum leadership. When you have the leadership, things move forward at a better pace, we are seeing the results of that now. To shut it down now would be a disservice and for that reason I support the override. Ms. Brzozoski comments we have spent the money to implement these curriculums, to take this away our children would fall behind and would be detrimental. Our systems are working and our progress is proof **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to support the override, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, Mr. Lehtinen, Ms. Brzozoski, Mr. Sculimbrene, and Ms. Archambault vote yes. Mr. Beardmore votes no.**

10. **Old Business**
    Discussion
    a. **FY25 Budget Update** Dr. Burnham was requested to create a "Needs based budget" by the Finance Committee. The town manager asked for a "Level Service" budget, this budget will include expenses as given by the principals and department heads. Also health insurance is going up because our rates have increased and we have more participating families. This number changes monthly, an additional 2.6 million on top of this year's total budget of 25.5 million. Dr. Burnham shared a slide show of the budget options and discussed what positions may be cut and the effect of the cuts. Each expense line was discussed and changes to each line. Ms. Archambault states she is ok with waiving the budget number until next week, but not the override number. I personally would go with "level service funding minus ESSER" Mr. Lehtinen agrees, there are a lot of concerns with the 2.9/3.0% and 5.5% budget. Should we support the 8.73%, with the hopes of an override? Mr. Beardmore also supports the "level service funding minus ESSER," however if we don't know what our budget number is going to be how do we determine the override amount. Mr. Lehtinen shares it is projected to be $1.43 million without ESSER. Ms. Archambault shares we have to use 2.97% to base how much money it will cost the average tax payer per year. By next meeting on 3/6 we will know the cost to the tax payers. **Mr. Beardmore makes a motion that the school committee does not agree with the 2.9%, Ms. Brzozoski seconds the motion. All agree**

11. **Public Comment** None (meeting had to end abruptly as the lights were scheduled to shut off)

12. **Reports**

13. **Topics for Future Discussion**

14. **Adjournment Ms. Brzozoski made a motion to adjourn at 10:10, Mr. Lehtinen seconded the motion, all approve**

Respectfully Submitted

Courtney Fuller