

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

Volume I, Issue No. 3

January 2001

Dear Reader:

The LINK's mission is to work toward improving and strengthening communication about school issues among the Town of Longmeadow elected and appointed representatives, School Committee, PTO and PAC leadership and the Longmeadow community.

The information contained in this newsletter represents the view of The LINK.
Official highlights of the School Committee meetings are found on the town website WWW.LONGMEADOW.ORG

IMPORTANT TOWN INFORMATION

Friday March 2, 2001 Deadline for submission of Warrant Articles for 2001 Longmeadow Annual Town Meeting.
Tuesday March 6th, 2001 Deadline for submission of nomination papers for those running for town offices.
Tuesday May 8th, 2001 Longmeadow Annual Town Meeting.

THE LINK FOCUS

SCHOOL BUDGET.

Meeting March 5th 7pm LHS Cafeteria In an effort to communicate financial and educational decisions facing the community, the school committee approved a meeting including Principals, school councils, Selectboard, and Appropriations Committee.

Overall Operating Budget. The School Committee continued discussions regarding the draft of the 01-02FY budget with the town appropriations committee on February 8th. The town has suggested a 5% increase in the school budget for the next year. The school committee has a budget of 6% increase just to maintain service and is also requesting an improvement budget, bringing the total to an 8% increase. The improvement budget is being put forward to properly address peripheral issues related to growth, learning objectives developed by school councils, and MCAS alignment. Class sizes and subsequent strain on staffing in all areas remain a concern. Your input is valuable at this stage of the process. Contact town boards with letters or easily with an e-mail to Townhall@Longmeadow.ORG.

Level Service portion of Operating Budget The most recent school committee budget includes a 6 % level service increase. The largest increases are in utilities (14-18% increase in costs) and the addition of 4 teachers based on population increases. K-3 science improvements are included in the level budget plan to follow the 4th grade science accomplished this year.

School Council Improvement Plans Final Report and Improvement Budget School Council Co-Chairs and Principals presented the final report of the FY99-FY00 School Improvement Plans to the school committee on January 15th. School Councils reported on the actions taken to achieve 1999-2000 objectives. Subsequent requests for improvements to the schools were then presented as portions of the "improvement budget" for 01-02 FY. These impressive reports are beyond the scope of this newsletter. Information on them is available at your local school.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

School councils are a dynamic effective way to provide customer service to our students by being based at individual schools. Plans developed by the councils are the result of student and parent input, and are used to help direct the school. The Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that each school in the Commonwealth establish a council that is a "representative, school-based committee composed of the principal, parents teachers, community members and at the secondary level, students." School councils have four major areas of responsibility. They will assist the principal in: 1) Adopting educational goals for the school that are consistent with local educational policies and statewide performance standards. 2) Identifying the educational needs of students attending the school 3) Reviewing the annual school building budget 4) Formulating a school improvement plan. School Councils are part of the structured responsive way budget decisions are made at the school level.

MUSIC IN LONGMEADOW SCHOOLS

The Winter Concert at the high school was another example of excellence of our town music program. Last Spring the LHS orchestra was one of 9 in the entire country invited to perform at Carnegie Hall. In 1999 LHS overall music

program won a Grammy award, rating it in the top 16 nationwide, including private music schools. We can not be proud enough of all our students and faculty. Supporting our outstanding LHS music faculty of Michael Mucci, Peter Thompson, and Kayla Werlin is a newly formed group called Friends of LHS Music. For more information please contact Laurie Ernst at 567-8303. A group organized at Glenbrook, called Music Matters, is currently selling mugs as a fundraiser to support music there. For more information or to help, please call Mary Ryan-Kusiak 567-9685.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE JANUARY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Anticipated Warrant Articles

LHS Repairs including new roof, improvements to heating systems, replacement of some windows, and the bleachers.. This does NOT include requested technology upgrade. **(Center School is currently the only school in the district at state standards for technology.)**

Busing item for Town Meeting Warrant Article submitted without endorsement by the school committee which is a request for busing for students living 2 or more miles away. Because busing is not required the school committee has brought this article forward as a courtesy after removing it from their budget. Next Year this article will need to put on the warrant by individuals.

Blueberry Hill and Wolf Swamp Roof Replacement It will be recommended that the town approve proceeding with this portion of the approved renovation project before state reimbursement. The roofs are not able to make it until proposed construction.

Caller ID Installed District will install caller ID on all telephones following standards set by safe schools. The phone system includes a block on all shielded calls for student safety and overall building security. CALLS MAY BE UNBLOCKED BY USING *82.

Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative Dr. McGarry reported that an affiliation with L.P.V.E.C. would save \$900,000 during 2000 on SPED costs.

Summer School The director reported an excellent financial picture and minor tuition increases were approved.

Williams Middle School Gym Floor An amendment was made to the capital plan to create Williams School Floor as item 10 at \$71,500 and gym retrofit as item 10A at \$37,400.

Full Day Kindergarten was approved with 1 session each at Wolf Swamp and Blueberry and 2 sessions at Center, each at a cost of \$2,600.

LHS TASK FORCE Chaired by Curt Freedman and Bill Hoff, is considering many options as to auditorium needs. While school committee members commented that the recent LHS concert reflected the excellence of our students and our music program here in town, there were concerns by parents attending the concert that the auditorium size is inadequate for these concerts. Currently seating 682, the addition of a balcony would bring the seating to 1000.

\$25,000 Grant received for MCAS Support before and after school from Mass Department of Education.

Diplomas The school committee will continue not to issue Longmeadow High School Diplomas to Home Educated Students.

School Choice Program will accept 15 students for this year. However, Mr. Flahive suggested that in 3 years the high school may not have the space for new choice students resulting in a significant hit to the budget due to additional funds brought in by the school choice program.

LHS Educational Opportunities Handbook Course offerings will now have a mission statement and learning objectives as well as course descriptions and prerequisite skills.

OTHER ITEMS

Open Gym nights for LHS Students, Saturdays 7-11 through the end of March, except Saturday 2/24.

LHS Students invited to Café Lancer, March 31st, 7-11 at the Community House. \$6 admission includes Karaoke, DJ Pizza, Open Mike, and Ping Pong. Please Call Jill Stewart 567-7017 for more information or to help plan activities.

“Newcomers” type youth group forming in town. Please contact Robin Rabideau at 567-2091 for more info or to help.

Safe Homes Network in need of volunteers. Please contact Jill Stewart at 567-7017 to assist in any way.

NOW ON WWW.LONGMEADOW.ORG . . .(Thank you to Jim Moran, Webmaster)

***All School Committee meeting highlights and approved School Committee minutes**

***The Town Accountant’s five year projection** Thank you to Paul Pasterczyk for his work for our town.

An understanding of the free cash use in town and its impact on our financial position is essential.

***A School Committee letter to all citizens.** Located in School Committee page.

***E-mail** It’s so easy to let your representatives know your point of view. E-mail **Townhall@Longmeadow.ORG**

Many Thanks to the LINK Representatives from the following schools:

Blueberry Hill	David Appleman, Lynn Gervais-Jones, Tani Sapirstein	Glenbrook	Laura Bertelli, Meg Schneider
Wolf Swamp	David Andre, Bettina Imme	Williams	Kate Pappas
Center	Maura Babin, Jill Strain, Jeanne Zobel-Lachiusa	LHS	Linda Ulrich
SPED PAC	Carolyn Ryan, Kathy Brock	J.C.C. Preschool	Carolyn Marchese

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