

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

Volume II, Issue No. 3

January/ February 2002

WHAT IS THE LINK Mission? The LINK or The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids mission is to work toward improving and strengthening communication about school issues among the Town of Longmeadow elected and appointed representatives, School Committee, the PTO/PAC leadership and the entire Longmeadow community. Our next general LINK Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m. in the Center School Community Room.

This issue covers four School Committee Meetings: (January 14, January 28th, February 11^h, and February 25th) Thank you to the following LINK Reps for their time and contributions to this issue: Maura Devlin, Lynn Gervais-Jones, Debra Jangraw, Marcie Kearing, Charlene Metcalf, Kate Pappas, Connie Pierson.

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

TOWN BUDGET IN CRISIS!! All free cash will be spent by the end of FY 2001-2. This affects all Town departments. We are particularly concerned about what this means not only for our town, but for the school budget. At a special school committee meeting 2/25/02 Dr McGarry presented the budget needs for FY 2002-2003. Without a significant Prop 21/2 override, there will be serious cut backs and school needs will not be addressed. Staff cuts would occur (eliminating 12-23 teacher positions). This will increase class sizes, as well as, impact the overall quality of our schools. Proposed cuts will occur in the remedial reading program, foreign language department, technology support, health care (nursing) Special Ed aides and behavioral assistants including classroom teacher positions! We all need to rally together and help our town through this crisis. It is imperative that you contact the members of our town Board of Selectmen urging them to support a Proposition 21/2 override. Send a letter, email, or call: Board of Selectman, Capital Planning, or Appropriations: Longmeadow Town Hall 20 Williams Street, Longmeadow, MA 01106 or EMAIL: Townhall@longmeadow.org, phone: 565- 4110. Contact our Town representatives NOW! Town Meeting date is May 14 and Town Election is scheduled for May 21, 2002.

HIGHLIGHTS

Longmeadow High School: LHS Advisory Council Representatives reported that students are pleased with the bathroom repairs completed over the winter vacation. Smoke detectors for the bathrooms would be helpful. Teachers need to use available AV/ computer technology more effectively. Forty teachers have recently taken a technology course. Additional courses will be made available. Parking lot evacuation has improved with new traffic flow pattern (turn right out of lot). Students would like an additional parking lot and would like to organize a fundraiser for this. LHS students are planning on fixing up 2 courtyards. A Lightning Warning System for the LHS fields has been approved and will be in operation by this Spring. The cost will be approximately \$5,000. It was voted unanimously to name the pool after Jean D. Roger in honor of the LHS graduate and those who lost their lives on September 11. LHS roof contract awarded to Titan roofing. Projected start date for the roof work is May 1, 2002. LHS Millennium Task Force recommended spending \$20,000 on a preliminary study for space and needs improvement. Although it was agreed that studying and developing a plan to renovate LHS is a good idea; there is no money in the budget to fund the study at this time.

Blueberry Hill/Wolf Swamp Renovation: Good weather has allowed work to progress on schedule.

LCTV: has \$100K in new equipment, including a mobile unit, which could be available to the public following training. There is potential for this equipment to be used in our schools.

Glenbrook Middle School: has been approved to receive signs directing people to the school. A capital planning request was made to repair cracks in walls, which needs to be repaired this summer. Glenbrook's boiler has been temporarily repaired. It now has only a minor leak and it is hoped to hold out for a few more months. Glenbrook's PAC raised over \$3,400 towards purchase of iBooks (portable computers with wireless internet access). Unfortunately, due to the budget freeze, the school budget does not allow use of matching funds to purchase the full set of computers as originally planned. Additional fund- raising efforts are underway thanks to the drive and energy of Laura Bertelli, Pres.

Full Day Kindergarten: The committee approved 4 sections of full day Kindergarten for 2002/2003; 2 at Center, and 1 each at Wolf Swamp and Blueberry. They approved a tuition increase to \$2,700.

Acceptance of Gifts: 1) Richard Mulcahy gifted a telephone system (Sound Seal); 2) Wolf Swamp to purchase: 2nd grade accelerated math program, scanner, presentation cart with book and speakers and a Yamaha Digital Piano (\$933) Administrative materials paper/copying supplies (\$278). 3) Glenbrook PAC- Towards the purchase of ibook wireless lab (\$3,490).

School Choice: It was voted to increase school choice next year for 25 freshmen, which will generate some revenue for school budget. There was also discussion to reduce freshman slots and add upper-class slots to even out school choice students among the grades (not to exceed a total of 25 school choice slots per class/ year with a total goal of 100 overall).

SAT Analysis: LHS principal (Larry Berte) and LHS math teacher (Marty Conway) reviewed SAT results of the class of 2001. The average score was 1104 (541 Verbal and 563 Math). This is 84 points higher than the national average, 78 points higher than Massachusetts average but 15 points lower than LHS's class of 2000. Also of concern was the gender gap with boys outperforming girls by 35 points (this is also a national trend). It was noted that the number of students taking the SAT II has decreased, as some colleges no longer require these test scores for admission.

*******LINK OTHER TOWN MEETINGS RELATED NEWS*******

Longmeadow Educational Excellence Foundation- (LEEF) George Keady and Brian Tuohey presented the recently formed LEEF to the School Committee on Monday, January 28th. They gave a brief history of how LEEF started in May 2001 with a steering committee comprised of various backgrounds in education, marketing, accounting, college foundation experience, and various town elective positions: John Discenza, Tom Herrala, Lyn Hopkins, George Keady, Mary Ryan-Kusiak, Ellen McKenna, John Papale, Susan Shaker, Brian Tuohey and Nancy Urbschat. These ten volunteers worked on a presentation for prospective Board Members delivered in two evenings in late October of 2001. To date, LEEF has 26 Board members, 75 volunteers and 100% Board member contributions as of February 1, 2002. LEEF has filed a 501c 3 status with the State which gives non-profit status allowing all contributions to be tax deductible. LEEF's mission is to create and maintain a fund that provides grants for innovative education and enrichment programs beyond the tax-supported budget for the benefit of the Longmeadow Public School students. The foundation is an autonomous, long-term institution that strives to ensure the excellence of the Longmeadow Public Schools and promotes a proprietary sense of ownership and pride within the community. LEEF's board members are: Mark Cress, John W. Davis, Lisa Emirzian, John Ernst, Peter Greenberg, Cindy Healy, Lyn Hopkins, George Keady, John Kelley, Mary Ryan-Kusiak, Joy Leavitt, David Leslie, Ellen McKenna, John McNamara, Marie Murray, Barry O'Connor, John Papale, Robert Poisson, Sandra Reilly, James Sotiropoulos, Bob Sullivan, Michael Suzor, Michael Swirsky, Richard Tredeau, Brian Tuohey, and Linda Ulrich. **HOW CAN YOU HELP?** Volunteers can help with fundraising, special events, operations, and more. Please contact LEEF at the address below. LEEF welcomes your financial support. Please send contributions to: **LEEF, P.O. Box 60782, Longmeadow, MA 01116 (not 01106).**

For further information, please call:

George Keady 567-2438

Brian Tuohey 567-0942

Lyn Hopkins 567-1434

Ellen McKenna 567-1119

*******LINK HOT TOPIC SPECIAL REPORT*******

Technology in the Longmeadow Public Schools: Submitted by: Jeanne Zobel-Lachiusa

Massachusetts Department of Education (D.O.E.) has issued benchmarks for technology requirements in public schools, which are to be implemented by 2003. Overall goals include Internet access for every classroom and to maintain a ratio of 5 students per high-speed computer (16 Meg RAM or higher). Longmeadow Public Schools (LPS) has a 15-person technology team in place including: Chairperson Cynthia Greene (Computer Network Specialist), 3 parents, 2 principals, 4 librarians, 2 school committee members. The focus of the Tech plan is to "improve the equity, continuity and excellence in integrating technology into the curriculum to enhance all student learning and to prepare them for the future." Results of the Longmeadow Technology Profile July 1, 2000- June 30, 2001 provides the following data: 1. LPS district ratio of students per A/B computers (16 Meg RAM or higher) = 7.09. 2. Classrooms with Internet access= 73%. 3. Instructional computers with Internet access= 82%. According to statistics provided by the D.O.E. website (www.doe.mass.edu) as of 5/01 the state average student/computer ratio= 6.3. Longmeadow is behind comparable school districts including Brookline, MA @ 4.5 and Amherst, MA @ 4.9. LPS individual school ratio for student to A/B computers is as follows: Blueberry= 8.24; Center= 4.66; Glenbrook= 8.74; LHS= 6.32; Williams= 9.08; Wolf Swamp= 15.09. Center School is the only school identified as having "adequate electrical capacity to support every classroom connected and to maintain a ratio of five students per high-speed computer." For further info contact LINK reps, Cindy Greene (565-4200) and/or D.O.E.

For more information about topics covered in this newsletter, or to provide suggestions or comments, please contact LINK Co-Chairs: Melinda Cropsey 567-8019 Cropsey@mediaone.net Jeanne Lachiusa 567-3826 tlachiusa@juno.com
Ellen McKenna 567-1119 mckenna1@mediaone.net Karolyn Ryan 567-2325 ryanjked@aol.com