

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.

Volume IV, Issue No. 3 January/February 2004

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

This issue covers four School Committee Meetings (January 12, January 26, February 9, February 23, 2004)

HIGHLIGHTS

Transition Planning and Superintendent

Search update: The Superintendent Search Committee (chaired by Carol Daigle) has chosen 7 candidates out of a total of 22 applicants- all of whom were excellent. Closed interviews are on March 6th. The process is more or less on target with a candidate to be chosen and announced by the beginning of May. The new principal has been chosen at Center School, Bob Lincoln. He was given orientation to Baldrige by Jan Hart over vacation.

New England Association of Schools/ LHS

accreditation update: Larry Berte, principal of LHS, reported the following: LHS is off warning for standards on curriculum and, in fact, received 11 commendations. The school is still on warning for facilities due to budget and finances. By 7/1/04 the following needs to be addressed: 1. provide a H.S. facilities conceptual design, 2. Provide specific concepts on student learning and show how larger class sizes are being addressed, 3. Create a school-wide rubric, 4. Provide updates regarding educational impact from budget cuts. Mr. Berte reviewed the new LHS handbook including current course additions/deletions. In response to the health classes being cut for freshman and sophmores, people from the community have offered to present free lectures to high school students on health-related topics. There is currently being a study done on high school renovation ideas. Bill Hoff is chairing the "Millenium Task Force". They will meet with Appropriations Committee and six different architects for proposed plan presentations.

Meet and Greet – The School Committee is inviting residents to attend their first "meet and greet" session on March 8th at 6PM in the Superintendent Lounge at LHS. Jessica Hutchins is organizing this meeting. It is a time for residents to meet school committee members and share their concerns, commendations, etc.

Blueberry/Wolf Swamp Renovations: Due to a recent change in the State fire code, the newly constructed elevators at Blueberry Hill and

WolfSwamp need modifications. The fire detectors and suppression systems need to be removed at a cost of \$2,691 to the town which will come out of bond money from the renovation project.

"Pot Hole" Money: Steve Nembrikow, business manager, wrote a grant and received \$200,000 from the state which is to be spent by June 30, 2004. The money was divided among the schools for principals to decide how to spend the money for their school.

Budget FY '05: The School Committee added a special meeting, February 17, to review the proposed budget with Business Manager, Steve Nembrikow. He will have the new budget format ready for committee review by 2/26. The School Committee will review the final draft on Monday 3/1. Currently, the budget will be "level services" from last year.

Increase School Revenues: A number of ways to increase revenue for the schools has been discussed they are as follows: 1. Raise full day Kindergarten tuition from \$2,600/ year to \$3,400 for '04-'05 school year. 2. Increase tuition for summer school classes. 3. Charge rent to the preschool for the space used at Blueberry Hill School and increase tuition for preschool general education "peer partner" students. 4. Rent LHS pool for this summer to Pioneer Valley Aquatic Club. 5. Implement a pilot program to improve cost effectiveness. Anyone can submit ideas. Good, cost-saving ideas will get recognition instead of financial reward. Dr. McGarry will oversee the program. 6. Increase school lunch fees- the goal is to have the school lunch program totally self-sufficient in 3 three years.

Special Education: Dr. Elaine Cuphone, Director of Student Support Services, reported on the cost containment programs being developed in the district. Educating students with special learning needs in town schools not only saves the town money it has other benefits as well. Whenever possible, students benefit from attending local schools for social reasons (learn with neighborhood peers), ease of

transportation, college-bound students benefit from Longmeadow's curriculum, programs are better able to be supervised. Longmeadow has currently developed 2 new programs: A class for students with Language Learning Disabilities (LLD) at Center School and a program at the high school for students who experience emotional, social or behavior difficulties. Next year, the goal is to develop an LLD class at the middle school. In addition, Dr. Cuphone hopes to develop an elementary-level "substantially separate" program for students with significant learning issues. This program will focus on daily living skills and social pragmatics. The Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) program for students with autism was approved to be housed at Glenbrook. Building of the 2 classrooms will begin this Spring. There will be no cost to Longmeadow. The LPVEC will pay Glenbrook a monthly fee for electricity and heat.

Elementary Report Card: A 14 person committee chaired by John Ciesluk and Jahn Hart has been working on revising the current reporting system. This may be piloted next year but the school committee would like parents notified of this possible change. The new reporting system would involve restructuring the schedule from quarterly to trimesters. Parent/teacher conferences would be held mid October and mid March and would involve goal-setting with three report cards to go out after Thanksgiving, end of March and end of the year. The new report cards will be standards-based per Massachusetts state frameworks and will better reflect the child's critical thinking, problem solving skills and skills progress. Proficiency is the benchmark with grade level performance to be 80% mastery of skill.

Kindergarten Screening: Dr. Gail Mengel reported on the results of parent/teacher surveys regarding the new process which received a 98% approval rate. Currently, students are screened individually by their Kindergarten teacher during the first 3 days of school. Teachers and specialists review the results to determine if further evaluations by specialists are needed. Kindergarten screening is mandated by federal special education laws. In the past, the students were screened by teachers later in the year. This caused space issues and required use of substitute teachers.

Substance Abuse Prevention Report: Mr. Bob Pisani, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator for the Longmeadow Public schools, updated the School Committee on strategies being implemented to achieve the "No Child Left Behind" Act, Goal IV- schools are safe, drug-free and conducive to learning. Mr. Pisani is working with the DARE coordinator in transitioning from the DARE program to an alternative program for the 2004-2005 year. His program is offering a 7 week Strengthening Families program targeting families with 10-14 year old children. The program will offer programming around the issues of communication, anger, self-esteem. To register, or for further information regarding substance abuse prevention, Mr. Pisani can be contacted at his office in the high school: 567-2274 ext. 448.

Safe Schools Report: The Safe Schools Team recently reviewed the safe schools policies. The team did not revise any of the policies, but did revise some regulations. Longmeadow does a tri-annual survey of school safety. The Safe Schools Team decided to purchase cameras for the entrance of Blueberry Hill School and Wolf Swamp School. The cameras will be paid for by the bond money from the school renovation project.

School Choice: Dr. McGarry reported that school choice advertising will be postponed until the school committee feels ready to proceed. Dr. McGarry reviewed the history of school choice, which began in 1993, as a way of raising revenue to prevent teacher layoffs and maintaining class sizes. It is also valuable for promoting diversity within the Longmeadow schools. There are currently 130 choice students, 30 of whom are children of Longmeadow Public Schools faculty. Faculty children have priority over other school choice students as do siblings of other school choice students. Each school choice student's school district pays Longmeadow \$4,550/student. School Choice program pays for all Special Education services needed by the choice student.

**"MEET and GREET" Monday
March 8, 6 p.m. in the Lounge at
LHS. All town residents are
welcomed to attend, meet school
committee members.**