

# ***THE LINK LETTER***

*(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)*

**Volume II, Issue No. 4**

**March/April 2002**

This issue covers four (4) School Committee Meetings: (March 11, and 25, April 8, and 22) Thank you to the following LINK reps for their time and contributions to this issue: Meg Schneider, Lisa Stevens, David Andre, Maura Devlin, Charlene Metcalf, Lynn Gervais-Jones, Kim Putnam and Maria Markenson.

**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](http://WWW.LONGMEADOW.ORG)**

**TOWN BUDGET ISSUE:** On April 8<sup>th</sup>, the School Committee Chairperson, Bill Hoff, and the Selectmen agreed to request an override of \$3.65 million. This is an alternative to the Appropriation Committee request of \$2.55 million. For several years the town has been balancing the budget with the free cash account. At the end of this fiscal year, this account will have few funds remaining, leaving the town with a \$2 million deficit for the next fiscal year. Hence, the requirement for an override. The budget issues have been hotly debated among the town committees and officials, leading to two different budgets to be presented at the May 14<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting. While the Appropriations Committee is recommending a \$2.55 million override, the town departments are requesting a \$3.65 million override. The difference is due to the fact that all the departments will be negotiating contracts this year. The Appropriations Committee recommendation leaves no allowance for contractual settlements, while the town departments have left a contingency to provide for negotiated increases. The larger override (\$3.65) is expected to last three years, while the smaller amount (\$2.55) would require an additional override of an unknown amount next year.

**Important Dates To Remember: Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting at Longmeadow High School  
Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> Registered voters go to the Community House to  
VOTE on the \$3.65mm override.**

*Note: The Reminder usually publishes the warrants before the Town Meeting or pick up at the Town Hall.*

## **YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

For any questions, or further information, contact our School Committee representatives. To get involved call Cindy Healy *phone 567-4231 or email: [IMCHEALY@aol.com](mailto:IMCHEALY@aol.com)*

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

**School Committee Budget:** After a line-by-line budget review, revisions, and several meetings with other town officials, the School Committee unanimously passed a FY 2003 budget of \$23,815,649.00. Of that amount, the town would appropriate \$23,304,649.00. The remainder represents the amount for the School Choice Program. This is the amount a \$3.65 million override would accommodate. This is \$800,000 less than the original FY2003 Needs Budget of \$24,590,554.

**School Calendar:** The new 2002-2003 School Year Calendar was approved. Students return to school on the Tuesday, September 3, 2002. This later start date is due to the construction projects at Wolf Swamp and Blueberry Hill schools. Projected end of school in 2003 is June 20. (Does not include snow days)

**Kindergarten Screening:** The first official day of school for town **Kindergarten students** will begin September 6, 2002. The initial three days of the school year will be reserved for screening the incoming students. This decision was made based upon the recommendation of the elementary school principals, the Director of Pupil services, and the findings of a recent study. This process will save the system the cost of forty days of substitute teachers normally required during the current screening process. Various agencies and groups in town will be notified to assist with the childcare challenges this schedule change may bring.

**School Lunch Price Change:** Effective September 2002, the prices for school lunches will be as follows: Elementary \$1.75, Middle and High School \$2.00. The last price increase was in 1998, and the cost of goods and services has increased.

### **School Committee Representatives:**

Mr. Thomas Jefferson was recently selected as the Superintendent of Schools in Somers, CT. With his new position, he finds it necessary to resign from the Longmeadow School Committee. His resignation will be effective at the end of this school year.

**Elections:** Three positions on the school committee will up for election May 21, 2002. The elections will be uncontested. Louise Croll will not be seeking re-election after 6 years of dedicated service. Both Bill Hoff and Carol Daigle are seeking re-election. There is one new candidate, Mike McCabe, who is seeking the vacant seat. Mr. McCabe is married with two children. He is an Electrical Engineer with United Technologies, and a Master Electrician. As a school committee member, he states that he “ values training in math as he considers it key to creative thought and success. He hopes to be a good steward of the people’s funds, work cooperatively with other committee members and reflect the will of the townspeople regarding education issues. He will bring added creative thought and problem solving to the committee, all working towards quality Education.”

**District Learning Team:** The DLT exists in order to bring ideas and people together and create an environment that enhances quality of education in the Longmeadow Public Schools. The team meets monthly and includes school administrators, business partners, community members, parents, support staff and teachers. The team has developed a strategic plan with three district goals and objectives:

1. Learning is enhanced and the learning community is strengthened. (*Eyes on the Child*)
2. Decisions are based on data-driven processes and access to information. (*Continuous Improvement*)
3. Resources are acquired, deployed and managed systemically and systematically. (*Cost Effectiveness*)

This plan was developed in accordance with The Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. This is a comprehensive management system for continuous school improvement. This will be the framework for guiding future district improvement activities.

**Longmeadow High School:**

**Schedule Change:** Next academic year, the High school will be changing its current schedule. The students will still rotate blocks and days, however there will be more consistency regarding schedules in the morning and afternoon. This change has been made to allow for LHS students to participate in programs outside of the high school. (Internships, job shadowing, college courses, collaborative programs, etc.)

**MCAS:** The Commissioner of Education has decided MCAS scores will not be put on high school transcripts.

**Roof:** Work on the roof began the week of spring break. The company will be working the second shift on areas of the roof when students are not in the classrooms from now until May 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Substance Abuse Prevention Efforts:** With the success of the Passive Alcohol Screening Program and the desire for a safe, drug free school environment, discussion was held about the state police sponsored Canine Search Program. Some local high schools and several schools within the state currently use this free program. A canine unit, trained to smell the presence of drugs, is used to search the school. The dogs do not search students, just areas of the school. The School Committee, in general, supported the idea but requested refinement and definition of the policy before proceeding.

**Parking:** Students are happy with the new makeshift parking. This was necessary due to the increased size of the current senior class. Future plans may include a more permanent solution, perhaps including a parking fee or parking lottery system with Seniors having first preference.

**Jean Roger Pool Plaque:** Wording of the plaque in the Jean Roger Natatorium was decided upon. Dedication will be to the victims of September 11, 2001 especially Jean Roger, with a poignant quote written by Jean to her parents in a letter dated September 10, 2001.

**Glenbrook Middle:** The boiler and wall are in need of replacement. These repairs are in the capital planning budget.

**Center School:** Third graders raised \$5,925 through its “Jump Rope for Heart” event. The School donated this money to the American Heart Association.

**Blueberry Hill and Wolf Swamp Construction:** Mild weather has allowed for great progress on both buildings. Wolf Swamp has the new boiler in place; new foundation poured (early) and expect the steel to be going up soon. Blueberry Hill has the bricks and roof on the addition with plumbing and utilities to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Both schools need additional sprinkler systems added to the 1974 additions. Wood truss roofs were utilized and code at that time did not require a sprinkler system. Code now requires a fire suppression system for wood truss roofs. Total additional cost: \$69,924.00

**Gifts:** The School Committee accepted an \$8000.00 gift from the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation. The money will be used to provide Baldrige Training to district teachers.

**Grants:** Longmeadow schools have been award a Competitive Technology grant from the state for the amount of \$25,000. This was the first year the town applied for the grant and received the entire requested amount.

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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@attbicom](mailto:Cropsey@attbicom) Jeanne Lachiusa 567-3826 [tlachiusa@juno.com](mailto:tlachiusa@juno.com)  
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