

THE LINK LETTER

(The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids)

Volume II, Issue No. 1

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WHAT IS THE LINK? *The LINK or The Longmeadow Information Network for Kids was formed in the 2000-2001 school year by representatives of each of the Longmeadow Public Schools, The Longmeadow Special Education PAC and the Longmeadow pre-schools. Our 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. We organize and disseminate information of interest related to the Longmeadow Public Schools in a timely, concise and objective way. To meet this goal, LINK representatives attend all School Committee Meetings as well as meetings of other elected or appointed town boards in an effort to facilitate positive working relationships that ultimately benefit our community and our schools. We compile highlights of these meetings in **The LINK Letter** and distribute five issues per year. This year we have identified a series of LINK “Hot Topics” and we will be doing a series of more in-depth reports on these issues during the course of the school year. Finally, we will co-host a “Meet the Candidates Forum” in the spring with the Longmeadow Senior Center.*

ORGANIZATION: *Our organization is made up of four co-chairpersons and a team of individual school representatives. This year’s co-chairpersons are: Melinda Cropsey, Jeanne Lachiusa, Ellen McKenna and Karolyn Ryan. This year’s individual school reps. are: Center School: Maura Devlin and Lisa Stevens, Blueberry Hill School: David Appleman, Lynn Gervais-Jones and Kim Putnam, Wolf Swamp School: David Andre and Charlene Metcalf, Glenbrook Middle School: Marcie Kearing, Janine McVay and Meg Schneider, Williams Middle School: Kate Pappas and Tani Sapirstein, Longmeadow High School: Michele Drennan and Debra Jangraw, Longmeadow Special Ed. PAC: Karolyn Ryan and TBD, Longmeadow Montessori School: Connie Pierson, and BayPath College Pre-School: TBD.*

HOW CAN I HELP? *1) READ the LINK Letter and provide us with feedback. We actively solicit your comments and suggestions about school-related “hot topics” you feel we should be covering and ways we can be a more effective organization, and 2) VOTE at town meetings and elections! It is our hope that by keeping our community informed, involved and actively engaged we will enhance the quality of education in Longmeadow.*

Our next general LINK Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 5th at 7:30 p.m. in the Center School Community Room. Dr. McGarry, Superintendent, is our guest speaker. Please join us.

*This issue covers four School Committee Meetings
(August 27th, September 10th, September 24th, and October 9th)*

**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**

HIGHLIGHTS

Pioneer Valley Business Excellence Award: *Longmeadow Schools were presented with the "Torch of Excellence Award" at the Pioneer Valley Business Excellence Award Luncheon on 10/17/01. This Business Excellence Award is for the service category and is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of our administration, staff, School Councils and District Learning Team.*

Blueberry Hill/Wolf Swamp Renovation: *The School Committee signed a 16.9 million dollar contract with Fontaine Bros. of Springfield for the renovation and expansion of Blueberry Hill and Wolf Swamp schools. This contract coupled with architectural fees, furniture, technology, bond issuance and contingency costs are expected to bring the projects total cost to \$21.6 million dollars with 64% reimbursed from the state of Massachusetts.*

Construction is scheduled to begin immediately. Initial steps will involve the placement of structural fill at the Wolf Swamp site after the digging of the foundation at Blueberry Hill. Both schools have established Safety Committees to protect students during the construction process. The School Committee entered into a contract with Peter Proakis to serve as Clerk of the Works for these projects. Mr. Proakis served as the Clerk of the Works for the Center School project and has over 30 years experience in this capacity. Ground-breaking ceremonies are scheduled for Friday, Nov. 2nd 9:30 a.m. at Blueberry Hill and 11:00 a.m. at Wolf Swamp.

LHS Projects: Bleachers at LHS Stadium have been replaced, offering improved safety and accessibility. School Committee gratefully acknowledged the gift of outdoor lighting on LHS practice football field from the town Youth Football Organization. School Committee awarded contract for replacement of Boilers to T.J. Conway of Spfld. Window replacement and roof replacement projects are "out-to-bid" and expected back mid-December.

Official Public School Enrollment for the 2001-2002 School Year: As of October 1, 2001 enrollment is 3315 students. This reflects an increase of 72 students system-wide over the 2000-01 school year. The breakdown is as follows: Pre-School: 43 students, Center School: 579 students, Blueberry Hill School: 305 students, Wolf Swamp School: 325 students, Glenbrook: 547 students, Williams: 447 students, and LHS 1,069 students.

Staffing Issues: We have a total of 33 new teachers this year system-wide. The breakdown is as follows: 2 at Center, 2 at Blueberry, 1 at Wolf Swamp, 6 at Glenbrook, 5 at Williams and 13 at LHS. These figures include the addition of several growth positions which were not included in the projected budget for FY 02, as follows: 1/2 Kindergarten teacher at Center, 1 First Grade at Center, 1 First Grade at Blueberry, 1/2 K Aide at Center, 3 1/2 1st Gr. Aides at Wolf Swamp and 1/2 Elementary Health teacher. The total estimated cost of these new positions is \$175,128.00. There is currently no reserve in the FY02 Budget to pay for these positions. The reserve positions for expected growth were deleted during last spring's budget negotiations based on the expectation that they would be funded in the future if excessive growth occurred.

New Director of Business Services: The School Committee has reviewed the job description and began the search for a new Director of Business Services in anticipation of the retirement of Joe Flahive, Asst. Superintendent-Business in January, 2002.

Special Education Deficit FY01: The School Committee voted to request an article for the Warrant of the Special Town Meeting for the town to fund the Special Education tuition deficit for FY01 that could not be funded from the reserve account, in the amount of \$22,268.42. In past years the deficit has been funded by the town reserve account, but FY01 town reserves were not sufficient.

Gift and Fund-raising Policy: The School Committee has adopted a policy requiring gifts of more than \$1,000.00 to be approved by the School Committee. Additionally, the School Committee must approve all fund raising campaigns intended to benefit individual schools or the school system which are reasonably expected to raise in excess of \$10,000.00. Other general terms and conditions apply.

Overnight/Overseas Field Trips: In light of recent terrorist activity the School Committee rescinded their approval of The Lyrics Group trip planned to Italy. They also decided against approval of all other overseas travel for this year. The administration will continue to monitor events before making decisions on whether or not to allow students to travel by air domestically. No decision has been rendered on middle school trips to D.C./Quebec.

Glenbrook Boiler: The boilers at Glenbrook (installed in 1968) are failing. Funding for repair/replacement costs will be placed on the warrant for the **November 27, 2001 Town Meeting.**

Proposed Mentor Program for new Teachers: The significant increase in new faculty members requires a systematic and formal approach to professional development, support and retention of these new teachers. The Mentor Program Development Committee has developed a proposed pilot program in an effort to promote and ensure successful inclusion of teachers new to the Longmeadow Public Schools, subject to law and funding. The mission of the program is to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the on-going support of teachers new to the Longmeadow Public Schools and the establishment of professional, collaborative relationships between veteran teachers and teachers new to the district.

For more information about topics covered or to provide suggestions or comments, please contact LINK Co-Chairs:

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