

1 Town of Lincoln Special Selectboard Meeting
2 Friday, December 18, 2020, 6:30 PM
3 On-line “virtual” meeting from multiple locations and by phone
4 GoToMeeting
5
6

7 Attending: Selectboard Chair, Bill Finger; Vice Chair, Paul Forlenza; members Oakley Smith, Will
8 Sipsey, and Bay Jackson; Selectboard Ass’t & Bookkeeper, Ann Moreau-Kensek
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10 Guests: Over 110 additional attendees
11

12 Bill Finger introduced the meeting at 6:33. He noted the reason for the meeting was to talk
13 about what’s happening with the school. He asked those attending to keep in mind the time
14 as they share opinions and ideas and asked people to be kind to each other. He asked people
15 who want to speak to send a message to Oakley Smith in the chat box, as Oakley will be the
16 moderator.
17

18 Paul and Bay had opening statements. Paul thanked everyone for coming and expressed
19 hopes that by the end of the meeting the Selectboard would better understand their role.
20 Bay expressed excitement over seeing so many people attending. She noted that one goal is
21 to learn how people feel. She had prepared a presentation and if people want a copy, they
22 should put their email into the chat box. As a point of order she asked Bill to record the
23 meeting. The presentation can be viewed here:
24 [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qlatNRBaN79mRo-J-oPZ-](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qlatNRBaN79mRo-J-oPZ-KvFyHtiqMjgABiYPn6vkqM/edit#slide=id.p)
25 [KvFyHtiqMjgABiYPn6vkqM/edit#slide=id.p](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qlatNRBaN79mRo-J-oPZ-KvFyHtiqMjgABiYPn6vkqM/edit#slide=id.p) (ctrl + click to follow link) or at
26 Lincolnvermont.org (Governance, Selectboard, minutes)
27

28 Bay’s presentation includes: a reviewal of the proposal; community response to the proposal;
29 Articles of Agreement /Act 46; Lincoln School/MAUSD Bond Agreement; steps to withdraw
30 from the union; next steps; community organization and action; and contact information for
31 MAUSD School Board, Selectboard Members, and elected state officials.
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33 Most of the speakers thanked other attendees and the Selectboard.
34

35 Tim Lueders-Dumont spoke to the issue of the school bond, debt changes and the potential
36 legal ramifications of repurposing the school.
37

38 Paul Forlenza talked briefly about the Town having to purchase the building if we withdraw
39 from the union.
40

41 Rob Backlund is on the MAUSD School Board and is also a resident. He noted that he was
42 speaking for himself, and not on behalf of the School Board. He expressed joy and sorrow- joy
43 at the outpouring of support for the place the school holds in the community and briefly
44 spoke about Ripton and Weybridge leaving their unions. He noted that intent is one thing,

45 outcome something else, and that the problems we are facing won't be fixed if we lose our
46 school. He expressed that as a School Board member he doesn't support repurposing or
47 closing the Lincoln Community School. He voiced a concern over the numbers, and how in
48 five years the district would still barely be in the black and encouraged everyone to think
49 bigger and more creatively. What affects us affects the entire school district.

50
51 Mike Fisher noted there are tremendous fiscal challenges ahead. He thanked Bay for her work
52 and shared that he was one of three dissenting votes on the Act 46 committee and that this
53 doesn't comply with what was voted on four years ago.

54
55 Katie Manaras asked if the School Board votes to go forward whether it sets it in motion or
56 does it go to the towns. Sarah McClain, school board member, noted that if the board votes
57 to repurpose the school, it is a School Board decision, and would be set in motion. Mike Fisher
58 added that Act 46 seems to say that can't be done. Paul Forlenza offered that the School
59 board could also vote to have the Towns vote.

60
61 Jim Warnock expressed his concerns with the Superintendent's "deficit approach", and
62 advocated for a strengths/asset approach and offered several ideas.

63
64 Oakley Smith reviewed the procedure for those who wished to speak.

65
66 Rebecca Otey was on the Lincoln School Board and also the Act 46 Committee. She
67 expressed that this is a state level problem pushed down to the Town level. She suggested
68 the Town needs to push it back up to the state level and said she is willing to participate and
69 assist the Town. She talked about creating points of contact between towns, and other
70 potential solutions, including filing for an injunction to buy more time.

71
72 Bill Finger noted that he'd talked with the Town Atty about a possible injunction and that
73 should be discussed tonight.

74
75 Several people spoke to the legality viz Act 46, and who vetted the Superintendent's plan.
76 Sarah McLain referred to the School Board meeting agenda for the meeting on Tues, Dec. 22.

77
78 Ann Fisher agreed there is a financial issue but it wouldn't be solved by sending 6th graders to
79 school with 17 & 18 year olds.

80
81 Kate Bently reported on a meeting she was able to sit in on with Patrick Reen. She noted he
82 was questioned on financials and she learned that some people will lose jobs whether
83 schools close or not. Seems untenable that 13 School Board members are about to make a
84 decision that affects over 10,000 people.

85 Brief discussion on magnet schools and the idea of raising per pupil spending.

86
87 Sally Baldwin noted that she has lived in towns where they've lost the schools and it isn't
88 good. She was at a meeting where the Supt. was talking and said he gave a 10,000 ft. view.

89 When asked about specifics he said the numbers were not available but said the details are
90 forthcoming. She wondered if anyone on the call had seen the numbers.

91

92 School Board members Rob Backlund and Sarah McClain affirmed they had not seen them
93 either and this information has not been available because of the possibility of identifying
94 information. It will be done in Executive Session.

95

96 Paul Forlenza shared that he'd spoken with the Office Manager who said the Lincoln School
97 budget is 1.7 million, with 1.2 million of that being staff and benefits costs.

98

99 Several people shared that they moved to Lincoln for the school, and that if we lose the
100 school a lot of families will move and Lincoln could become a retirement community.

101

102 Will Gusakov wondered what Rob and Sarah's take was on whether the vote would pass in
103 January.

104

105 Laura Newman noted that she'd spent time on the State website and that Lincoln and
106 Monkton were consistently the best schools. It is a bad idea to pull kids from a good school
107 and send them to one that isn't as good.

108

109 Sarah McClain noted there are 13 School Board members- seven are from the Town's whose
110 schools will remain open. Rob shared that he'd talked to others but didn't get a great read on
111 it. We need to make it about the five towns- it affects the whole district.

112 Sarah said the Board had moved beyond the subcommittee and is now dealing with a
113 recommendation.

114

115 Isla Halby shared that they would not have moved Zeno Mt. Farm to Lincoln if not for the
116 school. She raised questions about health insurance costs viz. this issue.

117

118 Bay Jackson invited people to put their emails into the chat box as she is creating a list serve
119 and invited people to consider how they could help.

120

121 Anna Smith shared that she and Tim Lueders- Dumont are working on some legal aspects and
122 also reaching out to LCS alumni and already have 100 names after just four days. A lot of
123 young people have a dream of coming back to Lincoln and closing the school might make a
124 difference in where they choose to live.

125

126 Kate Doer and Ben Davis shared a little of their history and why they moved to Lincoln. They
127 understand there is financial information needed and they believe in making a well-informed
128 decision.

129

130 Maureen Rotax shared her connections to the school and wondered how Bristol parents feel
131 about the larger classes and changes having more students from other towns would have on
132 the elementary school there.

133 Bay noted that one of the challenges is the enrollment projections. She encouraged people
134 who are new in town who have children not yet of school age to let her know.

135
136 Caleb Elder is the rep in Addison County. He reported that the Addison County delegation is
137 coming together to look at this – looking at possibly exempting the building and health
138 insurance costs. He asked people to send their email to the chat box.

139
140 Paul Forlenza briefly discussed the number of students at the school and noted we need hard
141 numbers to make a good case.

142
143 Judi Danforth noted that many of these costs aren't just about Lincoln, but the state and
144 nationally in how we pay for education. The state is encouraging people to move here from
145 other states. What will we have if our schools are gone?

146
147 Cameron Perta shared Judi's perspective and encouraged everyone to be proactive and
148 solutions oriented.

149
150 Steve Wendel asked what happens next and how much time we have.

151
152 Sarah McClain shared that the January 26 School Board meeting is when they'll make a
153 decision. There is a meeting on January 20th to discuss this.

154
155 Discussion on timeline to get this on the ballot.
156 Discussion on accuracy of population numbers five years out and if this is the direst situation
157 we've been in. Sarah McClain will send enrollment info.

158
159 Bay talked about the next steps. She talked about it being in everyone's best interests to
160 move in different directions to gather information and be prepared. She urged attendees to
161 sign up for a group they feel compelled to help with. The financial piece is the one that needs
162 solving.

163
164 Bill Finger expressed amazement at having 112 people show up at a Selectboard meeting. He
165 noted that Mary Arbuckle at NEAT-TV has offered to put this meeting on her platform.

166
167 He summed up his feelings that from this meeting and previous meetings that the train has
168 left the station regarding Supt. Reen and the School Board is being pressured to make a
169 decision in January. We're trying to come up with information and don't have the comfort of
170 time. We have a fairly strong case under Article 16 and the other is the bond. We received an
171 email from our counsel today regarding an injunction. We're in a position to pursue this
172 aggressively so we have time to pull this together, with Covid and the Holidays. We need a
173 little more time to find out the real desires of the whole town.

174
175 Paul affirmed the need to get an injunction and noted the Town's counsel recommended
176 someone with experience in education litigation.

177 Further discussion on doing this immediately and possible contacts.

178

179 Paul moved and Oakley seconded to seek out and hire an atty to represent the Town of
180 Lincoln in a case against the Central Office. Paul will take this on. Oakley cautioned that
181 litigation is very expensive and the Selectboard takes the taxpayer's money seriously.

182 Pal wondered if it is legal to have private funds coming into town. Further discussion. Bill
183 noted that an injunctions seems negative, it would provide the Town with time.

184 Bill called the vote, passed 5-0-0. The Town will go forward with the action.

185

186 Bill thanked everyone for coming and encouraged people to come to other meetings.

187 Sally Ober noted that at one point there were 105 people on the call. Bay saved the chatbox.

188 Meeting was adjourned.

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190 Minutes respectfully taken by Ann Kensek.

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192 A full recording of this meeting is available on NEAT-TV, and at lincolnvermont.org,
193 Governance, Selectboard, Minutes.

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