

Demographic Change Task Force
Minutes
January 7, 2009
Town Hall Room 111

Present: Paul Ash (LPS Superintendent), George Burnell (Board of Selectmen), Marian Cohen (2020 Vision Com. Liaison), Margaret Coppe (School Liaison), Ben Esty, Bebe Fallick (Chair), Dan Krupka, Carl Valente (Town Manager)

Other members not present: Yukari Scott, Stephanie Singer, Candace McLaughlin

Chair Bebe Fallick called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

The minutes of the December 17, 2008 meeting were accepted as amended.

Paul Ash, Superintendent of Schools in Lexington, presented a brief introduction of his experience in projecting school enrollments since 1986, when he was working in Wellesley. At that time, new school building projects were underway and 10-year enrollment projections were needed. At that time he used the cohort survival ratio or progressive rates that factor in fertility rates for various ethnic groups and the life cycle of home turnover (a 40-year cycle). However, cohort survival rates do not take into account in-migration or underreporting on the annual census.

Dr. Ash presented some of the enrollment data for Lexington schools:

- Kindergarten enrollment jumped more than projected, probably due to implementation of full day kindergarten in the fall of 2008.
- Fiske and Harrington elementary schools had progression rates far in excess of the other four schools; both are new schools.
- Enrollment is dropping by about 300 at the elementary schools over the next five years.
- The middle school and high school enrollments remain stable for the next 7-10 years.
- The high school buildings need significant repairs and work. The debt exclusion vote of 1999 was intended to prolong the life of the high school for ten years. We are at the end of that time now.
- It may be possible to close one elementary school in 2013 and this would necessitate redistricting of the remaining five schools.

(Committee members were given copies of the *Four and Ten-Year Enrollment Forecasts; December 10, 2008*)

Dr. Ash will be presenting a ten-year master plan to the School Committee in March 2008. In it will be all the capitol needs of the schools and the order in which they need to be done.

Discussion of the methodology used to project enrollments followed. Points raised were:

- Completed fertility rates (number of total children a woman has)

- Fertility rates
- Available house lots
- Distribution of houses by school district
- Possible 40-year trends in housing and completed fertility rates
- “Echo” effects in population increases

Dr. Ash presented information on the following statistics:

- Approximately 22% of public school students are non-white; most of this number is Asian
- 17% of the students come from homes where the household language is not English
- 3.6% of students are non-English speakers
- ELL (English Language Learners) have increased 25% in the last two years
- 20% of students are on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) while the state average is 16-17%

General comments about the schools:

- All buildings have dedicated computer space (some mobile carts)
- There are no industrial arts, no home economics, no business/secretarial programs

The discussion ended with a vision of what kinds of demographic information to collect and overlay on a 3-D map in order to see patterns that would aide the schools in enrollment projections and school building use. Data could be collected and linked to lots or houses in order to make more accurate projections. Questions were raised about what kind of information would be needed, what information is relatively easy to collect, and where would the information reside.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 4, at 7 PM. Bill Hadley from the DPW and Karen Simmons from the Recreation department will be the guests.

Minutes submitted by
Margaret Coppe