

TO: MEMBERS OF LINCOLN-SUDBURY SCHOOL COMMUNITY,
CITIZENS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS

FROM: NANCY MARSHALL, CHAIRPERSON, ON BEHALF OF THE LINCOLN-SUDBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 2012

You may be aware that contract negotiations between the Lincoln-Sudbury School Committee and the Lincoln-Sudbury Teachers' Association have not yet resulted in a signed agreement. Many LSRHS teachers were present at a recent regular School Committee meeting and read a thoughtful statement regarding the negotiations process and their desire to reach agreement. We, too, hope to conclude collective bargaining negotiations in the near future. The purpose of this letter is to outline the School Committee's position on the current status of our bargaining process and to help answer any questions and concerns from students, parents and community members.

We have had a number of formal negotiating sessions with the Teachers' Association, beginning in Fall 2011. Our priorities throughout the negotiations process have been:

- retaining faculty and staff of high quality across the curriculum;
- restoring faculty, decreasing total student load, and maintaining Lincoln-Sudbury's curricular depth and breadth;
- making the compensation package for junior faculty more market competitive;
- achieving fixed and modest growth in the District's annual budget through Fiscal Year 2015; and
- meeting the state's educational mandates and Lincoln-Sudbury's graduation requirements.

The School Committee has reached tentative agreement with the Teachers' Association on many of the issues raised at the bargaining table, including an agreement on health insurance that resulted in preservation of benefits for faculty and staff as well as cost savings to the District. However, a number of important issues, principally related to compensation and our ability to schedule students into appropriate classes, remain outstanding. Despite our good faith efforts over the last year to resolve these issues, the School Committee has decided to utilize the procedures available under state law to appoint a mediator to assist us in reaching agreement on the outstanding issues.

In the meantime, we are continuing to honor the terms of the teacher contract that expired on August 31, 2012 and the agreed-upon terms related to health insurance, thus ensuring continuity of operations for our school. Approximately half of our teachers have realized increases in their salaries this year, even without a signed contract, due to movement from one step to the next on the 17-step salary schedule or as a result of a "lane" change, which reflects graduate study or other continuing education. This is true even before any percentage increases to base salaries are applied. The School Committee has worked diligently and in good faith to reach an agreement with the Teachers' Association that would translate into fiscally responsible terms, including an agreement that would allow for an increase in the base salaries for senior staff members as well as those still advancing on the steps of the salary schedule.

The School Committee's proposals to the Teachers' Association have been informed by the fact that, due to fiscal challenges, we face a significantly different economic reality than we did when negotiating prior contracts. We expect these challenges to continue, due to a still-weakened economy and slow growth in tax revenue. These challenges are exacerbated by the adoption of unfunded mandates from state and Federal governments that have an adverse effect on our budget. At the same time, we anticipate a significant increase in enrollment at Lincoln-Sudbury in the next school year for which we must plan. As a result of all of these factors, the District is projecting a significant, potentially crippling budget shortfall over the next few years, a shortfall that cannot be managed through further faculty reductions and will require taxpayer support in the form of passed Proposition 2½ overrides if we wish to meet our objectives of maintaining our curriculum and adequately managing class size and teacher load.

As a School Committee, we are accountable to our towns to ensure there is appropriate staffing to meet the educational needs of students, while also being careful stewards of taxpayer dollars in light of our current economic circumstances. We are working to see modest increases in teacher salaries that acknowledge the dedication and excellence of our teachers, and ensure that their overall terms and conditions of employment, which include salary, benefits and professional opportunities, are competitive with those of other high-performing school districts with which we compete for talent. We believe that moderate growth of our teacher salaries may enable us to invest in restoring some of the faculty positions and curricular breadth that have been lost in recent years, and we believe this investment is imperative in order to sustain Lincoln-Sudbury's excellence. In summary, we believe that our proposals to the Teachers' Association have appropriately balanced all of these competing factors.

Despite the challenging negotiations over the past months, our teachers have continued to work hard on behalf of our students, offering strong instruction and learning opportunities in the classroom, providing other curricular supports, and leading a wide array of extra-curricular activities and opportunities. Our teachers and staff deserve our full support. We also believe that, despite our differences at the bargaining table, our teachers will continue to deliver services of a high standard and that our students will continue to receive an excellent education. We remain hopeful that, with the help of mediation, we will be able to conclude our contract negotiations successfully in the near future.

Thank you for your support – both during the negotiation process as well as in our efforts to meet our budgetary challenges in the upcoming years.