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May 16, 1995

Lowell Institute School
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
32 Carlton Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

The following is a summary of my meeting with MIT Provost Dr. Wrighton on February 9, 1995.

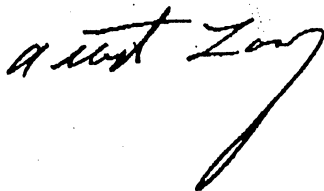
The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Dr. Wrighton's decision to close the MIT Lowell Institute School (LIS).

In attendance were Dr. Wrighton and myself. The meeting duration was approximately eighty minutes.

The following points were discussed:

- I pointed out that LIS does not require the current MIT funds to continue operation; Dr. Wrighton stated that he realized this.
- Dr. Wrighton stated that LIS does appear marginal to the community (MIT) and that other currently operating MIT services which appear to be "marginal" must be closed/ended.
- Dr. Wrighton stated that LIS has no place at MIT; he also stated that he has thought this way for some time.
- Dr. Wrighton (in relation to the above statement) also stated that MIT is rated "first" in many engineering fields; that MIT is very wealthy and that the students (at MIT) are some of the brightest in the world—in this context, Dr. Wrighton stated that MIT students should not be working in the same environment as LIS.
- Dr. Wrighton stated that area companies involved in biotechnology, are continually asking him (Dr. Wrighton) to train technicians in this field; in this context, Dr. Wrighton stated that he could not justify the existence of LIS at MIT.
- Dr. Wrighton pointed out that there exist other area schools where community members (Cambridge area) can receive the same instruction as LIS offers. I disagreed with this point; I pointed out that the other schools seem to offer more of a "quick fix" relative to the fundamental and through preparation one receives at LIS. Dr. Wrighton agreed with me but then stated that this was not a reason to compel him to reverse his decision.
- I asked Dr. Wrighton about the general direction MIT was heading in the future; Dr. Wrighton stated that biotechnology would be the focus; he also stated that "downsizing" would continue at MIT.
- Dr. Wrighton stated that he wished LIS well and hoped that LIS would continue but that LIS will not continue at MIT.
- Dr. Wrighton pointed out that there are currently no MIT instructors at LIS.
- Dr. Wrighton also pointed out that a small number of MIT staff (employees) are served by LIS.
- Dr. Wrighton discussed the "mission" of MIT, in a general sense; he further stated that LIS does not "fit" with this "mission".
- Dr. Wrighton stated that the funds, space and Athena computing time were indeed small; that they would likely grow as LIS continues to grow.

Sincerely,



The Tech (an MIT student-operated newspaper) 1/18/95

January 18, 1995

THE TECH Page 9

Provost Closes Lowell School, Cites Shortage of Resources

By Christopher Falling
STAFF REPORTER

Provost Mark S. Wrighton announced last week that MIT will close the Lowell Institute School, which has offered evening technical subjects in MIT classrooms since 1903, as part of a review of the Institute's higher education priorities.

The school will close on July 1, 1996.

"This decision comes as the result of a set of considerations related to a number of factors, including space, direct financial support, use of Athena [Computing Environment] facilities, and other resources," Wrighton said.

LIS offers classes in electronics, computer applications and engineering drawing, and computer-aided drafting to 1,000 students a year, including about 100 Institute employees.

The school provides "MIT and Cambridge with a service that costs MIT only a little bit of space in the evening and computer access," said Bruce D. Wedlock '56, director of LIS for the past 22 years and a lecturer in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

"I am disappointed at the decision to close the school," Wedlock said.

Wedlock's \$100,000 salary is the only line item in MIT's budget directly related to operating the school, Wedlock said. The Institute also provides LIS with about 1,000 square feet of classroom space and gives students access to Athena workstations in Building 32 for class work.

The remainder of the operating costs and salaries are covered through LIS tuition and donations from the Lowell Institute, a philanthropic foundation founded in 1836 to provide free public lectures for the citizens of Boston, Wedlock said.

In addition to the director, two full-time employees and one part-time employee will no longer work for the LIS administration.

John Lowell, a trustee of the Lowell Institute and grandson of its founder, offered to increase contributions to LIS to cover the salary of the director last spring, Wedlock said. However, MIT refused to continue providing classroom space and Athena access, he said.

Decision based on priority evaluation

"Much of the decision is based on our vision of what will be needed to sustain MIT as the leading academic institution focused on science

and technology," Wrighton said. "In this era of constraint we must make some difficult decisions about what we will do and what resources will be directed to such efforts in order to sustain excellence in our core missions."

The decision to close LIS does not come from the Institute-wide re-engineering efforts, Wrighton said.

"It should also be understood that when the LIS started there were not as many opportunities to pursue evening classes as there are today," Wrighton said. "There are now many academic institutions offering high quality evening classes in the greater Boston area," he said.

While LIS offers courses at the associate degree level, the level of teaching is more extensive than that of a community college, Wedlock said. LIS is also less expensive, at about \$300-\$400 per course, than other comparable institutions, such as Harvard University which charges about \$1,000 for a course, he said.

LIS was founded in 1903 with the purpose of educating mill workers in the Boston area, Wedlock said. "The cost of a course then was equal to the price of two bushels of wheat."

Retreat to the Ivory Tower

MIT's closure of the Lowell Institute School

by Rob

The recent announcement by the administration of the impending closure of the Lowell Institute School raises questions about MIT's priorities for technology education, and the soundness of its decision-making capabilities.

The Lowell Institute was set up according to the will of local philanthropist John Lowell, who died in 1836 leaving a quarter of a million dollars to set up an institute which would provide free lectures to the citizens of Boston. The school was founded in 1903 as the Lowell Institute School for Industrial Foremen to provide an opportunity for working people to get an education in the technology that was then coming into the workplace. Today it still functions in this capacity, keeping people who work in technology abreast of the latest developments and providing an upgrade to the skills and thereby the employability of technical workers. Where MIT as a university focuses on the theory and design of technology, the Lowell Institute School provides the necessary know-how to im-

plement and utilize this technology in the workplace. This combination has made MIT a somewhat more holistic technological institute, addressing many aspects of technology from culture, gender, policy, and design perspectives to applications and everyday use.

In addition, Lowell has catered to a somewhat diverse student body, which includes recent college graduates, current MIT students and staff, and residents of Massachusetts and surrounding states. Many who enroll already work with technology, or were laid off and need to upgrade their technical skills to compete for jobs. Some students have PhDs, some are recent immigrants, and about 125 per year are employees of MIT who are seeking skills that will be useful to them in their jobs here. The mean age of Lowell Institute School students is 35.

Over the years, the school has offered a wide variety of courses including computing, signal processing, video technology, glassblowing, electrical engineering, machine shop, drawing and drafting, and Japanese. The availability of a course at any given time depended on the availability of staff to teach the course and MIT facilities in which to teach them.

In a recent interview I conducted with Provost Marc Wrighton, he argued that the use of MIT resources by the school placed pressure on MIT that needed to be alleviated, especially during this period of budget cuts. But what resources exactly does the school utilize, and what are the benefits that validate this drain on resources? For a start, MIT provides very little direct financial support to the school. MIT currently pays the

salary of the school's director, which including benefits amounts to a total of about \$95,000. The Lowell Institute School has agreed to absorb this cost entirely, thus freeing MIT of any direct financial commitment.

There are also many indirect costs associated with the school's current operation. For example, the school occupies 100,000 square feet in building E32. At current market rates for the Kendall Square area, this property is worth \$15,000-\$20,000 per year. Dr Bruce Wedlock, director of the Lowell Institute School, ventured that the school could probably pay for this if MIT asked.

The Lowell Institute School also uses MIT labs and has around 120 Athena accounts operating during any given time. Wedlock pointed out that the school's use of MIT labs and computing facilities is restricted to 5-7pm on weekdays and Saturday mornings, which are off-times for MIT classes and student use. Regarding Provost Wrighton's argument, MIT still incurs a cost. While this is undoubtedly true, there has been no study to determine the actual level of the costs involved.

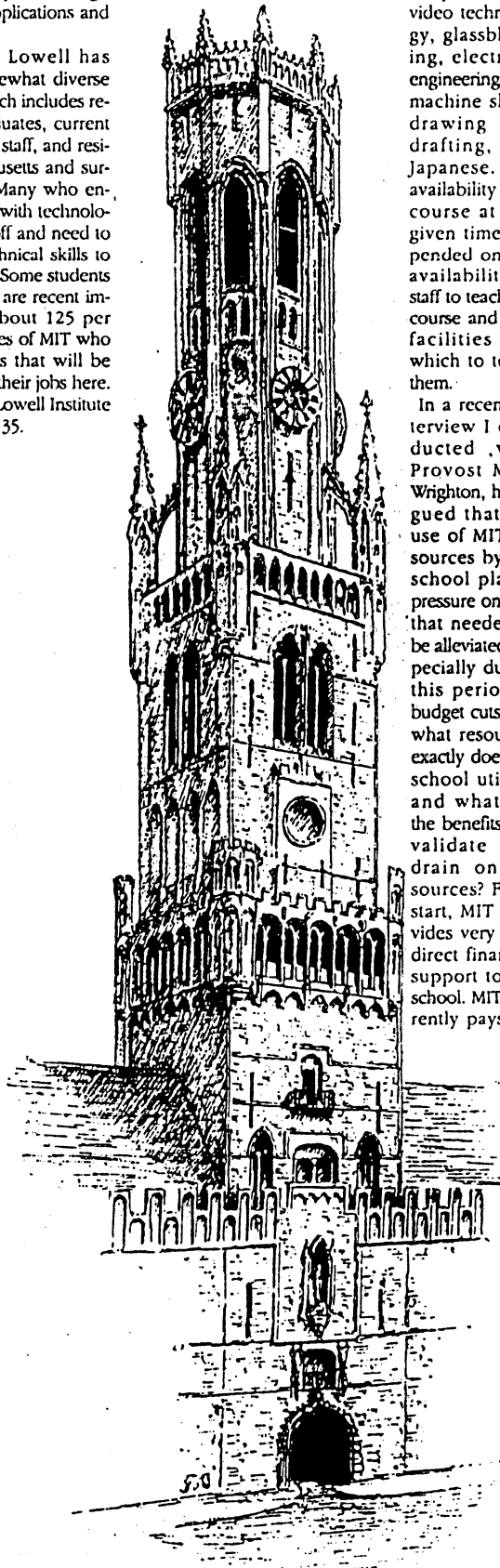
Wrighton voiced concerns about the similarly studied burden on MIT of Lowell Institute students "walking down the corridors and using the bathrooms" and forth.

In apposition to these costs, the nature and level of which remain unknown, the benefits to MIT and the broader community of having the school remain are mentioned above, over 100 of the school's students in any one year are MIT employees for whom the school's training enhances job performance and satisfaction. MIT currently pays the tuition for employees to attend the school. If it were to be closed down, Wrighton admits that the employees would enroll in similar courses at other schools, such as the Harvard Extension program (which, incidentally, is also set up by the Lowell Institute), Northeastern University or Wentworth Institute of Technology. Comparable courses at these other schools cost at least \$500 more than Lowell Institute School courses, which represents an additional cost to MIT of at least \$50,000 per annum. Given that there has been no study of the indirect costs of hosting the school, it is impossible to determine whether the savings or the expenditure is greater.

There are other important issues arising from the finances. For example, there is a sense in which the Lowell Institute School serves the Cambridge and Boston communities in a way which MIT's more academic activities can not. The presence of such a school allows the local communities

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From *The Thistle*, an MIT student-run newspaper 2/22/95



Lowell Institute

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benefit from the technological advances that we so proudly pursue. While it is true that these skills can be acquired elsewhere in the community, for MIT to end direct community access to its facilities makes a strong, and potentially undesirable, statement about MIT's priorities for technical education. MIT has always had a more down-to-earth feel to it than many other universities, largely due to the in-

clusion of multidisciplinary and practical programs in its activities. Provost Wrighton and President Charles Vest have received many letters from Lowell Institute School students, past and present, that make it clear that the image of MIT in the community and the workplace is greatly enhanced by the existence of the school within MIT.

Academia, however, is not what it used to be. According to Wrighton, Lowell courses are not taught by MIT faculty (although Lowell Institute School staff do teach MIT courses, interestingly enough). It seems that implementation and theory of technology are increasingly diverging. Junior faculty are invariably involved in the publish or perish roundabout that typifies academia today, and therefore can not afford to spend time teaching practical courses that won't advance their research and personal careers, useful though it may be to the working community. By the time an academic has published her or his way into a senior post, he or she has usually backed into a very narrow theoretical corner and is unsuited to teaching current job skills to workers. MIT must clearly decide whether it wants to be an inclusive technical school, or an ivory (Lego?) tower uninvolved in teaching technical skills to those who will use them.

Provost Wrighton made reference to the "mission" of MIT, the need to simplify and to concentrate efforts on what benefits students and faculty, and to eliminate that which does not distinguish MIT from other schools. Interestingly, he argues that the Real Estate center in the school of Architecture and Urban Planning is appropriate even though it neither teaches nor researches technology because its students are degree candidates (not to mention the fact that it brings in more than the odd dollar for MIT). As to the Lowell Institute School, he conceded that no single thing of that magnitude would interfere with MIT's mission, but that many things of that caliber could.

There are several inconsistencies in his argument. First, according to page 11 of the official MIT Bulletin, the institute's mission is

"to provide the highest quality programs of education and research in all areas of study and investigation where strength and competence have been developed and to do so with a strong commitment to public service and to a diversity of backgrounds, interests, among faculty, students, and staff." The Lowell Institute seems to fit the official mission better than a lot of other programs at MIT, though Provost Wrighton finds a loophole: he interprets "students" to mean degree candidates. That's interesting because MIT has many students who aren't degree candidates; there's even a classification for them: special students. And what does this say for the future of other programs such as the Community Fellows Program which also do not, in Wrighton's estimation, have any "students," but are excellent examples of what MIT can do with its resources when it cares to use them to benefit someone other than wealthy corporations?

Second, with regard to eliminating things that don't distinguish MIT from other schools, it could be argued that the Lowell Institute School actually helps to distinguish MIT because the school gives MIT a more comprehensive approach to education that is absent elsewhere. The administration apparently doesn't think so, but has not offered any explanation as to why or why not. Wrighton makes reference to goals and strategies that are not in the open, not agreed on by the institute, and therefore not valid.

With no numbers to back the financial argument, and the "mission" argument apparently based on some secret or incoherent agenda, the closure of the Lowell Institute School remains unjustified. Perhaps Wrighton's comment that the future growth area of technical training is biotechnology rather than digital technology might be relevant. Apparently MIT looked at the possibility of providing biotechnology workplace training through the Lowell Institute School, but the lab space was deemed to be unavailable and administrators felt that it would be difficult to get teachers. The move was scuttled as 'unrealistic.' It seems unreasonable, however, to go from this to a justification of shutting down the school as it currently exists, especially when there is still great demand for it from students from all over the community. The administration should articulate its real reasons for closing the Lowell Institute; until it does, this will stand as another example of unjustified decision making by the MIT untouchables.

City of Cambridge

The Special Committee on the Lowell Institute School held a public hearing on Wednesday, June 7, 1995, beginning at 5:45 pm in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing the future of the Lowell Institute School (LIS).

Present at the hearing were Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, Councillor Katherine Triantafillou and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury.

Mayor Reeves convened the hearing and explained the purpose. He read a letter from Councillor Duehay, who was not able to attend the meeting, but wanted to inform the Committee that he had some conversation with Harvard and would be happy to have further discussions. A copy of Councillor Duehay's letter is attached.

Mayor Reeves invited Massachusetts Institute of Technology to speak. Mr. Ron Suduiko, Director of Government Relations, MIT, stated that Northeastern University is seriously interested in continuing the Lowell School at Northeastern and have had discussions with Mr. Lowell, Trustee of the Lowell Institute. Northeastern plans on speaking with Dr. Wedlock about this plan. The courses will essentially be the same.

Mayor Reeves asked whether the campuses would be the same in both content and price. Ron Suduiko said the cost issue is not clear. Northeastern's tuition is higher. He believes there has been some discussion of using Institute funds for scholarships to make the costs lower.

Dr. Bruce Wedlock, Director of LIS, said that discussions with Northeastern began several months ago in January. There was a meeting in February. The meeting was positive, but the low cost of the Lowell School courses was an issue. He has not spoken with Northeastern since then. He did know that Mr. Lowell was going to meet with Provost Bayer, but got a message from him that indicated that cost was still an issue. He was aware that Mr. Lowell was planning to meet with the President of Northeastern.

Mayor Reeves said that in the late 1980's Northeastern has a freshman class of 8,000 and now has a freshman class of 3,000. They obviously have some financial issues to resolve.

Dr. Wedlock said that the Lowell Institute is a philanthropic foundation which also provides funding for Harvard Extension, and for Channel Two, which it started.

Councillor Triantafillou asked why MIT is forcing Lowell Institute School to leave when it does not cost MIT any money.

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Ron Suduiko said that MIT is reviewing its entire budget because of cuts in federal grants and changes in the economy. Since the Lowell Institute School will be facing a leadership change when the director retires, which he is planning to do, MIT decided that this was an appropriate time to implement this decision.

Susan Gomez, 9 St. Paul Street, said that she is a student at the school and wants to continue to go to school in Cambridge. She probably would not go to Boston.

Councillor Triantafillou asked for further explanation from MIT about the costs. Mr. Suduiko said that the costs were overhead from salaries, cost of use of the computer, and the use of space.

Councillor Triantafillou said that since Lowell Institute is willing to pay the entire salary of the director, what are the costs.

Ron Suduiko said that if the school were to continue there would have to be an additional investment to keep the school viable.

Councillor Triantafillou stated that the money issue appears to be an excuse, because there is no evidence of expense to MIT.

Dr. Wedlock stated that the school has never asked MIT for any money in the twenty-two years he has been the director. In 1972 MIT's commitment was to pay the director's salary and the salary of the Administrative Assistant. Ten years later he was told that MIT would not pay the assistant's salary. Before all of this started, John Lowell called Dr. Wedlock and offered to increase his contribution to cover the entire director's salary. Fees have not been raised in three or four years, and they could be raised \$50-100 per course, which could add \$5500-\$11,000 to its revenues.

Ron Suduiko said that as far as MIT is concerned, the issue is that there are huge transitions going on all over the country, and MIT must downsize. All areas must be looked at. MIT would prefer to provide its public service education through its programs in the Cambridge public schools.

The costs of the Lowell Institute School are in four areas: costs affiliated with the administrative structure, computer use and access, space, beyond that the cost of gearing the program up.

Councillor Triantafillou requested that MIT provide hard figures on these costs.

Mr. Suduiko said that the cost is not the whole issue. It is also a mission issue.

Councillor Born stated that she was present at the LIS graduation and she knows what courses are taught. Those courses are not taught at any other places in Cambridge. They are already available at Northeastern and Wentworth Institute in Boston. As elected members of the City of Cambridge, there is an obligation to see that there is education for job opportunities for residents of Cambridge.

Councillor Born asked what other adult education MIT offers.

Mr. Suduiko said that MIT cannot do everything in any area, including community services. He agreed with Councillor Born's characterization of MIT's action as a decision not to offer any adult education.

Councillor Born observed that this is a different decision from that of most universities. She pointed out that Harvard and Lesley, which have adult education, also provide support to the City's public schools.

Councillor Born asked whether if funds were found, MIT would keep the school. She said that she would be willing to work with the Boston Architectural Society to do fundraising. The CAD courses alone justify this. Ron Suduiko said that he doubted that MIT would so decide.

Councillor Born asked whether MIT, given its real estate holdings, would be willing to find another home for the Lowell Institute School in Cambridge. Mr. Ron Suduiko said that he did not know the answer to that question.

Councillor Born asked whether people can register to take just one course at MIT. Ron Suduiko said it might be possible to register as a special student.

Kathy Millis, of Lynn, stated that it is a fairly involved process that must be repeated over and over each semester for each course.

Councillor Born asked whether the reason for MIT's decision is that MIT does not consider the school and its courses up to "snuff". Mr. Suduiko said that this was absolutely not the reason. MIT takes students from all walks of life. Councillor Born said that Harvard has between eight to ten programs for adult education.

Ron Suduiko said that Harvard is a very different institution. One of the strengths of the presence of many institutions is that they are different and offer different things.

Councillor Born asked what the city can do to put the school somewhere else in Cambridge.

Mr. Suduiko said that the decision is not going to change. It was an administrative decision that went through a process. MIT is cutting 600 jobs.

Mayor Reeves said that it is very clear that MIT has not embraced and nurtured the Lowell Institute School, and this is really very sad. The need in Cambridge is enormous for post-highschool experiences. The City is now a partner with Bunker Hill Community College to offer junior college courses in Cambridge. MIT has increased its involvement with the Cambridge public schools enormously and is doing twice as much as Harvard in the City's classrooms. However, this decision is wrong.

Mayor Reeves said that a portion of being a part of a community is to involve it in discussions. He thinks MIT has decided to be a cutting edge technological undergraduate and graduate institution. Nevertheless, the LIS decision is the wrong decision because MIT will continue to be part of the community, and as such, it has an obligation to consider the community in its decisions.

Mayor Reeves stated that this is obviously not a space issue; it is a decision of not wanting LIS to be associated with MIT. This was a unilateral and elitist decision.

Councillor Galluccio stated that City Councillors have an obligation to make sure that the universities are giving as much to residents as possible. He believes that this is a bad decision. The bottom line is that MIT made a decision and balanced it with what effect MIT thought it would have on public relations. This decision does not help him in going forward with relations with MIT. Lowell Institute School represents exactly the area that Cambridge residents need increased. It is a horrible PR decision as well as a bad business decision. The City Council wants this school, and it is impossible for this decision not to impact the relation of MIT and the City. The decision is simply not acceptable.

Councillor Galluccio asked how the Lowell Institute School ended up in MIT. Dr. Wedlock said that the Lowell Family had a sensitivity to the impact of new technology or industry. The need to educate workers became clear.

Councillor Galluccio asked how much discretion the Lowell trustee has to decide how much money to spend on LIS. Dr. Wedlock said that the trustee has complete discretion.

Councillor Galluccio asked what the total amount of the trust fund is. Dr. Wedlock said it was \$33 million. Councillor Galluccio posed the question of whether it would be possible for the Institute to buy a building in Cambridge.

Mayor Reeves stated that he had to leave to go to the School Committee meeting. He said that he believed that the City of Cambridge at the high school or the Community Learning Center could accommodate LIS. He stated that he hopes that LIS will not leave Cambridge. He stated that MIT could be helpful in making sure that LIS stays in Cambridge.

At 7:00 p.m. Councillor Galluccio assumed the chair. Councillor Galluccio stated that the letters and previous testimony received by the City Council have been very clear, eloquent and heartfelt. He then invited public testimony.

Kathy Millis, 71 River Street, Lynn, submitted a statement by a person who attended a meeting with MIT regarding the issue. The letter is attached to this report. (Attachment A)

Richard Bjorkman, 362 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, submitted an article from the Tech, (an MIT student-operated newspaper) regarding the Lowell School closing. (Attachment B)

Michele Halverson, 27 Hutchinson Street, stated that she is a taxpayer, and appreciated MIT giving back to the community. Her children need the Lowell School. The Lowell School helped her tremendously. She urged MIT to change its mind.

Aram Hollman, 15 Clifton Street, Executive Committee, LIS, said that "re-engineering" is a thoughtful, rational process; it is not magic. The logic of this decision is missing. Being at MIT contributes a great deal to the quality of LIS. The teachers of courses he has taken recently at LIS were MIT graduates.

John Sergvaris, 136 Clay Street, Quincy, stated that MIT classrooms are not used at night. He graduated from high school and went to Stanford for financial reasons although he was accepted at MIT. He has taken LIS courses, and they have been excellent.

Councillor Galluccio asked where he had heard of LIS. Mr. Sergvaris said that he works as a computer programmer and LIS is well known among programmers for the high quality of its course.

Cora Bana, West Roxbury, stated that LIS students have access to the MIT library which is very beneficial, and the laboratory spaces are high quality.

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Councillor Galluccio asked how many students LIS has.

Dr. Wedlock said that there 1150 registrations, i.e, a student taking a course. There are approximately 400-500 students. About 100 are Cambridge residents.

Virginia Pochetti, Malden, Administrative Assistant at LIS, said that students are very frightened about LIS closing. There are classes Monday through Sunday, and there are waiting lists.

Michael Finnemore, 19 Boulder Street, Malden said that in the course he took 3/4 of the class were veterans. Lowell Institute treated him well and he is still taking courses there.

Councillor Galluccio thanked all those present for their attendance.

The hearing adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

For the Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth E. Reeves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair

Committee Report #2

S 219

Communication was received from D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk, transmitting a report from Mayor Kenneth E. Reeves, Chair of the Special Committee on the Lowell Institute School for a public hearing held on June 7, 1995 for the purpose of discussing the future of the Lowell Institute School.

6/19/95- No action taken
Placed on file
under Rule 19.

In City Council June 12, 1995

Charter Right exercised
by Mayor Reeves.