



Weymouth

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Weymouth School Committee

ZOOM Meeting

December 15, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

(approved 1/7/21)

Members In Attendance: Lisa Belmarsh, Chair; Tracey Nardone, Vice-Chair; John Sullivan; Secretary, Kathy Curran; Rebecca Sherlock-Shangraw; Carrie Palazzo

Members Absent: Mayor Hedlund

Also Present: Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Human Resources Director, Maryann Foley

The Meeting Came to Order At 5:31pm.

The Chair led in the pledge of allegiance.

Review Interim Superintendent Process

Chair Belmarsh advised that with Superintendent Curtis-Whipple leaving in February there is a need for an interim Superintendent during the permanent Superintendent search.

The chair gave an overview of the open interview process. A preliminary screening committee narrowed the pool to 2 finalists, William Lupini and Kathleen Sullivan. Ms. Belmarsh shared that she does not know of any other position where a public interview is used. Each interview will last 1 hour with committee members taking turns to ask questions. The order of members asking questions; Vice Chair Nardone, Mrs. Curran, Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw, Ms. Palazzo, Dr. Sullivan, and Chair Belmarsh. The candidate will introduce themselves, answer questions and have an opportunity for a closing statement. The Chair thanked the candidates for their time and putting themselves out there in such a public manner.

Mrs. Nardone confirmed that a decision would be made tonight and the Chair confirmed the committee would be recommending a final candidate pending background and contract negotiation.

Interview for the position of Superintendent of Schools-Kathleen Smith

Ms. Smith thanked the committee for the opportunity to be with them and interview for the position of the interim Superintendent. Ms. Smith outlined her educational and administrator experience with the Brockton Public Schools as well as experience as the Superintendent in Salem, MA. Ms. Smith shared her

experience as an attorney (passed the BAR in 1996 after attending New England School of Law) has helped in advocating for students and teachers as well as with the budget-especially in Brockton advocating for federal funding. Candidate Smith shared stories of leadership from both Salem and Brockton highlighting her administration and Superintendent experience. She and her husband, also an educator, have two grown daughters. Ms. Smith co-chaired the Urban Superintendent committee and was also a member of the South Shore Round Table of Superintendents which comprises 18 south shore communities. Candidate Smith conveyed her pride for being a public servant and educator for 42 years.

Vice Chair Nardone introduced herself, sharing that she also began her career in Brockton asked:
-How do you address and help as an Interim Superintendent a district heal from operational and political issues?

Ms. Smith shared that although 6 months may seem like a short time a lot could be accomplished. Speaking from experience she stated the following would be beneficial:

- Demonstrating commitment to community and stakeholders
- Developing relationships with the high level executive team (administrators, principals and deans)
- Being visible and accessible to staff; taking time to understand what is worthwhile (not only during Covid but for the future as well)
- A teacher and principal advisory group
- Ensuring an open line of communication and developing strong dialogue
- Meeting with parents throughout the district in large and smaller groups (virtually during Covid)

Ms. Smith referenced her time in Salem over the previous spring with remote, hybrid and returning to school plans and mental health implications. She mentioned her work with Dr. Fred Clarke of Bridgewater State University stressing that even though the work was hard, it was accomplished compassionate, collegial and collaborative work and training.

Mrs. Kathy Sullivan Curran introduced herself and commented that Ms. Smith had the confidence to bring forth plans in the face of politics. She asked:
-What is your personal definition of inclusion?

Ms. Smith stated that every student should have the opportunity to be in a class with their peers and that the environment be the least restrictive possible. She shared her experience as a special educator and praised the work of the SEPAC organization. Ms. Smith further stated that with strong professional development and recertification will ensure that students all have the same opportunities, curricular and extracurricular.

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw introduced herself and asked on behalf of the Weymouth SEPAC:
If Ms. Smith could share over the last spring during Covid what worked best to accommodate students on IEP? And what didn't work so well?

Ms. Smith gave a shout out to the Salem executive team, Directors and Special Education staff. Advising that even though the kiddos stopped being in school the IEP's didn't stop and work began right away. Phone calls were made home to families to ensure that they felt supported. Ms. Smith conveyed that there

was good guidance from Russell Johnston. Small group and speciality services were offered as well as wrap around services. She acknowledged that there were challenges and that it wasn't perfect.

Ms. Palazzo introduced herself and asked:

As possible Interim Superintendent, what do you hope to achieve and what do you want your imprint to be?

- Building strong relationships with school committee members to determine goals and priorities
 - A 30 day accomplishment status would be given
 - Confidential message would go to members everyday
 - 'Weekly packet' on Fridays
 - 'Superintendent snapshot' -transparency on what is being done
- Ensure teachers feel supported
- A strong communicator
- Assist with a balanced and prepared budget
- Helping to attract a Superintendent that will be excited to be in Weymouth long term
- Assisting in smooth transition

Ms. Smith shared that Superintendent Curtis-Whipple has done a great job.

Dr. Sullivan introduced himself, sharing that he is a teacher at BC High, former teacher in Medford and a summer professor at the University of Maryland asked:

How would you manage the balancing of the relationship with Principals while helping to facilitate the work they do?

Ms. Smith advised that a Superintendent is a political leader with the following:

- A strong communicator (in all ways including social media)
- Be visible leader
- Be an agent of change
- A managerial leader
- An instructional leader most importantly

She explained that the Principals are the CEO and executive leader of the building and that all departments support the CEO. Ms. Smith further stated that meetings with Principals together with and without the Superintendent can ensure best shared practices and equity. Developing strong communication and engaging 'teacher leaders' and implementing 'Parent Academy' can help with balance. Ms. Smith also commented on the importance of professional development for principals.

Chair Belmarsh mentioned the budget of \$220M Ms. Smith had in Brockton and asked:

How would the Interim Superintendent be part of this year's budget process?

Ms. Smith advised that the interim would work very closely with the Assistant Superintendent, Brian Smith discussing goals and guidelines and program value emphasizing transparency in the process. She reiterated that there will probably be budget shortfalls (as times are uncertain), and 'budget busters'. Ms. Smith advised that she had looked at the Weymouth per pupil expenditure and remarked that it is not as much as surrounding communities.

Mrs. Curran asked:

How an Interim Superintendent would handle union and staffing issues?

Ms. Smith commented that morale is a struggle most everywhere and emphasized that working collaboratively is a key factor posing the question "What can I do to help today?" Teachers and executive team members working together. Ms. Smith shared the 'Red Apple Award' that she implemented in Brockton. Any staff member (teacher, ESP, food service staff, secretaries, custodial/maintenance staff could nominate and be nominated. Being an inspirational leader and connecting with teachers and administrators is an integral part of the Superintendentship. Ms. Smith also mentioned that interest based bargaining was extremely successful in opening the lines of communication.

In Ms. Smith's closing statement thanked the committee for selecting her as a finalist for the Interim Superintendent position. She stated that she was proud to have served as an educator on the South Shore. Ms. Smith further stated that she is not a 'seat warmer' and would be committed to the community and all stakeholders of the district while assisting in the smooth transition to the permanent Superintendent.

A brief 15 minute break was taken for committee members to gather their notes and thoughts of the interview.

Chair Belmarsh introduced Dr. Lupini thanked him for considering Weymouth and being part of such a public process.

Interview for the position of Superintendent of Schools-William Lipini

Mr. Lupini thanked the committee for considering him and gave an overview of his 25 years of education experience. He is currently serving as the Superintendent of SAU 21 which encompasses 5 school districts in Hampton, NH. He served as Superintendent in Brookline as well as Essex North Shore (students from 17 different communities). Mr. Lupini oversaw the initial merger of 3 schools; North Shore Vocational School, Essex Agriculture and Peabody High School where he gained MSBA experience. Dr. Lupini has 3 grown daughters and is ready to leave permanent Superintendentship however does not want to fully retire. He shared that he is teaching, consulting, coaching experience, and skill set will be helpful in an interim position.

Vice Chair Nardone introduced herself and asked:

-How do you address and help as an Interim Superintendent a district heal from operational and political issues?

Mr. Lupini advised that the first step would be to identify the challenges and issues. Next would be to then work and communicate with the School Committee, principals, administrators, families, unions and teachers to determine possible accomplishments that could help transition in the permanent Superintendent.

Mrs. Curran introduced herself and asked:

Would you have the confidence and ability necessary to put a plan in place in 6 months and not be deterred by politics and personality?

Mr. Lupini informed them that if the committee is looking for an interim to maintain the status quo, he is not the person for the job advising that he would work with the appropriate stakeholders. He

highlighted his experience at SAU21 working with 5 different school committees (a multitude of different personalities) where he implemented a 'cross SAU committee' made up of students, union representatives, administrators and teachers.

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw introduced herself and asked:

If Mr. Lupini could share over the last spring during Covid what worked best to accommodate students on IEP? And what didn't work so well?

Mr. Lupini advised honestly that there was a struggle to provide services and that it could've gone better. Further stating that the best way to service students is in person. After running the different formats of learning between full remote, hybrid and in person, Dr. Lupini advised that the fall is going better.

Dr. Sherlock-Shagraw thanked Mr. Lupini for his candor.

Ms. Palazzo introduced herself and asked:

As possible Interim Superintendent, what do you hope to achieve and what do you want your imprint to be?

Mr. Lupini shared that establishing great working relationships with both city and town officials as well as administrators and staff would be a great achievement. He also conveyed his leadership experience where previous administrators (at least 12) who worked along him are now serving in their own respective Superintendentship. Mr. Lupini advised the imprint would be to help attract a permanent Superintendent and help in a smooth and successful transition.

Dr. Sullivan introduced himself, commented on Mr Lupini's skill set of 'juggling' 5 different school committees and asked:

How would you manage the balancing of the relationship with Principals while helping to facilitate the work they do?

Mr. Lupini advised that the key to a Principals success is defined autonomy and hosting and attending meetings to discuss shared practice and areas of commonality would occur on a biweekly basis. He also suggested meeting once a month, one on one with principals.

Chair Belmarsh asked:

What would the Interim Superintendents role in this year's budget process would look like?

Mr. Lupini expressed his enthusiasm for jumping in and working with the Business Manager and that the role of the Superintendent would be to put a face to the budget. To form relationships with town and council members to ensure they know what the budget represents, advocating for the students of Weymouth, that everyone is working in the same direction. Mr. Lupini referenced his time working in Brookline with Peter Roe. He also stated the need for transparency in the process.

Mrs. Nardone asked:

Please expand on your experience of dealing with different personalities on the school committee

Mr. Lupini advised that he has learned over his 25 years of experience of working in the public and private sector as well as with the Collins Center of UMass to communicate in an open and frank manner.

He would defer to the committee on how communication within the school committee should be handled, e.g. through the chair, to the whole committee, etc.

Mrs. Curran asked on behalf the SEPAC:

What is your personal definition of inclusion?

Mr. Lupini advised that he is a natural advocate as his youngest daughter is blind. Taking into account that the individual nature of every child is important, every student should have the opportunity to be in classes together with all necessary supports and accommodations to be successful. Mr. Lupini acknowledged the great work of SEPAC organizations.

As the Chair of the negotiation sub committee Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw asked:

What is the Superintendent's role during labor management or labor negotiations?

Mr. Lupini referenced his previous experience in Brookline and SAU21 saying that each was different. One was at the table with union and attorneys and the other was hands off as HR was present for negotiations and was involved when problems arose. He stated that he is comfortable in any of the practicing roles.

Mr. Lupini requested to go back to the inclusion question and offered more information stating that the top priority is for students to be in programs with their peers and remain in the district.

Ms. Palazzo asked for:

More context regarding what was successful for students on IEP's or ELL learners during remote learning.

Mr. Lupini reiterated that learning is best when students are in the building and mentioned that live streaming services seemed to work best in providing support to students but that there is still a long way to go.

Dr. Sullivan asked:

Please describe during non covid times when a day went sideways, how did you marshal everyone back?

Mr. Lupini prefaced that there have been many impactful moments in his experience such as Sandyhook, September 11, the Marathon and he spoke in reference to a previous 8th grade school trip where a student was assaulted. He explained the immediate work and planning that took place for the students and staff, families. Open communication was vital as well as honest assessment during debrief. Mr. Lupini emphasized that nimbleness, flexibility, and teamwork is of the utmost importance when dealing in crisis.

In Mr. Lupini's closing statement he conveyed his passion for equity, his skill set and administrator experience (especially with MSBA) and the importance of strong communication. He referenced a school report card that he implemented and published each year while in Brookline; that it's important for the community to know what and how the district is doing. He reiterated his thanks for being considered.

Recommendation of School Committee for Interim Superintendent of Schools (action requested)

Mrs. Nardone shared her thoughts of how lucky the district is to have 2 well qualified, energetic and strong final candidates and that the decision comes down to which candidate would be a better fit. Mrs. Nardone expressed her support in recommending Ms. Smith.

Chair Belmarsh agreed with Mrs. Nardone, noting Ms. Smith's south shore and budget experience.

Dr. Sullivan agreed that both candidates are amazing and that Dr. Lupini was reminiscent of former Superintendent Salim. He added his support in recommending Ms. Smith as she is an inspirational leader to move the district forward.

Dr. Sherlock Shangraw echoed her co members comments and expressed her joy of interviewing the candidates and listening to their stories and answers. She supports the recommendation of Ms. Smith for her energy, enthusiasm and well rounded experience including south shore roundtable and budget experience.

Mrs. Curran added her support of Ms. Smith with her experience (Superintendent advisory) and believes she would help attract great permanent employees.

Ms. Palazzo as parent and member shared her appreciation for the process and expressed her support for Ms. Smith.

Motion by Mrs. Nardone to offer Kathleen Smith the position of Interim Superintendent. Seconded by Dr. Sullivan. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

Next steps would be for Assistant Superintendent Smith and Human Resources Director Foley to identify contract terms and funding.

The committee expressed their thanks and appreciation to the interim subcommittee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:31pm. Motion by Ms. Nardone. Seconded by Dr. Sullivan. Roll Call vote. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John P. Sullivan', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

John Sullivan
Secretary

