



**BELCHERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
May 5, 2014**

LOCATION: Swift River Elementary School Library

TIME: 6:30 pm

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Dr. Linda Tsoumas, Chair (present); Ms. Clare Popowich, Vice-Chair (present); Mr. Richard Fritsch, Secretary (present); Ms. Myndi Bogdanovich, Member (present); Dr. Michael Knapp, Member (present)

ADMINISTRATION: Mr. Brian Cameron, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning (present); Mr. Thomas Ruscio, JBMS Principal (present); Mr. Robert Kuhn, SRE Principal (present)

VISITORS: Ms. Patricia Correia, M.A.S.C. Consultant; Ms. Brenda Aldrich, Selectmen Liaison to School Committee; Ms. Joanne Gosselin, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; Dr. Linda Denault, Ms. Janice Lachowetz, Dr. Robert Gazda, Interim Superintendent candidates; Ms. Aimee Henderson, Sentinel editor
(See sign-in sheet for additional visitors.)

MINUTES

I. Call to order

Dr. Tsoumas called the Regular School Committee meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Approval of minutes

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2014 School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2014 School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2014 School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2014 School Committee meeting, as presented. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Dr. Tsoumas turned the meeting over to Ms. Correia for discussion of the revised Superintendent Search Time Line and tonight's interview process to follow.

Ms. Correia distributed packets of information for this evening's proceedings, which contained a revised Superintendent Search Time Line, candidates' resumes, and interview questions. She noted that two changes had been made in the time line: cancellation of May 6th meeting for Interim Superintendent interviews, as this evening's meeting will complete that process; addition of June 3rd meeting to review accelerated time line and process.

MOTION: Ms. Popowich moved to approve the revised Superintendent Search Time Line, as presented. Mr. Fritsch seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

COMMENT: Dr. Knapp asked Ms. Correia if the members of the initial Superintendent Screening Committee have agreed to participate in the upcoming search, and she replied that although one member is unavailable, we will move forward with the remaining screening committee members, as is.

Ms. Correia then provided an overview of the qualifications of each of the three candidates, and she stated that all three individuals are strong candidates who would do well during this transition period in Belchertown's superintendency. Ms. Correia also noted that a half-hour had been scheduled for each interview, but that schedule may be shortened if the School Committee feels it has conducted a sufficient interview in less time.

III. Interview of candidates for the position of Interim Superintendent

Ms. Correia introduced the Interim Superintendent candidates who were present to be interviewed by the School Committee, in the following order at half-hour intervals: Dr. Linda Denault, Ms. Janice Lachowetz, and Dr. Robert Gazda. Each candidate was welcomed by the Committee members, and an opening statement was read by Dr. Tsoumas with a description of how the interviews would proceed. The format consisted of three parts: opening remarks by the candidate; four prepared questions from the School Committee; closing questions and/or comments by the individual candidates. The four questions will address the following issues: considerations for entry plan of interim superintendency; mission of interim superintendent with ways to create a smooth transition and success for the next leader; ways to maintain morale during the transition period of the interim superintendency; the role of an interim superintendent in working with the community. The candidates each discussed their reasons for applying for this position, their interest in Belchertown Public Schools, and their qualifications for the position. All candidates responded thoughtfully and thoroughly to the questions asked of them, with each stressing the importance of meeting with the district's administrative team as quickly as possible to establish goals for a smooth transition, while guiding current and ongoing projects/initiatives, and meeting with other town constituencies (Police and Fire Departments, Town Government, etc.), as well as parents and community members. Each candidate also noted that high morale is a key factor in ensuring success for the district during this transition period, and it is built on enthusiasm and support of staff which in turn, stimulates students. All candidates stressed the value of visibility within the community, which can be accomplished with participation in local events by the interim superintendent, and by forming strong relationships within the town to promote the

advocacy of the school system and its students. The candidates asked the School Committee what its expectations are with regard to the interim superintendency and its vision for the district moving forward during his/her tenure. The School Committee responded that stability during this period of transition was very important, while sustaining current/ongoing projects and initiatives.

At the conclusion of the final interview, Dr. Tsoumas called for a 5 minute recess.

IV. Selection of Interim Superintendent

Ms. Correia advised the School Committee that a decision with regard to the selection of an interim superintendent did not have to be made this evening, and it was decided that a discussion should now take place to make that determination.

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved to open the discussion of the candidate interviews for the purpose of selection of an Interim Superintendent. Ms. Bogdanovich seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Dr. Knapp stated that he felt Dr. Denault has the most current qualifications and expertise, but he is concerned that she holds a full-time position elsewhere, and that she did not mention the involvement of parents in her potential interim superintendency. Dr. Tsoumas felt that Dr. Denault has many responsibilities in her full-time job, and the fact that she teaches evening classes would preclude much participation in the community activities of Belchertown. Ms. Bogdanovich concurred with this observation, saying that a full-time position elsewhere will not allow for flexibility in Dr. Denault's schedule. Dr. Knapp found that the resume of Ms. Lachowetz is out-of-date, and thus she would not be his favorite candidate. With regard to Ms. Lachowetz, Ms. Bogdanovich felt that this candidate would be a strong advocate for children, having expressed an obvious caring for students, and that her SPED background and experience would be valuable to our district. Dr. Knapp stated that he favored Dr. Gazda to be the appointed Interim Superintendent, noting that he had led a district in CT for 20 years, he valued parental input in their children's education process, and he welcomed the opportunity for community involvement. Dr. Tsoumas agreed with Dr. Knapp's choice, stating that she was impressed by Dr. Gazda's desire to keep enthusiasm high throughout the district during this interim superintendency. Ms. Bogdanovich also concurred with the comments about Dr. Gazda, stating that she liked his priorities of promoting visibility and enthusiasm, and that he seemed to have a good sense of humor. Ms. Popowich favored Dr. Gazda, noting that she was especially impressed by his commitment to "not expect anything of others that he does not expect of himself". Mr. Fritsch also agreed that Dr. Gazda would be a good choice for the interim superintendency because he liked his belief that "if you hold others accountable, then they must be able to hold you accountable", and he felt that this candidate was a low-key individual with a healthy sense of humor.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

MOTION: Mr. Fritsch moved to appoint Dr. Robert Gazda as Interim Superintendent of the Belchertown Public Schools. Ms. Popowich seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Fritsch said that he felt all three individuals were strong candidates and well-qualified for the position. Ms. Bogdanovich stated that her first choice was Ms. Lachowetz, as she was impressed with the candidate's high energy level and strong concern for students.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Dr. Tsoumas stated that she would now contact Dr. Gazda to inform him of the School Committee's decision to appoint him as Interim Superintendent, with discussion to follow regarding an employment contract and per diem schedule. When these decisions are made, they will be submitted to the school district's attorney for review, and then brought to the School Committee for approval.

V. Adjourn

MOTION: Ms. Bogdanovich moved to adjourn the Regular School Committee meeting at 8:28 p.m. Dr. Knapp seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0-0, approved unanimously

Respectfully submitted by,

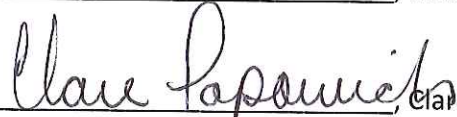


Kathryn A. Petersen

Non-Confidential Recording Secretary to the School Committee

School Committee members' signatures:

_____, Linda Tsoumas, Chair

 Clare Popowich, Vice Chair

 Richard Fritsch, Secretary

 Myndi Bogdanovich, Member

 Michael Knapp, Member

The mission of the Belchertown Public Schools is to ensure that every student meets with success every day. To that end, we pledge to ensure that we have rigorous, standards-based curriculum; instruction designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in every classroom; and access to the global learning community via state-of-the-art technology in schools that are communities of respect and civility for all.

2011-2015 Strategic Plan Goals (adopted by the Belchertown School Committee, 3/1/11):

Goal #1: To have guaranteed (standards-based and implemented by all), viable (doable and accessible to every student), seamless K-12 curriculum in every content area.

Goal #2: To have rigorous (standards-based), relevant (grounded in 21st Century skills), differentiated instructional practices with the ability to access the global learning community via technology available to every learner.

Goal #3: To implement a plan to ensure that our students understand the importance of acceptance, tolerance, and respect supported by all adults in the community.

The Belchertown School Committee conducts its business in open session pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The public is welcome to comment only on items on the agenda for this meeting as noted above. If you wish to address the School Committee regarding an item not on the agenda for this meeting, please contact the Superintendent of Schools at 413.323.0423 or via email at superintendent@belchertown.org to determine the best way to address your concerns (see School Committee Policy BEDH).

BELCHERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR SESSION
SIGN IN SHEET

DATE: 5-5-14

PLS. PRINT NAME BELOW

Dawn French

Brenna Alonci

Brian Cameron

Lynn Clark

Joanne Liscia

Robert Kuhn

Mona Guppi

DAVID VACCHI

Tom Laughner