

REGION 9 BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

July 8, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82231762368?pwd=TzIReNg5dWJVbTNMOVcrZU81Z1dxdz09>

Meeting ID: 822 3176 2368 - Passcode: 458348

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER:

T. Johnston called the Region 9 Board of Education Special meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

ATTENDEES:

T. Johnston, C. Graziano, M. Williams, M. D'Agostino, M. Pampel, J. Berry, K. O'Brien (joined at 7:16 p.m.)

Administration: R. Harrison, S. Pierson Ugol

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION: APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS TO THE JOINT BOARD PERSONNEL SEARCH COMMITTEE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT

T. Johnston appointed M. D'Agostino, C. Graziano, and M. Williams to the committee

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION: SEARCH CONSULTANT RFP FOR THE PERSONNEL SEARCH FOR THE JOEL BARLOW HIGH SCHOOL HEAD OF SCHOOL

R. Harrison gave an update on the posting RFP and posting for Head of School position. Position will be open until filled. At this time there are no responses to the RFP. A personnel search committee will be appointed by the board chair.

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION: UPDATE ON THE JBHS GYMNASIUM/CAFETERIA HVAC AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

M. D'Agostino gave an update on the project. There is currently a shortage of some materials which is causing a delay. The new delivery date for the bleachers will be 8/15/21. The new equipment and duct work will be completed when the work on the gym floor is started.

DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION: REGION 9 PARTICIPATION IN A JOINT BOARD PERSONNEL SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & OPERATIONS

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education establish the following:

1. A Joint Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education Personnel Search Committee of the whole, consisting of the membership of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education for the purpose of identifying a Director of Finance and Operations. The Personnel Search Committee shall be chaired by the Chairperson of the Board of Education then acting as chairperson of the joint boards; and

2. A Personnel Search Steering Committee, to consist of two members of each of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education with equal representation from the Towns of Redding and Easton. The Chairpersons of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education shall be members of the Steering Committee ex officio. This Steering Committee shall be considered a subcommittee of the Personnel Search Committee and be empowered to collaborate with the Superintendent to design and implement a process for 1) reviewing resumes; and 2) interviewing and screening candidates. The Steering Committee shall be co-chaired by one member from the Town Redding and one from the town of Easton to be selected by the Committee and shall provide regular updates to the Personnel Search Committee.

The Joint Personnel Search Committee and Personnel Search Steering Committee shall be automatically disbanded upon the execution of a contract between the three boards and the Director of Finance and Operations.

Motion: move to approve the above motion (C. Graziano, M. Williams). Approved 7-0.

T. Johnston appointed K. O'Brien and M. Pampel to the Personnel Search Committee Steering Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Maureen Hanley, 21 Andrews Rd., Easton - Questioned why more tax payer funds were needed for a Search Committee for Superintendent replacement; why the Search Committee doesn't contain members from the town and; if the results of the DEI survey were available.

T. Johnston stated that there is no question and answer in Public Comment.

D. Benson 34 Pond Rd., Easton - Appreciated the update that M. D'Agostino gave on the metal shortage for the school improvement project. Stated that the search for new central office personnel is an unusual opportunity to put in a new team. He suggested that we look for people who can handle the tri-board structure.

Phyllis Rhodes, Gallows Hill Rd., Redding - Stated that all of her children received an excellent education and that investing in our schools is the cheapest real estate insurance. She stated she is concerned about the turn-over of central office and that the long meetings were not in the best interest of the district.

Ben Oksman, Long Hill Rd., Easton - Stated he identifies as socially liberal. He made comments about the DEI narratives and offered to help interview candidates for Head of School, if needed.

Susanne Krivit, 86 Black Rock Turnpike, Redding - She echoed Phyllis' concerns about central office turnover. She is concerned about job stamina and meeting structure not being tenable. She is concerned about how to create a positive climate in both towns.

David Bryant, 82 Pond Rd., Easton - State that he thought Dr. Harrison was a poor choice in hindsight. He stated that politicization is unavoidable in these times and that the statement that administrators are working too hard is absurd. He concluded that if the job of central office is to report to 3 boards then we should state that the job includes weekends and evenings, but that the compensation and benefits are excellent.

Suzanne Nolan, 235 Lonetown Rd., Redding - Thank you to R. Harrison for his service. She is sad to see him go, but wishes him well. She stated that the 3 board structure is difficult and we need a work life balance solution.

Dana Benson, 84 Pond Rd., Easton - Well wishes to R. Harrison in his future endeavors. He stated that at the previous tri board meeting a board member asked the public to let up on the correspondence, but in his opinion the correspondence is helping the board to do their job.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Williams stated that the members of all 3 boards work well together and want the best possible outcome for all students

C. Graziano agreed with M. Williams. She addressed some public comments. She suggested that public watch recordings of missed meetings, clarified search funds were for the head of school, not the superintendent position, and recognized that the tri-board structure is a hard question to answer.

K. O'Brien stated that the appointment of Dr. Harrison was not political and that he was the best candidate for the job. She addressed public comments that the board does not mind the emails and letters, but does mind the political bullying with mailers and flyers with our pictures and vote count on them. She feels that the current political climate is negatively affecting our children.

M. D'Agostino stated that the 3 tri-board structure has been working, but recognized the caveats. He stated that the average tenure of a DRG A superintendent is 4 years. He was hopeful that Dr. Harrison was going to stay and that he was hired for his exceptional qualifications. He agreed that we should work to prevent late meetings in the future.

M. Pampel commented about the complex history of the board and acknowledged that we need to make some changes to the tri-board structure.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move to adjournment (M. Williams, K. O'Brien). Approved 8-0.

The Region 9 Board of Education Special Meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Recorded and Submitted by,
Juliette Berry, Region 9 Board of Education Secretary