

Amherst-Pelham Regional and Union 26 School Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 7, 2017
Library, Amherst Regional High School

IN ATTENDANCE

Eric Nakajima, Region
Trevor Baptiste, Region & Union 26
Anastasia Ordonez, Region & Union 26
Katherine Appy, Region & Union 26
Audra Goscenski, Region
Phoebe Hazzard, Region & Union 26
Ron Mannino, Union 26
Stephen Sullivan, Region
Vira Douangmany-Cage, Region (arrived at 6:14 p.m.)

Kathryn Mazur, HR Director
Michael Rush, Superintendent Search Consultant
Public and Press
Debbie Westmoreland, Recorder

ABSENT

Emily Marriott, Region
Cara Castenson, Union 26

1. Call to Order

6:06 p.m.

Mr. Nakajima called the Regional School Committee to order and Ms. Ordonez called the Union 26 School Committee to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. Discussion with Dr. Rush, Superintendent Search Consultant

6:10 p.m.

DOCUMENT: Memo to the Eric Nakajima and Anastasia Ordonez (Chairs) from Kathryn Mazur (Human Resources Director) regarding the Superintendent Search Update, dated February 28, 2017/ revised March 7, 2017

Mr. Nakajima noted that tomorrow night the committees will meet to identify members of the School Committee to serve on the Superintendent Screening Committee, as well as select by lottery the community member who will serve. It was agreed that two alternate community members will be selected in case the person chosen cannot serve for any reason. Ms. Mazur then distributed and reviewed a memo outlining the meeting dates and times of the Screening Committee as well as the finalist visits and School Committee interview schedule. Mr. Nakajima asked if the screening committee members have been appointed by all of the groups. Ms. Mazur noted that she has received names from all groups except SETF. Ms. Douangmany Cage confirmed that SETF will be represented by Kathleen Anderson.

Dr. Rush then reported that there are currently 35 candidates in the applicant pool, and he anticipates having 40 by the application deadline. He reviewed the process Ray and Associates has followed so far in gathering community feedback and recruiting candidates, then reviewed the process with the candidates moving forward. Mr. Nakajima asked when Dr. Rush will communicate with the candidates regarding scheduling of interviews. Dr. Rush noted that Ray and Associates will narrow the pool down to eight to 12 candidates before they reach out. Ms. Ordonez asked if the screening committee will get a list of questions from Ray and Associates or if they will be able to craft their own. Dr. Rush noted that it can be done either way, but any questions written by the screening committee should be sent to Ray and Associates to ensure they are legally OK to ask. Ms. Mazur suggested that Dr. Rush present a suggested list of questions to the screening committee for the semi-finalists, the screening committee suggest semi-finalist questions and the School Committee develop questions for the finalists. Ms. Ordonez noted that there has been a lot of community interest in the criteria Ray and Associates is using to ensure diversity among the candidates. She asked Dr. Rush to speak to that process. Dr. Rush explained that Ray and Associates sends the district's recruitment flyer to affinity organizations such as ALICE and AASA, asks basic questions about diversity, looks at ethnicity, and takes diversity into consideration in bringing applicants forward to the School Committee. They can extend the deadline and continue recruiting if necessary to ensure diversity in the pool. Dr. Rush noted that Ray and Associates tries to guard against bias and is looking for the best people. Mr. Baptiste noted that the committee needs to synchronize the timing for hiring a lawyer with the Superintendent search. Ms. Hazzard asked about the pros and cons of using a blind approach to reviewing the applicants. Dr. Rush stated that if a person is biased, that bias will come out when they meet the finalist in person. He noted that Ray and Associates wants to be open and honest in presenting all of the candidates' information, knowing that they will bring the best candidates forward for consideration. Ms. Goscenski noted that having the screening committee form the questions prior to meeting the candidates will help eliminate bias, and stated that the School Committee will need to be as open as possible to all feedback to ensure they are not bringing their own bias to the process. Ms. Ordonez noted that she is concerned about getting diverse candidates in the pool and active

recruiting is necessary to attract them. She expressed her hope that Ray and Associates is making sure the candidates truly represent the diversity of Amherst and the changing demographics of Amherst. Dr. Rush stated that Ray and Associates does actively recruit, noting that they have a diverse pool of associates who they call on to help with recruiting efforts. He stated that he believes they are getting the pool of candidates the committee wants, but noted that the search is not over until the committee is happy with the finalists. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked if there are self-disclosure forms that can be provided to each applicant so there can be a sense of who is applying. Dr. Rush explained that these forms are not on their application because it can be discouraging to some candidates. He noted that self-disclosure forms can be used at a certain point when reference questions are asked and said he can work with the district's Human Resources department to find a way to do this. Mr. Sullivan thanked Dr. Rush for coming back to speak with the committee again, noting that he feels much better after hearing him speak tonight. Mr. Baptiste noted that the candidates will be interviewing us as well as us interviewing them so it is important to recognize our own biases in the process. Mr. Nakajima asked Dr. Rush if there are any questions he needs to ask of the committee. Dr. Rush noted that he has been working closely and well with Ms. Mazur so he does not really have any questions at this time. He noted that he promises the committee that Ray and Associates wants to bring the best--and diverse--candidates to the district, and they want to bring a Superintendent to the district who will stay at least six years. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked how the district handles voluntary disclosure forms for other positions in the district. Ms. Mazur noted that applicants are provided with a voluntary disclosure form at the time of hire.

3. Adjourn

7:03 p.m.

Ms. Goscenski moved to adjourn the Regional School Committee at 7:03 p.m. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Mannino moved to adjourn the Union 26 School Committee at 7:03 p.m. Mr. Baptiste seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Westmoreland