

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Union #61 & Tantasqua Regional School Committees
High School Cafeteria
Meeting of Tuesday, April 6, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, GL c 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this joint meeting had no in-person attendance of members of the public

MEMBERS PRESENT

Brimfield

Angela Bradway *
Jennifer Custance *
Eric Jaeger *
Michele-Lee Shea

Sturbridge

Katherine Alexander *
Mary Bellezza
Karen Kowal *
Kristen Tuohey *

Tantasqua

Laura Alden
Patricia Barnicle
Mary Bellezza
Megan Cunningham**
Jennifer Custance**
Michelle Fitzgerald
Pamela Fitzgerald
Elias Gillen
Ted Goodwin
William Haggerty
Sheila Noyes-Miller
Christine Randall
Michael Valanzola
Susan Waters

(** Members have 2 votes)

Brookfield

Megan Cunningham *
Andrew Dunn *
Jeffrey Morin *

Wales

Carolyn Boehne *
Ashley Gallant *
Christine Randall *

Holland

Laura Alden *
Elias Gillen *

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Brimfield: Kimberly Hirsch
Sturbridge: Megan Panek
Tantasqua: Erik Iller, Kristen Leo

Holland: Erik Iller, Sarah Naples, Cheryl Raymond
Wales: Ed Boyce, John Croke

ALSO PRESENT

Erin Nosek, Superintendent; Jodi Bourassa, Assistant Superintendent; Greg Rossow, Technology Director; and Tracy Carbone (HS Teacher) and Kathleen Pelley (Burgess Principal), Superintendent Search Committee members

Mr. Valanzola convened the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

1. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion:

Tantasqua Motion #FY21-84

Union 61 Motion #FY21-11

Mr. Haggerty moved, seconded by Mrs. Alexander, to enter into Executive Session at 6:07 p.m. in accordance with MGL C. 30A, §21A(8) to consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by a preliminary screening committee as the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening the chair so declares.

Roll call vote taken. (Union 61, Tantasqua and Supt. Search Committee members were invited to Executive Session.)

YES – Union: Custance, Jaeger, Cunningham, Dunn, Morin, Alden, Gillen, Kowal, Alexander, Kowal, Tuohey, Boehne, Gallant, Randall

YES – Tantasqua: Alden, Barnicle, Bellezza, Cunningham (x2), Custance (x2), M. Fitzgerald, P. Fitzgerald, Gillen, Goodwin, Haggerty, Leo, Lovett, Noyes-Miller, Randall, Valanzola, Waters

The following motion was made in Executive Session but provided here for the convenience of the reader.

Motion:

Tantasqua Motion #FY21-86

Union 61 Motion #FY21-13

Mr. Haggerty moved, seconded by Mrs. Alexander, to exit Executive Session at 7:17 p.m., reconvene in open session.

Roll call vote taken.

YES – Union: Custance, Jaeger, Cunningham, Dunn, Morin, Alden, Gillen, Kowal, Alexander, Kowal, Tuohey, Boehne, Gallant, Randall

YES – Tantasqua: Alden, Barnicle, Bellezza, Cunningham (x2), Custance (x2), M. Fitzgerald, P. Fitzgerald, Gillen, Goodwin, Haggerty, Leo, Lovett, Noyes-Miller, Randall, Valanzola, Waters

Mr. Valanzola called for a short recess, reconvening the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Mr. Valanzola indicated the Superintendent's Search Committee conducted a fair and transparent interview process, reviewing the Search Committee's structure and its processes. As decided at the December 15, 2020 Joint Meeting and as recommended by the MASC, which discouraged an external search, combined with the intricacy and complexity of the district; the Superintendent's Search Committee has brought forth its recommended finalist, Mrs. Deborah Boyd, to the meeting for an interview with the full committee. Mr. Valanzola noted that it is the responsibility of the Joint School Committee to appoint its Superintendent. He indicated the following interview would provide an opportunity for Mrs. Boyd to make an opening statement, followed by a Q&A session.

2. Interview with Superintendent's Finalist

Mrs. Boyd was invited to make an opening statement.

Mrs. Boyd noted that it was an honor to be considered for the position.

The following provides a summary of discussion. Mrs. Boyd answered questions and discussed:

- Knowledge of the complexity of the district including: 5 towns, 2 counties, 8 schools (5 elementary, JH, SH and Technical), 7 buildings, 34 school committee members.
- Knowledge of all staff and administrators.
- Knowledge of community leadership and financial stability of each town within the District.
- Next Strategic Plan to 2030
- Immediate challenges:
 - Return to the classroom – in person learning.
 - Emotional and stress levels of staff
 - The effects of the pandemic on student's academic progress, as well as their emotional health and associated program needs.
 - Technology future – how to use what has been learned during this past year.
- Covid related lessons and challenges:
 - Making sure students and staff are ready to return and feel comfortable.
 - Keeping up with cleaning and safety precautions.
 - Federal funding related to the pandemic and the best way to engage those funds.
 - Assessing mental health and Social Emotional learning. Increased counseling may be needed.
 - Assessing student's academic progress.

- Financial challenges of local communities and hesitancy to build programs that rely on grant funding that might not be able to continue if funding is discontinued.
- Consistency of programs among all elementary schools. Transitioning students from elementary to the middle school and then to the high school programs.
- Professional development and keeping administrators connected to the students.
- Implementing best practices across all schools.
- Maintaining limited turn-over of staff.
- Summer program opportunities.
- Maintaining “no fees” for extra-curricular activities.
- Acknowledged lack of classroom teaching experience, but noted understanding of learning standards, evaluation tools and instructional rounds. She noted the strengths of the District’s leadership members available to provide guidance in curriculum areas.
- Strength of Mrs. Boyd’s relationships with local towns.

Mrs. Boyd thanked the Committee for the opportunity, adding that she felt she was in the best position to continue the strong commitment to provide the best educational opportunities to the students of this District.

The Q&A session concluded at 8:25 p.m.

Mrs. Alexander read the report of the Superintendent Search Committee providing its’ reasoning to appoint Deborah Boyd as the District’s next Superintendent. The vote of the Search Committee was unanimous.

Motion:

Tantasqua Motion #FY21-87

Union #61 Motion #FY21-14

Mrs. Alexander moved, seconded by Mr. Haggerty, to appoint Deborah Boyd as the next Superintendent, effective January 1, 2022 and authorize the Chairman to enter into contract negotiations with Mrs. Boyd.

VOTE: Tantasqua – YES (15) Union 61 - YES (14) Vote was unanimous.

Mr. Valanzola thanked Dr. Erin Nosek for her commitment to the District with all members joining in acknowledgment of her strong performance during her Superintendency. (Dr. Nosek is retiring 1/1/22)

ADJOURN

Motion:

Tantasqua Motion #FY21-88

Union #61 Motion #FY21-15

Mrs. moved, seconded by Mrs. Cunningham, to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 pm.

Mr. Valanzola asked if there were any objections to adjourning, hearing none, he declared the motion passed by unanimous consent.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Noyes-Miller
Secretary – Tantasqua Regional School Committee

Mary Bellezza,
Secretary – Union #61