

RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Administrative Unit 50
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To be approved by the Rye School Board at the April 15, 2020 meeting.

RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

A special meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at Rye Junior High School on Monday, March 23, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members: Margaret Honda, Jeanne Moynahan,
Matt Curtain, Scott Marion

Administrators: Salvatore Petralia, Superintendent

Staff:

Visitors: Ryan, Kaplan, Heather Reed, Susan Ross, Sharry Sparks (via phone)

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (00:47)

Ms. Honda called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Ms. Honda welcomed those attending and acknowledged that everyone at the meeting was keeping their distance and being careful.

Ms. Honda explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the one-year school board vacancy. Ms. Honda continued to explain that they would be meeting with each candidate one by one, then going into a non-public meeting to discuss the applicants and returning to a public session for a roll call vote.

Ms. Honda explained that prior to the meeting the Board compiled some important criteria and qualifiers, to consider during the Board Member selection process. Ms. Honda added that Mr. Curtin created a 5 point scale for the categories, so the Board could rank each person and creating an equitable process for all candidates. Ms. Honda emphasized the Board's desire to be fair and transparent through the process.

Ms. Honda led the Board in a discussion to review and prioritize the categories. Ms. Honda reviewed the categories including: current and/or past board experience or community involvement/volunteerism, experience in education or public schools, complementary experience such as business leadership, finance or human resources and/or other skills not represented on the board today, dedication to representing the Town of Rye and the Rye schools, formal education/training, and having children or grandchildren in the Rye schools.

Dr. Marion noted that the categories of experience in education and formal education, seemed similar and he asked what the differences were. Ms. Honda said she kept both because she was combining all the feedback that she had received. Mr. Curtin explained that education/training pertained to their individual education versus their experience within public school. Mr. Curtin added that one was topic specific while the other was more general.

Dr. Marion asked if within this category a graduate degree would be worth more than an undergraduate. Mr. Curtin said his thought process had been that advanced degrees are helpful and certifications are helpful, but any education pertinent to the field of education was beneficial. Mr. Curtin clarified using the example of someone who has an expertise in law or construction, which could be a benefit to the Board when working on policy or building issues, in addition those with educational experience or certifications, would have a helpful perspective.

Dr. Marion agreed that the categories covered slightly different areas. Ms. Honda explained this wasn't an exact science, and this would be used as a guide to facilitate their discussion.

Dr. Marion asked to review the category of having students within the school. Mr. Petralia cautioned the Board, that having already reviewed the credentials of the candidates, they should not weigh certain categories more than others as to not be perceived as unfair.

Mr. Curtin noted that these categories were created prior to reviewing any of the candidate credentials. Ms. Honda concluded that they would keep the categories as is and move forward.

Communications

Mr. Petralia review two communications. Mr. Petralia asked the board to entertain a motion under personnel to except the resignation of Ms. Jennifer Miller, a Humanities teacher at Rye Junior High school. Dr. Marion explained that it was with tremendous regret that he would motion to approve and added that she was one of the best teachers he had ever seen in his life.

Dr. Marion made a motion, seconded by Ms. Moynahan, to except with deep regret, the resignation of Ms. Miller. Discussion. Vote 4:0

Ms. Honda thanked Ms. Miller for her work. Dr. Marion noted that Ms. Miller had changed the school greatly.

Mr. Petralia explained that he had received an email and attachment from the President of the Association of Coastal Teachers (ACT), Ms. Andrea Papoutsy. Mr. Petralia said it was a draft memorandum of understanding between the Rye School Board and the Association. Mr. Petralia noted that the Association, with perhaps some guidance from the NEA, submitted this regarding the change to remote instruction. Mr. Petralia explained that he would need further vetting within the Central Office and also needed legal counsel to review. Mr. Petralia noted that the New Hampshire School Administrators Association would be reaching out to NEA. Mr. Petralia thanked the ACT for sending the memorandum and explained that he was asking the Board to take no action but just to review.

Dr. Marion asked if staff was asked to use their own devices. Dr. Marion noted that staff may need to upgrade their internet and the Board should consider helping with that.

Ms. Honda expressed concern over timing and asked if this needs to should be addressed before the next meeting. Dr. Marion noted that Mr. Petralia needed to review the communication with council, before any action.

Mr. Curtin expressed how his experience at home and during this time, gave him concern over the frequency of the school board meetings. The Board discussed how under the circumstances, they could call emergency meetings, if needed.

Mr. Petralia advised the Board to wait on any motions regarding the Memorandum or any upgrade to staff internet.

NEW BUSINESS (21:14)

School Board Vacancy

Ms. Honda explained that Christy Hart had withdrawn as a candidate.

Ms. Honda and the Board reviewed the timing for the candidates and the process of allowing the candidates to speak and then take questions.

Ms. Honda said the first candidate was Sharry Sparks. Ms. Sparks was called to present over speaker phone.

Ms. Sparks congratulated Mr. Curtin and Ms. Moynahan for winning the School Board election. Ms. Sparks explained that she had lived in the Rye community for 40 years, and that her husband and both of her sons attended Rye schools. Ms. Sparks added that as a parent she volunteered at the schools and with other organizations in Rye.

Ms. Sparks explained that she served for 10 years on the State Executive Board of the NEA, which dealt directly with the education of students, teaching and school staff issues, as well as legislative issues that affected the public schools.

Ms. Sparks noted that she was serving on the Human and Civil Rights Committee. Ms. Sparks said she served 3 years on the NEA Governance Committee, 12 years on the NEA State Board of Support Staff Issues and 2 years as the State Director of Education representing New Hampshire in Washington. Ms. Sparks noted that all those positions, dealt directly with public education and students.

Ms. Sparks added that she worked for 22 years with the Rye School District, 9 years with local preschools and 2 years as the School District Clerk. Ms. Sparks said she served for 2 years on the Professional Learning Advisory Committee and 10 years on the Safety and Crises Community at Rye Junior High.

Ms. Sparks expressed that her experience more than qualified her to serve on the Rye School Board and said it would be her pleasure to serve. Ms. Sparks noted the support she received from over 600 voters in the community. Ms. Sparks voiced that she would love to lend what she can to give back to public education, the students of Rye and the Board.

Ms. Honda thanked Ms. Sparks for all she had done and her dedication to Rye, the students and the community.

Ms. Honda asked her for details about the State Director of Education for the State of New Hampshire. Ms. Sparks explained that it was a position she was voted into, and she traveled to Washington 4 times a year. Ms. Sparks reviewed how in that role she presented Public School funding and student issues to Senators and Congressman.

Mr. Curtin noted how impressive her qualifications and experience were. Mr. Curtin asked what Ms. Sparks specific issues and concerns drove her to seek a Board position. Ms. Sparks explained that she wanted to advocate for students at all levels, open up communication and focus on accountability. Ms. Sparks noted that promoting a safe working environment was important and promoting a professional school environment.

Ms. Curtin asked for more detail on professional culture and climate in the schools. Ms. Sparks referred to professional development, but also opportunities to develop relationships. Ms. Sparks mentioned the desire to have a venue to promote camaraderie.

Dr. Marion asked Ms. Sparks about her role with RESPA and how that alliance could shift so it was not a conflict of interest. Ms. Sparks explained that while sitting on the NEA Executive Board, she had to shift to more of a management role and was able to make the shift needed.

Dr. Marion thanked her for running and applying for the one year position.

Ms. Sparks noted that this was the first opportunity that she had to run for a School Board position due to other commitments and the need to not have a conflict of interest. Ms. Sparks emphasized it was important to her not to have a conflict of interest. Ms. Sparks thanked the Board for the opportunity and for interviewing her over the phone.

Ms. Honda thanked and introduced Mr. Ryan Kaplan.

Mr. Kaplan reviewed his history having just moved into the community, after living briefly in Portsmouth. Mr. Kaplan explained that he and his wife spent 3 years in Milan, where they worked in the schools. Mr. Kaplan noted that prior to his time in Milan, he worked for 13 years in education. Mr. Kaplan said he was certified as a teacher, principal, and superintendent and although he was now working in Real Estate, he has maintained those certifications.

Mr. Kaplan said he was staying involved in the school system. Dr. Marion asked how he was staying involved in the schools. Mr. Kaplan explained that he started by attending PTA meetings. Mr. Kaplan mentioned working with Ms. Lull on Pick-up Control and explained that he took on that project.

Mr. Kaplan mentioned that his children attended the school and his wife taught in a local middle school.

Mr. Curtin asked if he had interest in getting back into education. Mr. Kaplan explained that he got into coaching recently and he added that although he might not take on a role as a teacher, he was always looking for opportunities to interact with students.

Mr. Curtin asked if there was anything he had learned overseas that he would like to incorporate into the education system here. Mr. Kaplan explained that he did not have a specific agenda, but he felt it important to best support the teachers to empower the students.

Ms. Moynahan noted, as this was a one year position, was Mr. Kaplan just looking for a one year commitment. Mr. Kaplan explained that having not been on a school board, he saw the one year positional an opportunity to see how the Board worked and with that knowledge see how he could best support the team.

Ms. Honda inquired as to how comfortable Mr. Ryan would be in making hard decisions that might relate to staff. Mr. Kaplan noted his changing perspective from classroom to administration and explained that the needs of the school do rise above the needs of one teacher. Mr. Kaplan explained his view that the Board needed to be advocates for Rye and there was give and take.

Dr. Marion made note of Mr. Kaplan's experience and explained the need to support and not micromanage. Mr. Kaplan voiced his philosophy that you hire good people and let them thrive. Mr. Kaplan said through support and empowering, the staff will excel.

Dr. Marion emphasized how great every candidate's qualifications were and regardless of the outcome of this Board position, he encouraged Mr. Kaplan to remain involved.

Ms. Honda introduced Ms. Heather Reed.

Ms. Reed noted that her past weeks experience with her children at home had been good and she commended the staff. Ms. Reed reviewed the ages of her children in the Rye schools.

Ms. Honda noted that the Board had her letter and information.

Mr. Curtin asked Ms. Reed her thoughts about the future for distance learning. Ms. Reed noted her 10 years at VLACS - Virtual Learning Academy Charter School. Ms. Reed explained that VLACS was a state-wide school and noted the flexible learning and schedules for students.

Dr. Marion asked what motivated her to apply for the one year verses running for a three year. Ms. Reed felt the short term position was a better fit for her, at this time due to her other commitments. Ms. Reed expressed her passion for education. She mentioned that being involved was her motivation and it was a good opportunity to experience working on the Board. She also reviewed her previous board experiences.

Dr. Marion asked if moving forward she might run for a term and Ms. Reed responded that the timing would have to be the right.

Ms. Moynahan asked Ms. Reed about her work at East Kingston in relation to Rye's variable enrollment. Ms. Moynahan noted how Ms. Reed approached the Board at East Kingston. Ms. Reed explained how in response to the desire for the school to have a language program, she proposed using an online language program as part of their technology time.

Ms. Honda asked Ms. Reed what she might want to focus on should she be appointed. Ms. Reed noted health education and the environment. Ms. Reed expressed thoughts on conservation.

Ms. Reed noted the 5th Grade transition worked out well based on the need to transition to remote learning. She felt as though her child have the necessary technology skills to adapt , but she wanted to ensure that all students were prepared for the future. Ms. Reed noted that technology must be embraced but added that the face-to-face component was important and needed.

Ms. Reed asked for a review of the responsibilities covered by the Board. Ms. Honda reviewed items like budgets and policies. Dr. Marion noted that negotiation were just completed and other committee assignments were minimal. Ms. Honda pointed out that they are a working Board and members fill a variety of duties. Ms. Moynahan reviewed the basic meeting scheduled.

Ms. Honda thanked Ms. Susan Ross for applying and meeting with the Board.

Ms. Ross thanked the Board for the opportunity. Ms. Ross noted that the Board had provided hope and insight to the families, kept children safe, adjusted instruction appropriately, provided stability for staff and lead the community. Ms. Ross was drawn to get involved to help the Board move forward. Ms. Ross mentioned bringing to the Board her experience in online education, consensus building and school administration. Ms. Ross explained her work as President of Northeast Association Learning Specialists for 11 years. Ms. Ross summarized that she would like to share her education experience.

Ms. Honda noted the high caliber of candidates and thanked Ms. Ross for her interest.

Mr. Curtin asked Ms. Ross about her specific experience and expertise in online education. Ms. Ross explained her work both within public and private schools, since retiring from school work in 2015. Ms. Ross expanded on her work with Learning Specialists and platforms that she was familiar with.

Dr. Marion asked how her work in Private Schooling translated to Public. Ms. Ross reviewed history of having been trained in the public schools, then trained as a teacher trainer, and working at St. Joseph's Teachers College. Ms. Ross summarized her and her children's experience within the public schools.

Ms. Moynahan asked Ms. Ross about training adults and children on online programs like ZOOM. Ms. Ross recommended the tutorials and discussed some of the issues.

Ms. Honda asked Ms. Ross about her Board experience and Ms. Ross reviewed the Boards that she had sat on including, her Church Board, Board of Christian Education, Lake Wentworth Conservation, and others.

Mr. Curtin asked if Ms. Ross might consider running for a Board position at the conclusion of this one year term and how would she feel about making hard decisions that could effect people that she once worked with.

Ms. Ross discussed her experience with family involvement on Boards and desire to sit on a School Board. Ms. Ross emphasized that the students' needs came first to her.

Ms. Ross explained that she had wanted to get involved with the Board, since she moved to Rye, but until now the time was not good. Ms. Ross concluded that she was ready and able to commit to the Board and would run for a seat.

Ms. Ross asked the Board about the Board commitments and Dr. Marion reviewed time commitments. Ms. Honda summarized that it could be a little more than 10 hours and explained that it was a working Board. Ms. Ross asked what specifics the Board thought this person would cover. Ms. Honda explained the transitions taking place with committees. Ms. Moynahan reviewed her Board commitments.

NON-PUBLIC (1:32:26)

Dr. Marion made a motion, seconded by Ms. Moynahan, to enter into non-public per RSA 91-A:3, II (c) to discuss and evaluate the four highly qualified candidates at 6:38 p.m. Discussion. Vote: 4-0.

PUBLIC MEETING RECONVENED (1:32:50)

Dr. Marion thanked all the candidates for putting their names in. Dr. Marion expressed that the Board was amazed with all the candidates and their great credentials and anyone of them would be capable.

Dr. Marion made a motion, seconded by Mr. Curtin, to nominate Ms. Heather Reed for the one-year Rye School Board position. Discussion. Vote: 4:0

Ms. Honda restated that the caliber of candidates was top notch. Ms. Honda explained that the Board reviewed the criteria that they created and based on that they selected Ms. Reed. Ms. Honda noted that Ms. Reed's work with related boards and having children in the school system were highly important criteria.

Dr. Marion reminded the candidates not selected, that there would be an election coming up and they should consider running for the seat.

Ms. Moynahan echoed the statements of Ms. Honda and Dr. Marion.

Dr. Marion reviewed the new executive order from the Governor allowing the Board to have a Public Meeting without a physical quorum present and the meeting would not need to be physically open to the public, if there were technical means for individuals to participate.

Mr. Petralia explained that the previous communication may have noted this allowance as well. Mr. Petralia said that an agenda would still be required.

Mr. Petralia noted Chief Walsh's communication to the Board to include the school playground as part of the closure.

Dr. Marion expressed that people needed to get outside. Dr. Marion said he supported not having groups on the field but felt that individuals should be allowed. Dr. Marion suggested wording that stated no groups larger than five could be on the grounds. The Board discussed the options and the concerns surrounding activities on the playground.

Ms. Moynahan said that if they were to close the playground, it should just be closed without any stipulations.

Ms. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Dr. Marion, to close the school playgrounds as part of the Rye School closure. Discussion. Vote: 4:0

Mr. Curtin asked if the fields were included. Mr. Petralia confirmed that it would include the fields.

ADJOURNMENT/NON-PUBLIC SESSION (1:40:05)

Dr. Marion made a motion, seconded by Mr. Curtin, to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 7:16 p.m. Discussion. Vote: 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Samantha Panek

April 1, 2020



Matt Curtin, Secretary

4/16/2020

Date