



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

March 25, 2021

Called for immediately following the Public Hearing on the FY22 Budget, broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the Ad-Hoc Superintendent Search Sub-Committee's recommendations for candidates to move forward in the interview process for Interim Superintendent.

Members Present: Vice Chair Bowman, Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Richardson, Chief Talent Officer

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:50 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained this meeting is televised, no votes will be taken and there will be no public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the sound check roll call: Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Vice Chair Bowman PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Mayor Siddiqui gave background on what has been happening on the Ad Hoc Sub-Committee process. On February 23, 2021 then they met to create a job description, the screening of 17 applications, determining the three finalists, and announced that they are Dr. Victoria Greer, Dr. Brian Metcalf, and Dr. Monica Henson. The Chair turned the floor to Member Rachel for next steps.

Member Rachel gave an overview of next steps explaining that the requirements are different for an interim search than for a permanent search. During an interim search, the School Committee has the authority to simply appoint an Interim Superintendent without any kind of process, which would have been beneficial due to the timeline, however they wanted to include an anti-racism framework into the process and decided to ask finalists to meet with three different groups of stakeholders, providing a diversity of participants to lead the interview process. They have carefully recruited these stakeholders in three different groups: Students, Families and Staff. She explained who were in the different stakeholder groups. They will be asking very critical questions, they will be centering the community of Cambridge and showing the candidates what it means to work in the district. There will be nine hours of footage, with three simultaneous webinars running at the same time. Cambridge residents can feel free to join all three, as attendees, no registration needed, jumping in and out randomly. The following Friday, all of this will be broadcast over the course of three days. This is the first time attempting this process and there may be a few bumps but it will make the process better in the long run. What this looks like will be sent out on the supt. search website tomorrow for the benefit of the public.

Mayor Siddiqui explained that the Ad-Hoc will meet again on March 30th to discuss strategy for contract negotiations. The next steps will be for the School Committee to interview the finalists and make an appointment.

The floor was opened for questions, comments and concerns.

Vice Chair Bowman thanked everyone for their work. She commented that most parents are not a part of these stakeholder groups. She would like for them to be included.

- Member Rachel responded that we cannot get everyone, especially the silent majority, they focused on the students that are high risk learners; adding that there will be multiple opportunities for the citizens of Cambridge to let the School Committee know how they feel about these candidates in addition to these groups.

Member Rojas agreed with Member Rachel and thanked Vice Chair Bowman for her comments. The main objective was to focus not just on staff; it will include students and families.

Member Fantini asked what the feedback mechanism will be

- Member Rachel answered that School Committee will be debriefing with the panelists and will make good use of the feedback.

Member Fantini asked when School Committee will do their interviews

- The Chair answered a tentative date of April 15th. He asked what kind of interviews will they be
- They will be zoom interviews, the questions will be related to their application materials.

Member Fantini would like to know who else applied

- Ms. Richardson responded that all applicants are confidential.

Member Rojas added that the finalists were asked screening interviews which were contained to the application materials.

Member Weinstein asked will anything be in place for multi lingual access.

- Dr. Brown answered there will be a live translator for one of the panelists and the recording will be captioned in multiple languages for our community.

Member Wilson thanked everyone for all of the hard work. She asked Ms. Richardson about applicants, even though it is confidential. She is curious as to why they cannot have access to their information.

- Ms. Richardson explained the Ad Hoc was put together specifically to screen, weed out and put the finalist information together

Member Wilson wonders if they can get questions in advance of School Committee interviews from the public, in particular the parents that will not be in the room.

Member Rojas stated that the Ad Hoc can receive questions and they can move the questions forward to the Committee of the Whole.

- Member Rachel agreed with Member Rojas and is hoping this will be taken into consideration for the search for a permanent superintendent. She stated the stakeholders will have a total of 4 questions each.
- Ms. Richardson stated that the time crunch is tight, these issues can be incorporated for a permanent supt.

Member Wilson asked if we can get more community members into this process. Can a google forum be created for families.

- Member Rachel responded that there may be a way by using Member Rojas's suggestion.

Member Rojas asked about 1 hour for each group. That is a long time, how about 45 minutes each.

- Member Rachel explained that they really are 45 minutes each with room to move from one zoom link to the next.

Vice Chair Bowman asked why/how they ended up with the three people that are before the Committee.

Mayor Siddiqui answered that out of seventeen applications received, they used the job description to decide who were the most qualified with experience of being a superintendent.

Member Rojas explained that he was interested in getting a sense of how well the applicants knew about our city, what the reason was for leaving the last job and whether or not he felt he could have any chemistry with them.

Member Rachel responded to whether they were committed to anti-racism, closing the achievement gap, she also paid particular attention to the way they spoke about students, are they bilingual, they all had a variety of different strengths and share our core values.

Ms. Richardson replied that from an administrative standpoint, she looked at how well they deal with the administration.

Member Rojas stated that before the screening there were many applicants that they could not get two votes each from the Members.

Member Fantini wants to know who is doing the moderating for the community forums

- Member Rachel said the stakeholders will figure that out

Member Fantini asked if they are looking into their past.

- Ms. Richardson answered that they are in process of doing thorough background checks and they have been asked if there was anything the Ad-Hoc needed to know tell us now

Member Fantini wanted to know if there was any problem with them going forward to the end. Ms. Richardson answered they know very clearly that this is an interim position and they can apply for permanent.

Member Fantini asked if this person actually be the superintendent are we going to do site visits.

- Member Rachel presumes that if an interim goes for permanent, the site visit will happen then.
- Ms. Richardson responded there will be a robust search for permanent which will include all of the necessary steps for a National search for a permanent superintendent

Member Nuriel Vera-Degraff wants to know what happens if we cannot get a majority vote for one of these three candidates.

- Vice Chair Bowman answered that if the Committee doesn't like anyone, there will be an internal candidate appointed and then a national search for a permanent supt.

Member Weinstein wonders if they were asked if they want to be permanent.

- Mayor answered that at least two stated they were interested in permanent. Rojas stated that he believes that all three are interested in permanent.

Member Weinstein asked is it fair to say all seventeen were baseline qualified?

- Mayor Siddiqui answered no they were not all baseline qualified.
- Member Rojas stated that no candidate got three yeses from the three Ad-Hoc members.
- Ms. Richardson responded the best of the five were chosen to come up with three.

Member Killian asked after the interviews are all over, will the stakeholder groups be able to get together with other stakeholder groups and brainstorm and see another lens?

- Member Rachel is open to either.
- Member answered it may be hard to get them all together again. Sharing feedback is possible, just not in person.
- Member Rojas thinks there may be a short debriefing period at the end of the day on the 8th.

Member Wilson asked if these three candidates only got two votes each.

- Rojas clarified that the finalist got three votes each.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.: Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Attest: 

Doshia Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee