

Special Meeting
Marlborough School Committee
January 10, 2013
Royal Embassy Suites

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Vigeant at 6:15 for the purpose of discussing the search for the next Superintendent of Schools, and operating norms/governance.

Mayor Vigeant, Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Bodin-Hettinger, Mrs. Hennessy, Mrs. Hardy, Mr. Hediger and Mrs. Dwyer were all in attendance. Mr. John Connolly, the consultant for the search, was present as well as Interim Superintendent Dlott.

The committee wished to discuss the schedules for the final three candidates in detail.

Mr. Connolly explained his past experience in this regard. Specifically, the need for all of the school committee to be involved in spending time with the finalists. As the three members of the subcommittee would have met them once before, he suggests that the other members find a way to be a part of the “day in the district” with each candidate.

Mr. Connolly had proposed that after each day, on the following morning, the candidates meet with the Mayor (as Chair) and one other member of the school committee to debrief.

Dr. Hediger offered he would be happy and is very interested in participating in these breakfasts. Mayor Vigeant is not able to do all three mornings with several things that can not be moved. Mayor Vigeant was planning on meeting with each of the finalist – participating in some way – during their day in the district.

Members were concerned the proposed schedule was very aggressive. At present, the schedule has the candidates doing a tour in the morning, a lunch with Dr. Dlott, afternoon tour, a community meet and greet followed by a dinner with the full committee and a public interview in the evening from 8 – 10.

Mr. Connolly was comfortable that this was not too aggressive, however he did agree we probably need to build in a little more down time prior to the dinner and interview. School Committee members offered their opinion that it would be good to have the two instructional leadership directors as part of this tour of the district process. Dr. Dlott thought it a terrific idea as it says a lot about the district that the next Superintendent will have some very capable people on their leadership team who know the district and the strategic plan very well.

The Committee took a break at 7:30, and reconvened at 7:37 around the topic of norms and governance.

Mrs. Dwyer provided the committee a copy of the norms adopted previously that had been tabled at the June 12, 2012 meeting. Mrs. Dwyer and Mrs. Hardy spoke to the work

ICLE (International Center for Leadership in Education) had done with the committee with all five of the seven members currently seated at the table about the authority of the superintendent verses the board – roles, lanes and responsibilities.

Mr. Connolly agreed this was important, and offered his services to help the committee revisit these with whoever are finalist to ensure clarity in this topic. As a former Superintendent, he is well suited to lead the committee on a discussion in this domain.

Dr. Dlott spoke to how well prepared the committee is for meetings, but that he has never been a part of meetings that are so long. Dr. Dlott offered his perspective having served as interim on what we do well as a board, and what we can improve upon.

Mrs. Bodin-Hettinger agreed that to make it “easier to succeed than fail” we need to have this well defined.

Mr. Connolly stressed that no matter how we view ourselves individually as school committee members, whenever a SC member goes into a school they are viewed as a school committee member. He strongly cautioned members on any roles they assume within schools – that the mere presence of a SC member can change the dynamic of a conversation on advisory boards such as school councils.

Members spoke to this, their personal experience, and agreed to consider this going forward.

Mrs. Dwyer spoke to noticing a trend on SC emails listing leadership in the district from individual school committee members. Mrs. Dwyer spoke to our previous norm was only to with the Superintendent who would then decide how to handle the request. She has continued to honor this norm with Dr. Dlott for the most part, but acknowledged not abiding by it 100 percent herself and seeing a trend across the entire committee.

Members acknowledged that had worked for a while previously, but when things fell apart last spring, members were looking for timely information and could not get it from the district office, and resorted to contacting principals directly. Members also acknowledged a lack of trust in information from district office which lead to this path.

Dr. Dlott acknowledged this past history, but made it very clear that as Superintendent he expects all such requests to go through him, it is an important organizational structural issue and is directly related to accountability.

Mrs. Dwyer and Mrs. Hardy spoke to how they had learned from ICLE on this point, and Superintendent Carlson had made it very clear thru ICLE that individual board members request took up an extraordinary amount of her time, and that individual school committee members direct contacts and information gathering from building principals was not productive, particularly during the budget process. Mrs. Matthews spoke to it essentially coming down to trust.

Mr. Connolly agreed, and Chairman Vigeant acknowledged this was a productive conversation, and that this all needed to be clarified for whomever sat next in the superintendents seat.

Dr. Hediger asked what to do if the Superintendent is unresponsive. Mrs. Dwyer offered it should be taken to the Chair for action, that one would presume the next superintendent would be meeting with the Chair regularly like Dr. Dlott does, and cautioned that seven members have seven different priorities. Dr. Hediger was not comfortable with that model.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m., the committee agreed to reconvene the following week to finalize the schedule for site visits and which committee members would participate in which parts.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Dwyer
Secretary