

**MARPLE NEWTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2013
BOARD ROOM
MINUTES**

Board: President Kathryn Chandless, Vice-President Nancy Galbraith, Mr. Robert Sack, Mr. James Lanzalotto (by phone), Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe, Mr. Leonard Altieri, Mr. Atsushi J. Baker and Mr. John McDevitt.

Solicitor: Mr. Mark Sereni, Esquire

Administration: Dr. Merle Horowitz, Dr. Constance Bompadre, Mr. Joseph Driscoll, Mr. Lance Freeman, Mr. Michael Dumin.

Press: 0

Audience: 23

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Kathryn Chandless called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. and welcomed all in attendance. Mr. Robert Sack then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present were Mrs. Kathryn Chandless, Mrs. Nancy Galbraith, Mr. James Lanzalotto (by phone), Ms. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe, Mr. John McDevitt, Mr. Leonard Altieri, Mr. Atsushi J. Baker and Mr. Robert Sack.

Mr. Lanzalotto stated that he must leave the proceedings at 7:15 p.m. He asked that the Board try to reconnect with him when the time came for nominations and elections.

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless requested a motion to accept the agenda, as presented. Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe asked for the following addendum to the agenda:

APPOINTMENTS

ADMINISTRATIVE

MOTION: To approve the following administrative appointment, item 1.

- 1) Gregory Puckett – Principal
M.Ed.-Widener University: Educational Leadership; Certification: Principal
K-12; Social Studies; 6 Yrs. Administrative Experience;
6 Yrs. Teaching Experience.
High School

Salary: \$134,810.00
 Effective: July 1, 2013
 Reason: Replaces Dr. Raymond McFall (Resigned)

Motion to accept the revised agenda was made by Mrs. Nancy Galbraith and seconded by Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe.

With no further discussion, motion passed, 8-0

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items Only)

There were no comments at this time.

6. INTERVIEW OF CANDIDATES TO FILL THE SCHOOL BOARD VACANCY CREATED BY THE RESIGNATION OF DAVID J. MCGINLEY.

Prior to interviews, President Kathryn Chandless asked Mr. Mark Sereni, Esq., to go over the procedure. Mr. Sereni explained that the Board, as committee of the whole, should listen to all candidates. After interviews are closed, the Board may deliberate publicly, discussing concerns regarding the candidates they have heard. These interviews and deliberations are public by virtue of the Sunshine Act. After these deliberations, any Board member may nominate a candidate. A second for nomination is not required. A motion to close nominations, with a second, is required before a vote is taken on the appointment. Appointment is given to the first nominee to receive a majority of votes. At that point, no further votes are taken.

Mr. McDevitt expressed concern that the process used does not give proper consideration to the candidates. He believes that these interviews should result in rounds, with call-backs for the most impressive, so that people are given a fair and equitable opportunity to present their best qualities to all. His concern is that the Board will not learn enough about the candidates as they answer two prepared questions.

Mr. Sereni responded that the Board may evaluate the process and make changes if it so desires. The only constant is that voting stop when a majority vote is reached on a nominee.

Mr. McDevitt asked for a similar situation with the Board in past practice. Mrs. Nancy Galbraith stated that Mr. Richard Sokorai was one of six candidates to be considered for appointment. His name was first when the voting took place, and he won appointment by achieving a 6-2 vote. Mr. McDevitt held that going from eight to four to three to two to one candidate is a better process.

Mr. Atsushi Baker disagreed stating that rounds would overcomplicate the process. The Board has had time to review the resumes, plus hearing the candidates individually should be enough to make an informed decision.

Mr. Leonard Altieri stated that just because you send in a resume it doesn't guarantee you an interview. He said the Board has had days to review these, and he would hope that it could make an informed decision based on who is best suited for the job.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless stated that while Board policy allows the Board to screen applications, the most democratic method for selection was to hear all who submitted a resume. She then stated that the process can be examined and revised after tonight's proceedings.

Mr. Lanzalotto exited the meeting at this point at 7:12 p.m.

The candidates were brought into the Board Room one at a time.

- 1) Mr. Linn Carpenter was introduced. Mr. Carpenter has taught in private school for 35 years. He stated that he had been taught to serve his community and felt that serving on the Board would fulfill that. His own children have been educated with IEP's, and he understands the importance of meeting the needs of all students. His concern is to get the best tools into the

- classroom to facilitate the best learning experience, to have good communications with the community and the staff. Mr. McDevitt asked what Mr. Carpenter would bring to the Board. Mr. Carpenter responded that his teaching experience would allow him to balance programs to the needs of the students. He then spoke to his ideals for classrooms, i.e. class sizes of 15, and thanked the Board for the opportunity to appear before them.
- 2) Ms. Linda Collier was introduced to the Board. Ms. Collier stated that she is the Director of Paralegal Studies at Delaware County Community College, and she has children who have graduated from the district, and who are going to be going into the district. Mr. McDevitt asked what tools Ms. Collier felt she would bring to the Board. Ms. Collier replied that she has a skill set that allows her to determine what is needed to reach and succeed in higher education. Mr. McDevitt asked her opinion of school uniforms. Ms. Collier replied that uniforms depend on the environment and the need for regimentation. Mr. McDevitt asked if Ms. Collier had any experience or knowledge of PSER's. Ms. Collier replied no. Mr. Sack asked what Ms. Collier felt was the main issue she would tackle as a Board member. Ms. Collier responded that her goal would be to maintain Arts programs. Also she would like to see quality field trips for students so they might experience their lessons. She also emphasized her experience as a child advocate and her expertise in the juvenile system. She would use that expertise to help students avoid trouble. She then thanked the Board for the opportunity.
 - 3) Mr. Claude Falcone was then introduced. Mr. Falcone spent five years in the Armed Service Network in technology services. He now teaches in the Philadelphia school system. He wants to give back to his community, and looks to maintain a strong high school to keep property values high in Marple Newtown. Mrs. Chandless asked what Mr. Falcone saw as his strengths. Mr. Falcone replied that his leadership skills would prove beneficial to the Board and to the students. Mr. McDevitt asked where Mr. Falcone sees the district in ten years. Mr. Falcone replied that the technology must be improved and maintained to stay on even footing with all other districts. Mr. Falcone responded to Mr. McDevitt's query regarding uniforms as a good idea – schools shouldn't be a forum for fashion shows. Mr. Falcone thanked the Board for the opportunity.
 - 4) Ms. Barbara Harvey was then introduced to the Board. She stated that she has been a Marple resident for twenty six years, with two children who went through the district. Mrs. Kathryn Chandless asked what tools Ms. Harvey could bring to the Board; Ms. Harvey replied that her experience with the County Comptroller's office gives her insight into budget matters and insurance issues, and that being a member of the Marple Ethics Committee gave her an ability to make difficult if not popular decisions. Mr. McDevitt asked where Ms. Harvey thought the district needed the most improvement. Ms. Harvey replied creating and maintaining a budget to offer a proper education to students. Ms. Harvey thanked the Board for the opportunity.
 - 5) Ms. Dana Kauffman was introduced to the Board. Ms. Kauffman began by stating that her earlier experience as a Marple Newtown School District Board member gives her a unique view of the needs of the Board and the district and an investment in the Board. Her interests and what she feels are the greatest needs in the district are the budget, facilities and curriculum. One of her major strengths is a tiny learning curve, since she served on the Board recently. She stated she would come prepared, and would be a good team member. Mrs. Chandless asked if Ms. Kauffman would be interested in running beyond the appointment. MS. Kauffman replied that she would not run as an endorsed candidate. Mr. McDevitt asked how Ms. Kauffman would improve the Curriculum in the district. Ms.

Kauffman replied that she would like it to be more public. There should be more press coverage of presentations and more talk in regular meetings regarding curriculum issues. Ms. Kauffman thanked the Board for the opportunity.

- 6) Ms. Sara Ronsvalle was introduced to the Board. She stated that she had sons in the district and was a graduate of Marple Newtown High School in 1997. Her interest is to help extracurricular activities flourish, so that these enrichment programs will be available for her children. The strength she sees in herself is her financial background, grounding her for budget issues. Mr. McDevitt asked what excites her about the district. Ms. Ronsvalle replied that being appointed to the Board would put her in a great position to advance the curriculum and activities along with financial development. She said that she would like to see the Arts programs progress. She then thanked the Board for the opportunity.
- 7) Mr. Steven Schoenstadt was then introduced to the Board. Mr. Schoenstadt expressed his interest in giving back to the community, and his interest in this appointment as a vehicle for that. He had served as a School Board member in Neshaminy School District for ten years, and was very familiar with the workings of a Board. He feels his strengths are that he is a consensus builder and that he can work with the Board to become a team to offset problems. Mr. McDevitt asked what Mr. Schoenstadt thought his greatest success was as a member of the Neshaminy Board. He replied to the completion of the new high school building project, that it created a functional campus which had been lacking before. He then stated that he had worked for seven years on a budget committee and could hit the ground running in that area. Mr. McDevitt asked about test scores in Neshaminy during his tenure on the Board. Mr. Schoenstadt replied that they were mid-range statistically, but in compliance. Mr. Schoenstadt then thanked the Board for the opportunity.
- 8) Mr. Alexas Skucas was then introduced as the final candidate. Mr. Skucas stated that he was a product of the public school system in Virginia. He has had experience as an engineer, designing Air Traffic Control Systems, and then returned to night school to become a patent lawyer. When asked what strengths he possesses that he could bring to the Board, he replied that he has no particular political affiliations, but life lessons would enable him to make informed decisions. His ability to research information would put him in the best place to contribute effective ideas. He stated he has a great willingness to listen, and to be proven wrong. He emphasized that all constituencies would have his ear. He is fiscally conservative, and would look for a constant evaluation of how money in the district is spent. Mr. Altieri asked if he had the time to devote to the position. Mr. Skucas replied that he works mostly from home, and devote the time easily. Mr. Skucas then thanked the Board for the opportunity.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless called a recess to the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

At 8:22 p.m., Mrs. Chandless recalled the meeting to order.

Mr. Lanzalotto returned to the meeting by phone at 8:23 p.m.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless opened the deliberations.

Mr. John McDevitt stated that he got a feel for everyone, and he was comfortable with the entire proceeding. He said he took back everything he said in the beginning. He was happy that a lot of good people came out, and that he was able to keep an open mind throughout the proceedings. He also stated that Mr. Skucas looked like the real deal.

Mr. Atsushi Baker stated that he was impressed with a lot of candidates, and that it is nice to see there are a lot of people who want to get involved with the community.

Mrs. Nancy Galbraith stated that if she was going to vote with her heart, she would choose Ms. Kauffman, because she knows the ropes. But the fact she is not a candidate for election means it is not a choice for the long term, and the same transition will occur quickly. She said she would rather an appointment who is looking for long term.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless stated that she appreciated all who came out tonight, but she echoed Mrs. Galbraith's long term concerns. She said the need for consistency is paramount, with all the turnover we have had recently. She was impressed with Mr. Skucas, he seemed to have his priorities straight. She said that she is looking for someone qualified and in it for the long term.

Mr. John McDevitt stated that openings occur frequently, citing six or seven since the start of his three year tenure. He is happy to see so many good people in the bullpen.

Mr. Leonard Altieri said that he is looking for someone interested in community involvement, and stressed the importance of a long term goal. Previous school board experience would be good, but better someone who is willing to transition from appointee to candidate.

Mr. McDevitt stated that the Board's responsibility is to bring in the best person for the job, not to look toward the next election.

Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe stated that the intent to be here by election shows a commitment to stay. Mr. McDevitt disagreed, saying that all candidates have the potential to bring experience to the Board.

Mr. James Lanzalotto stated that the need was to find someone who wants to be engaged, who can learn quickly and who could be groomed to stay. Mr. Baker emphasized that everyone has the opportunity to take the initiative to become elected.

Mr. McDevitt maintained that the best teams are best because they have the best player in the moment. Mrs. Chandless stated that the candidates have already shown their dedication; it will be a difficult decision because all the candidates are capable. Mrs. Galbraith then encouraged all in the audience to consider running.

Mr. Robert Sack stated that he agreed with Mr. McDevitt, it was time to bring the best person on board, get them up to speed and move forward.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless then closed deliberations, and moved forward to nominations.

7. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF THE CANDIDATE

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless requested nominations from the Board members. Mr. Atsushi J. Baker nominated Mrs. Barbara Harvey. Mr. John McDevitt nominated Mr. Alexas Skucas.

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless requested a motion to close nominations.

Motion was made by Mrs. Nancy Galbraith and seconded by Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe.
With no further discussion, motion passed 8-0

Mrs. Kathryn Chandless then requested a motion to appoint Barbara Harvey as school director to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of David J. McGinley.

Motion was made by Mrs. Nancy Galbraith and seconded by Mr. Atsushi J. Baker.

A roll call vote was requested.

Ayes: Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe, Mr. Atsushi Baker, Mrs. Nancy Galbraith, Mrs. Kathryn Chandless, Mr. Leonard Altieri, Mr. Robert Sack

Nays: Mr. John McDevitt, Mr. James Lanzalotto

Abstentions: 0

Mrs. Barbara Harvey was appointed 6-2-0

8. ADMINISTRATION OF OATH

The Honorable John P. Capuzzi, Sr. administered the Oath of Office and The Loyalty Oath to Mrs. Barbara Harvey.

The newly sworn-in Mrs. Harvey assumed her seat at the board table.

Mr. James Lanzalotto left the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS

ADMINISTRATIVE

Mrs. Sherry-Lee McAuliffe then requested a motion to approve the following administrative appointment, item 1.

- 1) Gregory Puckett – Principal
 M.Ed.-Widener University: Educational Leadership; Certification: Principal K-12; Social Studies; 6 Yrs. Administrative Experience;
 6 Yrs. Teaching Experience.
 High School
 Salary: \$134,810.00
 Effective: July 1, 2013
 Reason: Replaces Dr. Raymond McFall (Resigned)

Motion was made by Mrs. Nancy Galbraith and seconded by Mrs. Kathryn Chandless. Mrs. Nancy Galbraith stated that Mr. Puckett is very impressive, and will be wonderful for the high school. Mr. McDevitt agreed with Mrs. Galbraith, adding that the only issue he had was that Mr. Puckett was a Penncrest graduate! Dr. Horowitz added her congratulations to Mr. Puckett, stating that she looked forward to getting to know him more, and moving the district ahead. Mr. Gregory Puckett thanked everyone for the opportunity. He said that he is humbled and honored to be back in Delaware County, and looks forward to meeting everyone, especially the students. With no further discussion, Motion passed, 8-0

9. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no comments at this time.

10. COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD

Mr. John McDevitt stated that, even though he asked candidates questions regarding their opinions on school uniforms, he wasn't expecting that issue to come before the Board. Mrs. Kathryn Chandless stated that the process of appointment definitely requires some discussion and revision, and that the Board should look at it critically. Mr. McDevitt responded that he found the process questionable going in to tonight, but he felt better when it came time for nominations, He felt that all of his questions had been adequately answered. He agreed, though, that the Board needs to take a look at the process. Mr. A.J. Baker stated that if the community has a concern with the proceedings, the Board should definitely look at it.

Mrs. Nancy Galbraith stated that she had brought “Autism Awareness” pins from the I.U. for all the Board members to wear during the next month, which is Autism Awareness month.

11. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, President Kathryn Chandless adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mr. Joseph Driscoll, Board Secretary