

**The Hamilton Wenham Regional School District
School Committee Meeting
Buker Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room
Wednesday, May 1, 2019 7:00 PM**

Present:

Michelle Horgan, Assistant Secretary
Michelle Bailey
Gene Lee
Kerry Gertz, Vice Chairperson
Stacey Metternick, Secretary
Peter Wolczik
David Polito, Chairperson

Also Present:

Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary
Dorothy Presser, MASC representative

1. Call to Order

David Polito calls the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

2. New Business

A. Interview Candidate Susan Kustka for the Interim Superintendent Exhibit A
Kerry Gertz, Vice Chairperson, introduces herself and welcomes candidate Susan Kustka.

Q. Would you tell us a little bit about yourself and if desired, provide an opening statement?

Susan Kutska introduces herself and provides a brief overview of her experience, most recently as Assistant Superintendent for Weymouth Public Schools.

Q. What made you apply to this position?

Ms. Kutska is aspiring to be a permanent superintendent. She is goal driven, motivated, resilient, and has a great deal of experience in education. Ms. Kutska thinks an interim position would offer great experience, especially in Hamilton-Wenham's small student body population.

Q. Based on what you have learned about our district, what would be your top 3 goals during your interim superintendency?

Ms. Kutska notes the importance of keeping a steady progress during interim superintendencies. She would first like to understand what the district's goals are. She notes that she has worn many hats including capital plan management, supervision of various departments, food, transportation, principal, etc. She enjoys curriculum development and professional development. She would also implement strategies to support staff. Ms. Kutska speaks of social emotional learning, trauma inflicted students, and notes how this population should always remain a priority.

Q. Please describe your management style and how you think this may work within the regional district?

“Collaborative” Ms. Kutska always starts the year by asking how she can help leaders grow, and then works consistently to develop goals and grow from there. She likes to call herself a share leader for principals, she is there to support the principals, and always encourages principals to keep her in the loop to allow her to support them to the best of her ability. She clarifies that she never makes decisions for others, and she believes there is more than one right way to handle any given situation.

Q. Have you ever had to assist a school committee in the superintendent search process as a facilitator, advisor, or in an administrative capacity?

She has not assisted with the superintendent search process, but has offered support with assistant superintendents and principal searches. Ms. Kutska is very familiar with the process and confident in her ability to facilitate the process, or engage consulting firms if desired.

Q. What is your experience (if any) negotiating union contracts and land use purchases?

Ms. Kutska was a curriculum leader in the district, and as such, has experience with a great deal of negotiations and other problem solving situations. She adds that it is always her preference to work without the presence of attorneys, and has seen a great deal of success in facilitating the process without need for attorneys. Ms. Kutska states that attorneys don't lend themselves well to effective problem solving strategies. She has settled many contracts by enlisting proactive methods. She adds that she has both indirect and direct experience working with MSBA in building facilities, and is excited by that process. Although she has no direct experience with land purchase negotiations, she has a strong budgetary sense and is confident in her ability to engage in such a process.

Q. How familiar are you with the needs and issues of a regional school district, and what is your experience managing these complexities?

Ms. Kutska has heard from many superintendents and school committees about the complexities inherent in regional districts, and notes her understanding of particular challenges arising from town differences such as socioeconomic, culture, etc. Ms. Kutska believes that Hamilton-Wenham already has a strong sense of unity between the towns.

Q. How would you describe the differences between permanent and interim superintendent roles?

Ms. Kutska highlights her various roles in educational leadership, particularly in regards to aligning the district's mission and vision to the long-term plans and budgetary projections. Although a strategic plan is critical to help districts to move forward, she believes this would be a function of the permanent superintendent. She believes her role as interim superintendent would be refraining from those longer term projects, but ensuring a healthy climate for the permanent superintendent to engage in those processes.

Q. If desired, please provide any closing statements, final thoughts, or information you would like us to consider that we have not asked.

Ms. Kutska is an educational leader: she is civic minded, believes in the power of working together, and has numerous skills in this area. She is here this evening because she cares deeply about children. She has extensive experience and skills in Human Resources (which she believes is a unique offering that not many superintendents can offer), professional development, leadership, trauma-informed approaches, and

safety and security for the district (including writing grants to meet the safety/security needs of the district). Ms. Kutska believes that she still has a long time left in education leadership, and knows that her breadth of skills would position her as an excellent leader for Hamilton-Wenham. She adds that she does not want to ever forget what it is like to be a teacher, as her relationship with students drives her to be a strong leader.

Thanks the School Committee for inviting her here this evening to speak. Ms. Presser escorts Ms. Kutska out of the room.

School Committee discusses next steps in the process: second round interviews will take place on the 8th and deliberations will take place on the 10th.

School Committee begins discussing the categories/topics to develop their questions for second round interviews, and will finish their discussion after the second interview.

B. Interview Candidate Jeffrey Sands for the Interim Superintendent Exhibit B
Kerry Gertz, Vice Chairperson, introduces herself and welcomes candidate Jeff Sands.

Q. Can you tell us about yourself?

Mr. Sands has served as the Assistant Superintendent for Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District for the last 6 years. In this capacity, he oversees the day-to-day operations of departments in all non-instructional areas: facilities and grounds, procurement, HR, IT, finance, etc.

Q. What made you apply to this position?

Mr. Sands states that he takes his job very seriously, and has a vested interest in the success of the district. He explains that upon arriving, the district was suffering, but with Dr. Harvey, Mr. Sands, and the leadership team, the district has seen many benefits and a lot of positive growth. Mr. Sands know that his skills, commitment, organization, and professionalism allowed the district's growth to its current healthier status. Mr. Sands believes he is the right person for the interim superintendent position, as he has a great deal of institutional knowledge, an extremely honorable work ethic, and will provide consistency throughout the transitional period.

Q. Based on what you have learned about our district, what would be your top 3 goals during your interim superintendency?

- 1) Ensure that the leadership team established does not fall apart; that the team continues to work diligently and collaboratively, maintaining continuity in the team despite changes;
- 2) Continue the really great work that Dr. Harvey and the leadership team introduced;
- 3) Continue focus on facilities, specifically continue leading the critical Winthrop Sprinkler Project, and ensure projects are completed on a timely basis.

Q. Please describe your management style and how you think this may work within the regional district?

Mr. Sands explains that his management style is demanding but fair, adding that those that report to him would say they enjoy working with him. If there are issues, Mr. Sands explains that he does not let things fester. He is straightforward and holds high expectations of his team.

Q. Have you ever had to assist a school committee in the superintendent search process as a facilitator, advisor, or in an administrative capacity?

No, Mr. Sands states that he has assisted with the assistant superintendent search process, but has no direct experience with the superintendent search process.

Q. What is your experience (if any) negotiating union contracts and land use purchases?

Mr. Sands has been a part of a team that negotiated the last 7 - 8 contracts for the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District. Dr. Harvey and Mr. Sands took that responsibility together and worked as a team of equals. Mr. Sands adds that he has extensive experience with labor union contracts, as well as negotiating Real Estate and land purchases. Mr. Sands' experience with accounting firms allowed him to gain extensive experience in commercial real estate negotiations.

Q. How familiar are you with the needs and issues of a regional school district, and what is your experience managing these complexities?

Mr. Sands states that he is very familiar with the needs and issues of a regional school district, and managing such complexities is one responsibility he currently holds for the district. He explains that he is familiar with every aspect regarding regional school districts: organization, structure, statutes, budgets, personnel issues, CBA issues, excess and deficiencies, etc. Mr. Sands has extensive and successful experience in this regard.

Q. How would you describe the differences between permanent and interim superintendent roles?

Mr Sands explains that the two roles are very different. In his opinion, the interim's responsibility is to keep the ball moving forward to make sure there's staff who have what they need, continuity, the team is in a good place, and there are no fractures in planning. When the time comes for permanent superintendent, the district is in good standing because the interim has ensured projects continue, and the district remains in sound health. The permanent position, Mr Sands explains, is responsible for the long-term strategic planning and larger project initiatives; enlisting community, parent, and teacher feedback to guide those processes. An interim superintendent would not necessarily engage in these larger projects given the 12 months of service time. Mr. Sands adds that it is crucial for the interim superintendent to provide an adequate transition to the permanent position.

Q. If desired, please provide any closing statements, final thoughts, or information you would like us to consider that we have not asked.

Mr. Sands believes he offers a unique set of skills to the community and to the district. He offers continuity, stability, institutional knowledge, 6 years of relationships with 100s of people in the community, and there is absolutely no learning curve involved should he take this role. Mr. Sands explains that should he take on the role of interim superintendent, the opening of the assistant superintendent position would allow current staff the opportunity to step into a larger leadership role.

Mr. Sands expresses his appreciation for the School Committee's unanimous vote of confidence in interviewing him this evening.

Mr. Sands wore a tie and got a haircut specifically for this interview.

Ms. Presser escorts Mr. Sands out of the room.

School Committee members discuss the most effective process in choosing the finalists for the interim superintendent position. Members discuss positive attributes and qualifications of each of the candidates:

McAlduff: regional experience, interim experience, regional language fluency, skilled communicator, values partnerships, key communicator with towns, experience with Winchester Public Schools building, MSBA process experience, well versed in negotiating contracts, values engagement with schools, interim position continued, so school committees must have had faith in him, climate study idea, strategic planning, served in districts with similar demographics.

Herb Levine: charming, political leader role, vast experience, built 12 schools, goal was 'do no harm'.

Susan Kustka: management/operational skills, student centered passion, took time to research the district extensively and had detailed data points on Hamilton-Wenham demographics, background in special education; curriculum background

Jeff Sands: brings continuity, zero learning curve, union supports his candidacy, well-versed with budgetary challenges (which will only continue), institutional knowledge, interesting and intriguing approach to leadership positions, knowledge and skills with Longmeadow, relationships formed with crucial stakeholders, union contract experience, will keep momentum going.

School Committee members vote on their top two candidates

David Polito: McAlduff & Sands

Kerry Gertz: McAlduff & Sands

Michelle Bailey: McAlduff & Levine

Stacey Metternick: McAlduff & Levine

Peter Wolczik: Levine & Sands

Michelle Horgan: Sands & Levine

Gene Lee: McAlduff & Sands

Total votes:

McAlduff 5

Sands 5

Levine 4

Discussion: both Levine & McAlduff are finalists in Marblehead District's interim search as well. Discussion regarding strategy in carrying 2 or 3 candidates forward. School Committee decides:

05/08/2019: Sands, McAlduff & Levine will be interviewed

05/09/2019: Marblehead will decide on their Interim Superintendent

05/10/2019: Hamilton-Wenham School Committee meets to deliberate

Dorothy Presser will make phone calls to finalists tomorrow morning, and fill the interview time slots on 05/08/2019: (1) 7:00-7:40; (2) 7:50 -8:30; (3) 8:40-9:20

School Committee members discuss the topics they would like to ask questions about during second-round interviews:

Kerry Gertz - Special Education
Stacey Metternick - Building projects/Capital improvements
Gene Lee - Budgeting/Finance (and possibly address elected officials/schools relationship)
Michelle Bailey - School Committee Relations/Communications (and possibly question regarding towns)
David Polito - Leadership & Management
Michelle Horgan - Planning/Organization
Peter Wolczik - Curriculum & Instruction / Teaching & Learning

Members agree to choose 2 questions from their topics above, both a general question and backup question in order to ask something different if need be. Those asking the questions may ask permission from chairperson to ask a follow up question if needed.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MOVE WILLIAM MCALDUFF, HERB LEVINE, AND JEFFREY SANDS FORWARD TO THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT FINALISTS FOR RE-INTERVIEW ON MAY 8TH 2019.

**MOTION by Stacey Metternick; SECONDED by Michelle Bailey
Unanimously approved by 7 members present.**

3. Vote to Adjourn

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN AT 9:16 PM.

**MOTION by Stacey Metternick; SECONDED by Kerry Gertz.
Unanimously approved by 7 members present.**

Respectfully submitted June 6, 2019 by Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary.