

March 25, 2019

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for the specific purpose of the Board Vacancy on Monday, March 25, 2019 at 6:30pm prevailing time in the Board Room of the Administration Building, 425 N. Washington Avenue, Scranton, PA.

President Dixon called the meeting to order at 6:30pm with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call: By the Secretary.

Present: Directors Borthwick, Duffy, Gilmartin, Lesh, McAndrew, Popil, Schuster and President Dixon.

President Dixon read the announcement and purpose of the meeting as A Special Meeting for the Specific Purpose of the Board Vacancy will be held on Monday, March 25, 2019 at 6:30PM in the Board Room of the Administration Building, 425 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, PA 18503. The scheduled work session will take place following the Special Meeting.

Public Comment:

No one signed up to speak.

At this time Mrs. Dixon conferred with Attorney Audi regarding the proceedings for interviewing the candidates for the board vacant seat.

It was determined the candidates would be sequestered and the board would follow the same procedures from the last vacancy that took place a couple weeks ago. Mrs. Orr escorted the candidates to another room.

The candidates were afforded 2 minutes to address the board followed by four questions from the board. The same four questions would be asked each candidate and the board will then submit their names to the board secretary to tally with a member of the media and another witness. A motion will be made for the candidate with the most entries. The order in which the candidates spoke was the order in which they signed in with the Board Secretary.

Mr. Daniel Brust, city resident, Holy Cross High School graduate and Doctor of Pharmacy from Duquesne University, Mylan School of Pharmacy, is a Clinical Pharmacist Specialist employed by the V.A. Medical Center in Wilkes Barre.

Mr. Brust feels he understands the struggles children face in the public school system, and he would bring new blood to the board with a strong ethical background and a strong, analytical and rational mind to make ground decisions and he believes the importance of education starts at the earliest level.

Director Duffy's first question was – what is the annual budget of the Scranton School District including all state, federal and local revenues. Mr. Brust was unsure.

Director Duffy's second question was – what is the largest financial shortcoming the Scranton School District faces. Mr. Brust was unsure.

March 25, 2019

Director Gilmartin asked as they embark on the recovery efforts and will be reviewing a plan that Dr. Finan prepares and will be faced with a lot of difficult choices, are there any points that he would absolutely not consider, any deal breakers.

Mr. Brust said he has no bias or prior influences so there would not be any deal breakers.

Director Borthwick asked if there are any specific policy priorities or ideas he has related to addressing the district's fiscal crisis.

Mr. Brust's focus would be on ethics and making decisions not only for the board but for key stakeholders and students, staff and faculty.

Mr. Ken Norton, life-long city resident, and grandparent of two Scranton School District students is interested in the short duration and his hope is for a smooth transition into the next year with all the drastic changes and reactions to everything. Mr. Norton has been involved with kids for quite a few years and is a firm believer in Vo-Tech and the need for kids to be exposed to the trades.

In response to Director Duffy's question regarding the total annual budget of the Scranton School District Mr. Norton did not know.

In response to Director Duffy's question regarding the largest financial shortcoming the district faces Mr. Norton referenced Auditor General Mr. DePasquale's \$200,000.00 and said he is more interested in what the cost is to educate a student and how it is broken down in dollars and cents.

Director Gilmartin commented as the district moves into the next phase of the recovery process and they get the findings of Dr. Finan's plan and assess all the choices asked if there is any point or points he would not consider, in other words any deal breakers.

Mr. Norton replied that all options would have to be considered and his biggest concern is the disruption of the kids as there is already talk of "shaking schools" and that relates to his granddaughter and becomes a case of how restructuring schools is going to disrupt the kids.

Director Borthwick's question of addressing the district's fiscal crisis and special policy priorities, Mr. Norton believes 5 ½ -6 hours of teaching is a rather short period and he would like to look into summer programs and give kids more of an idea of Vo-Tech because although he was lucky enough to get involved and work in his father's garage as a mechanic kids do not have that opportunity right now and they don't have the experience of working and getting their hands dirty.

Sarah Cruz, city resident, commented this is the 3rd time she is addressing the board in almost five months and she is not giving up, she is not a quitter and remains engaged by attending work sessions and board meetings because when it comes to education she would have the same passion, tenacity and love for Scranton School District students as she has for her own education.

Ms. Cruz would work to find ways to alleviate the current ruins of the district as well as heeding the forthcoming recommendations of Dr. Finan and the Financial Recovery Advisory Committee. Ms. Cruz would help the district regain financial solvency, continue the efforts of transparency and restore the trust and dignity that the taxpayers are justly seeking.

In response to Director Duffy's question Ms. Cruz was unsure of the total budget of the Scranton School District.

March 25, 2019

Director Duffy's second question regarding the largest financial shortcoming the district faces Ms. Cruz responded that there are a lot of answers but right now what they could do is lobby and advocate for a more equitable financial funding formula with legislators in Harrisburg and hopefully restore programs such as art, library education, music and referred to Auditor General's recent visit when Mr. DePasquale suggested doing away with the bus contract which could bring immediate financial relief and if they were to look at the legalities of that it could be an option.

Director Gilmartin, with regards to the financial recovery plan, asked if there were any options Ms. Cruz would not consider.

Ms. Cruz would not agree to closing schools because it would result in having to transport those students and would increase an already stressed transportation budget.

Director Borthwick asked if Ms. Cruz would have any specific policy priorities or ideas when it comes to addressing the district's financial crisis.

Ms. Cruz thinks keeping better track of the money coming in to the district, where it is being spent, how it is being utilized and clearly keeping track of every dollar, every penny that is coming in to the district and where it is spent.

Ro Hume, grandmother, city resident and volunteer, stood before the board as an advocate for the kids, she cares about the city and the community and would like to be part of the process and part of the solution for the district rather than standing on the sidelines.

Ms. Hume said the district needs to move forward with the financial recovery plan and the focus should not be how the district got here but should be what is the best way to move forward and what is the best for the kids. Ms. Hume would bring a commitment to learning and listening to the board and the courage to make the tough decisions to bring the district forward for the kids.

Ms. Hume said there has been a lot of turnover on the board, it has been difficult for the board and the public and urged the board to consider a candidate who is going to be here after the election; there are six available spaces, there will be at least three new faces and she believes it is in the best interest of continuity for the board and public.

In response to Director Duffy's question regarding the total budget, Ms. Hume did not know.

Ms. Hume's response to Director Duffy's second question was the thing to consider is the size of the district, the makeup of the district, and get the public behind the lobbying efforts, look at more radical solutions and always with the priority that the children come first and they need to protect the interests of the children.

In response to Director Gilmartin's question, Ms. Hume would not have any deal breakers with regards to the recovery plan options and that it is impossible to make a decision about something she knows nothing about. Ms. Hume knows there are things she would probably keep "gritting her teeth" about but she has great faith in Dr. Finan and the financial recovery committee but at this point she doesn't have the knowledge to be able to say because she doesn't have enough knowledge of everything yet.

Director Borthwick asked if she has specific policy priorities or ideas when it comes to addressing the district's financial crisis.

Ms. Hume said she was not prepared to do that but she believes there is a need to look at and concentrate

March 25, 2019

on how to put the pressure on the people to give the district fair funding because our students are worth more; why is our children worth less than a child in Pittsburgh or Philadelphia.

At this time, the board members now submitted one candidate of their choice to Mrs. Orr; Sarah Hofius-Hall from the Scranton Times and Mr. Laffey, Business Manager accompanied Mrs. Orr to tally the submissions.

Mrs. Orr returned and handed the results to Mrs. Dixon who announced Mr. Ken Norton received the most submissions and asked for a motion to appoint Mr. Norton to the vacant seat.

Director Lesh made a motion, seconded by Director Borthwick and the motion passed with seven (7) affirmative and one (1) negative vote. Director Duffy voted in the negative.

The candidates were now brought back into the board room and Mrs. Dixon thanked the candidates on behalf of the entire board for stepping up to the plate and informed them that the consensus of the board was to appoint Mr. Norton. Mrs. Dixon wished those candidates running for office great luck and thanked them for their interest.

Attorney Audi now swore in Mr. Ken Norton as the newest board member and Mr. Norton took his seat to join in the work session.

The Work Session was now called to order at 7:24pm as the Special Meeting adjourned.

By: _____
Secretary