



PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Joint Meeting with Select Board

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

North Pembroke Elementary School Library

7:00 PM

Present from Select Board: Daniel Trabucco, Chair; Tracy Marino, Vice Chair; John G. Brown, Jr., Clerk; Rebecca Coletta, member; Steven Ciciotti, member

Present from Committee: Lance Kennedy, Chair; Susie Scholl, Vice Chair; Susan Bollinger, Secretary
Arrived late: David Boyle

Call to Order

Mr. Trabucco called the meeting of the Select Board to order.

Mr. Kennedy called the meeting of the School Committee to order.

Interview Applicants: Interim Appointment, School Committee

Mr. Trabucco and Mr. Kennedy discussed the format of the meeting. The Chair of the Select Board will host the meeting and will begin by recognizing the three candidates, in no particular order. Each candidate will make a two-minute opening statement prior to the question and answer portion. Mr. Trabucco will call for questions from individual board members, alternating, beginning with the School Committee and Select Board. Each candidate will conclude with a one-minute closing statement if they so choose. The candidate will then join the audience while both boards have a discussion. Mr. Trabucco will then call for nominations and seconds. Each member will have one vote.

The candidate that gets the most votes will be selected, if there's a tie there will be a runoff until a candidate has the most votes.

Mr. Michael Quinn thanked the boards for giving him the time to interview for this position. He stated has lived in Pembroke for about eight and a half years with his wife after moving from Weymouth. He has a daughter almost three and a newborn son and they are the reason he is here tonight. He stated he wants to be involved in his children's education and this is a great way to do that. by being on the School Committee. He stated his role as a Financial Planner provides a certain skill set that he could bring to the School Committee. As a Financial Planner, he has experience building budgets and experiences developing long-term financial plans as well as developing and building relationships. In addition to that, in Weymouth, he served on the Board of Trustees at his condominium association, which was a 140-unit complex, for about four years as the Treasurer and was active in developing the budgets there. He stated in this role he had to have some tough discussions with members when there were certain capital repairs that needed to be done.

Mr. Adam Murphy thanked the board for the opportunity. He stated he and his wife moved to Pembroke in 2019 and they have a six-year-old daughter attending Bryantville Elementary and a one-year-old at home. He stated he wants to drive the school system, but he is not coming in with a personal agenda of what he

wants to see accomplished. He wants to be able to participate in and be able to drive the education program in Pembroke so that young families move here and are engaged to have the best school system. He stated if he can somehow affect that change then he would love to be part of that process.

Mr. Matt Files thanked the board for being invited to participate in this process. He stated he went to kindergarten at North Pembroke and moved back with his wife and two boys in 2020. He has been an educator for the last 12 years and the decision came out of a desire to give back. He stated he believes it's important for people in education and those that support education through committees and select boards to make sure that they are working with all stakeholders in order to provide the best possible education for children in the community. He stated he is not here with an agenda and doesn't plan on running for election in May. He is here to bring his experience and expertise to the committee to help through the budget process and through the school year.

Michael Quinn, 26 Lionel Lane

Mr. Kennedy asked him what type of school system he envisions for his young children. Mr. Quinn stated he wants to have a great school system with many programs around special education and vocational. He stated there needs to be a culture in the school that promotes anti-bullying, inclusiveness community service. He added that he wants academics to be top-notch so the school system can move up in the rankings. The schools have suffered since COVID, and he wants to be sure they have a great turnaround.

Mrs. Marino asked if there was a specific issue that prompted his application for the position. Mr. Quinn stated one reason is the lack of vocational education offered to Pembroke students. He believes every student should have that option and he would like to work with the committee to help figure out a plan to get it back.

Mrs. Scholl asked him to elaborate on how he navigated a difficult conversation or particular complication. Mr. Quinn stated you have to be open with the people and you have to listen and pay attention to what they say so that you can address their concerns.

Mr. Brown asked how he would work with his colleagues and the Superintendent on advocating for budgetary constraints that exist in Pembroke. Mr. Quinn stated he would first make an appointment to meet with the Superintendent and go over this year's budget. He stated that the percentage of State funds received has been going down and that has to be figured out. Also, the non-discretionary costs are rising faster than the increase in the budget. He stated the school buildings are going to need repairs down the line. The important thing is long-term planning to figure out the wants and needs and prioritize them.

Mrs. Bollinger asked if there is one thing that he would like the school committee to do differently or better and if so what it is. He stated that the committee does a good job of being open and would suggest advertising meetings more and programs that the schools are doing. Making parents aware of what is going on in the schools so that they can get involved.

Mr. Ciciotti said it's great to have really well-qualified applicants that are willing to volunteer their time for the Town and regardless of who gets the open seat they all should get involved in the Town in some way. Mr. Ciciotti stated he is looking for stability and commitment, especially on the school committee, and asked Mr. Quinn in what ways has he already committed or planned to commit to this seat for the foreseeable future. Mr. Quinn said he DEI working group and has been to every meeting as an active participant. He added that he has been attending the school committee meetings regularly for the past several months and he has pulled papers for the election in May.

Mrs. Coletta asked what he will bring in the way of knowledge about education and what he wants to see as an education priority. Mr. Quinn stated that he has never worked in education, but he graduated from college and recently passed his CFP exam. He has read years' of school committee meeting minutes. He stated he will meet with Mrs. Obey and Ms. DeLorenzo to find out the priorities around programs and services.

Mrs. Bollinger asked about availability for subcommittee meetings and Mr. Quinn said he can be very flexible.

Mrs. Marino asked how without knowledge of special education will he listen to parents' concerns. Mr. Quinn said he would attend SEPAC meetings to learn more and answer questions. Also, he will meet with Ms. DeLorenzo to learn the priorities.

Adam Murphy, 391 School Street

Mr. Kennedy asked how he would prioritize and help the committee process what should be valued and what should be prioritized in the upcoming season budget season. Mr. Murphy stated the teachers should be paid well and should have the right supplies, and the main needs should be taken care of. In addition, make sure that students and staff feel safe at school.

Mr. Kennedy stated the committee is looking at a two million dollar budget gap right asked if he has had to make similarly difficult decisions with work.

Mr. Murphy said COVID was really detrimental to his work and 95 percent of the staff had to be furloughed. Programs were brought back slowly as costs had to be kept as minimal as possible with the limited cash flow coming in. It is now back to almost the 2019 numbers by adding services every year but there is the problem of getting staff to work so some services can't be provided. He added that it's difficult to make these decisions, but it has to be done.

Mrs. Marino asked if he were appointed tonight what would his first order of business or priority be. Mr. Murphy stated he would get up to speed with what the board has been up to over the last year, where they're heading, and get on board with the budget. As well as working on how to cover the wants and needs and do the best to provide for the students.

Mrs. Scholl stated the school committee is focusing on the budget, vocational needs, technology, and the long lingering impacts of COVID, and asked which of these types of issues is something that he feels his skill set could tackle. Mr. Murphy said the vocational piece is a very big piece of the puzzle and he would like to focus on that. He said he has access to people in the Marine industry and connections to different programs and schools. His company has its own in-house training program called Hornblower University, so he has a background in training, and this could be a connection to the vocational piece.

Mr. Brown asked how he would work with his colleagues to advocate for Pembroke and bring his experiences to life to exemplify the committee. Mr. Murphy said that he is not going to know the answer to every single thing right off the bat, but he would work with his colleagues to learn and collectively as a team to be able to come up with decisions. He stated in his past experiences he learned things as he do the job and he is always open to learning. He is willing to work with other committees to make sure everyone is advocating for the town to the State.

Mrs. Bollinger asked what he'd like the School Committee to do differently or better and how would he do it. Mr. Murphy said he would like to get students actively involved in the School Committee, so they understand what is involved in the decisions being made.

Mr. Ciciotti asked in what ways he believes that his skills and experience will best help Pembroke schools and students. Mr. Murphy said a major part of his job is to build relationships and he spends time on relationships with the local city agencies, town agencies, state and federal and the Coast Guard. He added that building relationships with the students, staff, school committee members and town members is important.

Mrs. Coletta asked how he would make difficult decisions like deciding program needs versus wants in a school system that he does not know that well. Mr. Murphy stated he would look at if/why the program needed to be cut, how to keep it by looking at other options and look at all the moving parts.

Mrs. Coletta asked if he worked on the budget at his current job.

Mr. Murphy said he manages the year-round staff of 557 and also has an operating budget for 42 vessels. Contracts and fuel costs have to be maintained and it involves constantly looking for the best prices.

Mr. Ciciotti asked how he has already committed or plans to commit to this seat for the foreseeable future. Mr. Murphy said he is going to Town Hall to start the process to run for the seat in May whether he is appointed tonight or not.

Matt Files, 132 Water Street

Mr. Kennedy asked him to explain how he can help the committee with the desire to provide vocational opportunities for students. Mr. Files stated he was a furniture maker after college and then decided to pursue the education field. He added that he is very familiar with the vocational issue and there is no easy answer. The School Committee needs to get creative in servicing the needs of students and he would love to engage in those conversations.

Mrs. Marino asked what prompted him to apply for the open seat. Mr. Files said he lives by the principle of being of service to others. This is an opportunity to fill a void to help get the committee through another budget season and school year. He added that he is a true believer in public education so it's both his lifestyle and passion for him.

Mrs. Scholl said she was intrigued that he was employed by the Elliott School of Fine Arts and Applied Arts, Duxbury Public Schools and the New England Casket Company all at one time. She asked him to talk about the overlapping period where he was doing all three jobs and how this will serve him. Mr. Files stated one strength he has is compartmentalizing and it was important to stick with his vocational roots. He strongly believes students should have vocational options as the goal of public education is to provide barrier-free access to appropriate education and appropriate is different for every student.

Mr. Brown asked if he plans to run for the seat in May. Mr. Files said he saw this as an opportunity to be of service with his expertise and background and hadn't considered it as he saw this more as an immediate need, but it is not out of the question.

Mrs. Bollinger asked if there is one thing that he would like the School Committee to do differently or better and if so how would he do it. Mr. Files stated one solution to the vocational issue is to involve the community, especially businesses, and partner for local industry needs.

Mr. Ciciotti asked why he had not considered running for the seat in May. Mr. Files said he stepped away from being the president of the teachers union in Duxbury as it weighed heavily on him, so he did not want to commit long-term to this role at this time.

Mrs. Coletta asked him to elaborate on how his experience will help him navigate a two million dollar shortfall and the near-term decisions needed. Mr. Files stated the job of the School Committee, the Superintendent and the Administration is to prioritize what the impact of a reduction in staff is going to be. He stated there's an opportunity to increase revenue, such as rentals of facilities. He added that it is important to work with legislators to express the needs and funding options from the State to help alleviate some of the situations.

Mrs. Bollinger asked about his availability for subcommittee meetings and Mr. Files said he would be available

Closing Statements

Mr. Quinn thanked the committee and stated they have a tough decision to make. He stated each of the candidates bring something different to the table. The one thing that he brings is knowledge and experience with budgets as well as relationship building. His number one priority is getting vocational education back and this will be a team effort.

Mr. Murphy stated he appreciates the time. He stated that he does not have a financial or educational background, but he does have an operational one. He comes from a very strong work ethic, and he looks forward to either collaborating with the committee as a member of the School Committee or in another capacity on a committee.

Mr. Files thanked the committee and said it is a good problem to have three qualified candidates. He stated he wants to express his passion for education and wants to do everything he can to make sure Pembroke continues to move forward. His hope is that he can help Pembroke head in the right direction.

Discussion and Deliberation by Select Board and School Committee

Mr. Kennedy stated this is a big commitment and appreciated Mr. Files' honesty. Each candidate brings a uniqueness to the table. Mr. Files with a vocational and educational background, Mr. Quinn with a budget background and Mr. Murphy with the operational background

Mr. Ciciotti stated the commitment aspect is really important for him as stability on the School Committee going forward is important. Each candidate is well qualified in different ways and would help in so many different ways. He added that when Mr. Tropeano left, the committee lost some of the budget skills, so he leans toward Mr. Quinn.

Mrs. Scholl stated agreed that each candidate brings a very unique set of skills to the table which are integral to the work operationally, financially, and educationally. She added it comes down to the level of commitment as it takes a long term to become familiar with the day-to-day work and how things operate. Mr. Files is looking to fill the seat for a few months. Mr. Murphy's operational background is important, but the financial piece is the piece that the committee is going to struggle with. Mr. Quinn stood out because he has been attending School Committee meetings for months.

Mrs. Coletta stated her one concern is that Mr. Quinn's involvement seems a little more political. She added that there is value in someone wanting to be of service in a different way. She stated that dealing with a 30+ million dollar school budget is different from personal finances. She stated she is leaning towards Mr. Murphy because of his operations experience and because he has not come in with an agenda. Also, he has ties in the vocational world as well as the ability to understand large operating budgets affected by contractual and regulatory requirements. In addition, he knows what it takes to make some very difficult

decisions like cutting services. Mrs. Coletta went on the state that Mr. Files can contribute between now and May in terms of the vocational piece and his knowledge of school budgets.

Mrs. Bollinger stated she agrees with Mr. Coletta about Mr. Files and that all three candidates have amazing qualifications. She stated that Mr. Murphy's operational experience would be beneficial to the School Committee as well. She added that the level of commitment is also important to her, and Mr. Quinn has shown his commitment by attending many School Committee meetings and pulling his papers for the election. She stated she votes for Mr. Quinn.

Mr. Ciciotti stated that he is active on social media and is not aware of anything concerning that Mrs. Coletta is referring to. He stated people have different political opinions and he has not I've not seen or heard of anything concerning.

Mrs. Mariano stated the three candidates have very different backgrounds and all come with strong attributes that would be positive for the School Committee. She stated she prefers a member with an educational background however, she does feel the same way about the commitment. It would be a disservice to have someone come in for a short time and the board will have to teach a new member in May. She added that she is torn between Mr. Quin and Mr. Murphy.

At 8:51, Mr. Trabucco moved to open nominations for the appointment of an interim School Committee member. Mrs. Bollinger nominated Mr. Quinn; Mr. Ciciotti seconded. Ms. Coletta nominated Adam Murphy; no second. One nomination for Michael Quinn; nominated and seconded. Mr. Trabucco called for a vote regarding the nomination of Mr. Quinn by roll call vote:

Voting Yes: Mr. Kennedy, Mrs. Scholl, Mrs. Bollinger, Mr. Boyle, Mr. Trabucco, Mr. Brown Jr, Mrs. Marino, Mr. Ciciotti

Voting No: none

Abstaining: Ms. Coletta

Absent: none

At 8:53, Mr. Brown moved to adjourn the Select Board. Mrs. Coletta seconded.

Voting Yes: Mr. Trabucco, Mr. Brown Jr, Mrs. Marino, Mr. Ciciotti, Mrs. Coletta

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

At 8:53, Mrs. Bollinger moved to adjourn the School Committee. Mrs. Scholl seconded.

Voting Yes: Mr. Kennedy, Mrs. Scholl, Mrs. Bollinger, Mr. Boyle,

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

APPROVED: February 7, 2023