

The special meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence was called to order at 6:00 p.m. on July 21, 2020, in the New Providence High School/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, by the Board President, Mrs. Cuccaro.

Present on roll call were Rebecca Coniglio, Bernadette Cuccaro, Robert Dinerman, Mary Misiukiewicz, Adam Smith and Joseph Walsh. Also present were Dr. David Miceli, Superintendent of Schools; James Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and four members of the public.

Mrs. Cuccaro led the salute to the flag.

Mrs. Cuccaro read the following statement:

This is a public meeting of the Board of Education of the Borough of New Providence. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with PL 1975, Chapter 231.

Whenever the business of the Board requires it to convene to Closed Session, the session will begin no later than 10:00 p.m. At the conclusion of the need for Closed Session, the Board will reconvene to the public portion of the meeting. At that time the Board will complete any other business that may be before it and the public will then be given an opportunity to be heard before the meeting is adjourned.

The following notice was posted on June 29, 2020:

The New Providence Board of Education will hold a **Special Meeting** on Tuesday, July 20, 2020 beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the New Providence High School/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, for the purposes of interviewing candidates to fill the open board member seat. No action will take place at this meeting.

### **Interviews for Open Board Member Seat**

Mrs. Cuccaro welcomed each candidate for the open Board member seat. Each candidate was given an opportunity to give an opening statement and was asked the following questions by the following Board members:

#### **Question #1 by Mrs. Cuccaro:**

An individual school board member has no authority; only the Board as a whole can make decisions for the District. What skills or traits will allow you to contribute to effective operations of the Board as a whole?

#### **Question #2 by Mrs. Misiukiewicz:**

What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our District to address? Why do you see these as needs? If you could add one thing to our curriculum, what would it be?

**Question #3 by Mr. Walsh:**

The New Providence School District's annual budget is approximately \$43 million. Do you have budget experience? How should a school board balance the need to provide a quality education with the need to respond to the local taxpayer burden?

**Question #4 by Mr. Dinerman:**

Is there a particular issue or concern that motivates you to serve on the Board of Education? What do you hope to accomplish?

**Question #5 by Mr. Smith:**

One of the roles of the Board of Education is to negotiate the contracts with our various associations. What do you believe is a fair yearly raise for teachers in New Providence?

**Question #6 by Mrs. Coniglio:**

How have you exhibited your willingness to volunteer your time while living in New Providence?

**Question # 7 by Mrs. Cuccaro:**

If you were asked to make a decision on a legal issue with a school employee, how would you go about making that decision?

Each candidate started with an opening statement, answered the questions above and ended with a closing statement. Below is a summary of the statements and responses from each of the candidates.

**Mr. Ilya Meyzin**

Mr. Meyzin has a B.A. in Philosophy with distinction from Yale University. Through his career in strategy/management and military service, he has developed strong leadership, communication, problem solving, negotiation, and analytical skills. As Vice President of Data Science Strategy & Operations with Dun and Bradstreet, he is responsible for articulating and implementing innovative strategic capabilities designed to better serve their customers and grow revenue.

As a parent of two AWR students, he has an interest in contributing his time and skills to the school district's continuous educational effectiveness and financial stability. The District has given his children the best opportunities and experiences he could ask for as a parent and he is looking forward to giving back, especially during these unprecedented times. Mr. Meyzin is eager to help the Board of Education with its important work by bringing his in-depth experience across all core business functions and operations. All children in our school system today will spend a significant portion of their careers in the second half of the 21st century. The world's ever-accelerating pace of change suggests that their generation will face challenges that do not even have names yet. To position our children for success in this unprecedented environment, our job is to arm them with a strong foundation of intellectual, social, financial and emotional skills. Carl Sagan often talked about marrying the wonder and skepticism in the mind of every school child as the principal goal of public education; if we help our children embrace the joy of learning and discovery, and provide them with solid critical thinking skills- the 21st century will be their oyster.

Mr. Meyzin commented that he wants to be more involved in his children's education. He volunteers in the New Providence Soccer Club where he coaches his kids. He has numerous leadership experiences.

Mr. Meyzin commented that the teachers went above and beyond what they were expected to do, a lot of surprises and direction. It is important however to get back to some sort of normalcy. He commented that he is passionate about education. He donates 95% of his books and the rest he keeps for his kids to have. He commented that he would like the STEM curriculum structure to be broken down potentially by age group. He commented that the salaries and compensation for teachers should highly be considered. He commented that legal issues in the District should be guided by counsel. Mr. Meyzin thanked the Board for their consideration.

### **Jennifer Killea**

Mrs. Killea is currently a member of the New Providence Education Foundation and believes that being on the Board of Education is an exceptional next step to serve the District. She resides in New Providence with her husband Brian and two young children. Her son, Bowen will be entering the third grade at Allen W. Roberts this fall and her daughter, Evelyn is in nursery school.

Mrs. Killea has just celebrated her 18 year anniversary with JPMorgan Asset Management. She is a Managing Director in the Global Strategic Relationships Group. In this role, she works with various teams within JPMorgan to deliver investment capabilities and intellectual capital to Broker-dealers and financial advisors throughout the country. She has a B.S. in Finance from Marist College and an M.B.A. with a dual concentration in finance and marketing at Fordham University.

Mrs. Killea commented that collaboration is key in working together and being able to decide as a Board. She commented that part of what is needed in the District as far as budgeting is to consider air conditioning. She recognizes that taxes are high in New Providence and as a resident she knows it is complicated, but important to stakeholders to know what's important. She commented that she would like to see STEM go deeper in subject matter.

Mrs. Killea commented that she will come into the Board with eyes wide open and learn from the rest of the members. She commented that teachers' salaries, coming off from this year, teachers should be rewarded for their success. We should give more incentive for a tough year we have had and ahead. She commented that legal issues should be referred to someone with experience, knowing not to comment when the situation is for someone else that knows what to advise. She thanks the Board for the opportunity.

### **Amy Lepre**

Mrs. Lepre moved to New Providence in 2004. She has three children, a senior, freshman and a 6th grader at AWR. She commented that she is a product of private school, but moved here for the public school system.

Mrs. Lepre was Allen W. Roberts PTA President. She is a dynamic, collaborative and hard-working volunteer leader with nearly ten years of experience helping to drive change and improve the educational experience in New Providence. She has passion for volunteering with a broad-based liberal arts education, professional experience in event planning and an international mindset from living abroad for two years. She has deep experience with many of New Providence's administrative support functions including the Police Department, the Department of Public Works, the Borough Administrator, School Administration and the Board of Education.

Starting as an individual volunteer and ultimately becoming the PTA President, she contributed countless hours to PTA committees and events including the annual Spring Fling fundraiser, the Fun Fair, the Talent Show, Picture Day, 6th Grade Committee, STEM Fair and the Book Fair. She participated in the selection process for Principal, Vice Principal and Teacher of the Year.

Mrs. Lepre founded the AWR Safety Committee, created a weekly newsletter called "The Rambler", enhanced the social media presence for AWR, awarded gold status for the US Department of Transportation's SAfe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 2016 representing the first time a school in New Providence had achieved this level. The achievement and maintenance of gold status ultimately led to New Providence receiving a SRTS grant in 2019.

Mrs. Lepre commented that one of the priorities for the District is to learn how to teach and know how Generation Z learns. How do we target them to technology, but not too much of it and teach more hands on strategies. She also wants the District to teach more of Social Emotional Learning. She commented that she understands budgeting, to pick and choose what is important and it is also important to understand the burden of the taxpayers in town.

Mrs. Lepre commented that one of her goals and believes that is important is to be transparent and learn how to inform families, using mobile apps and social media, to communicate through them in a way that will benefit the community. She commented on negotiations. She wants to make sure that we are being fair to the teachers and staff, making sure our district is comparable to surrounding districts. On legal matters, she commented that these should be addressed by counsel or someone with experience. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to be considered.

### **Kevin Marusic**

Mr. Marusic commented that he is very much aligned with the goals and focus of the organization and would like to use the skills he has gained in his professional career to help the community during this transition period. He commented that he does not wish to run for the permanent position in this coming election cycle. He commented that he thinks this appointment should be considered independent of future board makeup and with an eye towards immediate impact to assist upcoming planning.

Mr. Marusi worked for AT&T for more than 22 years, serving in a number of capacities in sales, operations and customer service in leadership positions. He has recently led their healthcare sales organization and has intimate knowledge and resources at his disposal that he believes would be advantageous for planning for the upcoming school year.

Mr. Marusi commented, personally, he and his wife Pam have lived in town for the last 16 years, where he and she volunteered in many capacities. They have two children who attend NPHS. This community has been extraordinarily good to them and feel this is an opportunity to help in another way.

Mr. Marusi graduated from Siena college while playing Division 1 Lacrosse and has his master's in technology management from Stevens Institute of Technology.

Mr. Marusi's priority for the District is getting the children and teachers back in school. Emotionally it will benefit everyone. He commented that it is important for everyone to address the anxiety of the children and find resources to help them. How do we move forward? He commented that the

District's curriculum has nothing lacking, but we need compassion for what is going on right now. He commented that he has motivation to be in for the short term and understands that he needs to step up to speak to broader audiences. He understands that we as a District have restrictions on what we can do, everyone is valuable but we have to know what is fair to teachers and staff. He commented that in legal matters, we need to lean on counsel. He thanks the Board for the opportunity and consideration.

### **William Dibble**

Mr. Dibble commented that he enjoyed his time serving the Board of Education in New Providence and would like to serve again.

Mr. Dibble is an analytical, business-minded professional with extensive experience devising, deploying, and strengthening HR policies in line with aggressive corporate requirements. Articulate leader skilled in directing multidisciplinary teams and creating cultures that encourage mutual respect, collaboration and innovation.

Mr. Dibble commented that he is impressed and supports what we have done in the District. He commented that budgeting is all about communication. He commented that we need to talk to the community and get the message early so that there is input from them.

Mr. Dibble stated that he is motivated to give his time back to the Board and serve. He commented that in negotiating, he believes the payscale is unfair and we should give them as much as the budget allows us. He believes that the best way to handle legal issues is to get advice from Counsel. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to be heard.

### **Amanda Marano**

Mrs. Marano grew up in New Providence and recognizes the importance and value that our school system affords not only to individual students, but the community and its reputation as a whole. This is one of the key factors in why she and her husband chose to raise their family in New Providence and hopes that it remains a priority in the years ahead.

Having spent her career working in Business Development and Advertising Sales for some of the world's leading news brands in NYC, she understands the ever-changing technology landscape that has affected all areas of our lives-- from remote work, telemedicine and most recently in "distance learning" for an entire generation of children. As a mother of two young sons, she is acutely aware of the concerns and challenges that families have and will face in the coming years as we navigate a post-COVID world. In addition to how to incorporate technological changes to teaching and communications, the BOE will continue to face the growing concerns of an aging infrastructure in all the school buildings and the looming ramifications of what the state mandated affordable housing will do to our community and potential overcrowding issues.

Mrs. Marano commented that she understands the role of the Board of Education is to oversee that the school district functions and adheres to the state's mandates while keeping the best interests of the whole community. As she has deep roots within the community, she has found herself in a unique position that she had the perspective and understanding from both the "older" generation, in addition to the "newer" generation of families that moved here, for the same reason that her parents did in 1987.

The value that I could bring to the Board is through bridging the gap between a generational divide and helping navigate how the BOE and school system communicate with residents, parents and students.

Mrs. Marano commented that she has success in her career because she knows how to listen, build relations, grow her network and work across teams to build great programs. She cares deeply about New Providence and its schools and hopes to help make a difference in the coming year.

Mrs. Marano's immediate priority for the District, which she believes needs to be addressed, is the mental health of the students. Going through something that we had never done before, we do not know who has anxiety and who will have problems. We need Life Skills in our curriculum and mental health to all kids, it would make a world of difference. In the District's budget, we need to prioritize where and what is needed, fundraising to help the gap. She is motivated to give her time to serve on the Board of Education and has filed paperwork for the coming election. During negotiations, we need to look at the budget and look at what is fair and what we can do budget wise. We need to speak with legal counsel and discuss situations as they occur and look at the facts upon coming up with a decision.

Mrs. Marano thanked the Board for the opportunity and consideration.

**CLOSED SESSION**

Mr. Walsh moved to adopt the following resolution:

This body shall on July 21, 2020 at 8:04 p.m. in the New Providence High/Middle School Media Center, 35 Pioneer Drive, discuss in closed session, pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act, specific matters which may generally be described as follows:

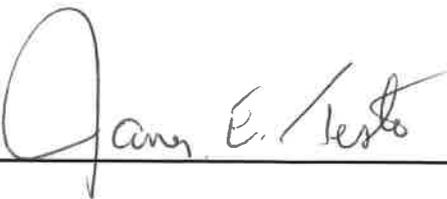
- Personnel- Discussion of Board Member Interviews

The minutes of the discussion in closed session of the aforementioned matters may be disclosed to the public after final determination of action has been reached.

Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

**Adjournment**

There being no other business before the Board, on a motion by Mr. Dinerman, seconded by Mrs. Coniglio, and carried unanimously, Mrs. Cuccaro declared the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.




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James E. Testa, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary  
7/21/2020 Special Board Meeting