



Mission Statement: To support and challenge all students to achieve personal and academic excellence in a student-centered environment.

BERLIN-BOYLSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

4:30 pm

Tahanto Regional Middle/High School

Multi Purpose Room

Stream link <https://www.youtube.com/@bbrsdlive2893/streams>

This meeting may be recorded, and your image or voice may be broadcast.

School Committee: Mrs. Meagan Grill, Chair; Mrs. Julie Lee, Vice Chair; Mrs. Lori-Anne Hart, District Clerk; Mr. Michael Totman; Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti; Mrs. Lisa Mair

Administration: Mr. John Campbell, Berlin Memorial Principal; Ms. Jannel Fitzpatrick, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Ms. Renee Legendre, Tahanto Middle/High School Assistant Principal; Mr. Paul Mara, Technology Coordinator; Mr. Michael Wood, Interim Director of Finance & Operations;

Also Present: Mr. Al Ganem and members of the public.

I. Call to Order - Mrs. Meagan Grill called the meeting to order at 4:38pm.

II. Public Comments - none

III. Communications - none

IV. Appointment of a Director of Finance and Operations (Vote) – Mrs. Grill wanted the Interim Superintendent to have input on the new Finance Director decision and postponed the vote.

IV. Interviews of Interim Superintendent Candidates – Mrs. Grill explained Mr. Michael Wood is in the Interim Finance Director position and NEASC recommended Mr. Albert Ganem as a candidate.

1. Albert Ganem – Mr. Ganem introduced himself to the committee. He has been in education for over 30 years starting out as a teacher in Worcester. He has served as a superintendent in the past. He is currently the Assistant Principal and Director of Admissions at Venereni Academy. The committee asked the candidate a series of questions to include curriculum and mental health transparency by Mrs. Lisa Mair. Mr. Ganem spoke to make sure vetting is done for curriculum in the schools and making sure

people understand that and having transparency with parents. He felt parents should have the right to opt out.

Mr. Totman inquired about experiences in the past he would bring to the table and what would be his priorities before school starts and the first 90 days. His first goal is to sit in with the administrative team and prepare for the start of school. Second, to meet with the Facilities Director to make sure the schools are ready and he would want to get out to each of the schools. The 6-month plan would be to look into the school improvement plan and acting on those items as the focus. Additionally, he would plan to get into the community to get to know people and what their needs are.

Mrs. Julie Lee asked how is the interim different from the full superintendent and how can district grow. He noted some interims may come in too just keep things afloat, his idea is to be completely invested and keep the district moving forward.

Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti asked what culture had he created in the past and would make at BBRSD. Mr. Ganem noted it is all about communication and being present in the schools to get to know the teachers, parents, and students and being available to meet with people.

Mrs. Lori Hart asked what made him want to join BBRSD and how to help the community feel confident in the future – Mr. Ganem felt BBRSD had good schools with room for improvement to become great and felt he was up to helping move it forward to the next level. The community is a big piece to get involved with and to let them know what is taking place in the district since they are the taxpayers.

Mrs. Grill inquired about a past report to the Ethics Board. Mr. Ganem explained during Covid they were looking for a teacher to help cover a block and his wife offered to help. He reported it to the ethics committee and they learned that if you hire someone you are related to the school committee needs to officially know.

Mr. Ganem had several questions for the committee regarding the budget process. Mrs. Grill and Mr. John Campbell explained the process BBRSD goes through. Zero based budgets were also discussed.

Mr. Ganem inquired what would the school committee want him to be exemplary at in one years' time. The committee felt being exemplary at the budget and getting the community to understand and buy in. It was also mentioned that helping getting the students where they need to be after high school.

Compassion and hard work are qualities he looks for when he has hired in the past and what he wants to bring that to the job, if hired.

2. Michael Wood – Mr. Michael Wood introduced himself to the group. He has been a superintendent for 22 years in a number of school districts. He felt leadership is a critical skill set of bringing the school community together and how they work as the community. The Interim Superintendent role is to bridge where you've been and get it ready for the next person and leaving it as a better place. He felt he has the

time to commit to the position and being available to the schools and the community and puts his heart and soul into his work.

To answer Mrs. Mair's question on transparency, notifying parents, and allowing to opt out Mr. Wood noted it is a challenging time and they need to know their audience and go to the core of what they have to teach with the Massachusetts frameworks. They have to figure out how to be respectful to the community and how can they communicate that. He feels they need to have options, communication, and being available to have conversations. He is a big fan of weekly emails to parents about upcoming materials and curriculum.

To answer Mr. Totman's question about regional school district experiences and his immediate priorities and 90-day goal. His goal in the first weeks would be to know what the plan is for the year and having good people in those roles and to unpack what the school is about and where it is headed. In 90 days, his plan would be to develop relationships with the committee and with the two towns to make sure things are transparent and figure out how to put a support system in place. He has learned in the past about engagement and going with students to make sure they get to the place they need to be.

Mr. Wood addressed Julie's question about district growth and getting students where they need to be. He spoke that they key to a good interim is someone who advocates what is already on the roadmap and move that forward.

Mr. Wood spoke to Mrs. Degliaberti's question about culture about promoting an open culture and a feeling of being approachable and fair and so people feel like they can come to Central Office.

Mrs. Hart asked Mr. Wood what made him want to position and how to help community feel confident about the future. Mr. Wood spoke to being excited about the challenge and how to figure out what is moving forward. He spoke to that BBRSD is similar to other districts and that he has helped figure out those challenges in the past. He felt the key is transparency and communication.

Mrs. Degliaberti asked about his departure from Nashoba in 2015. He noted that a new school committee chair came on board and was asked to leave without explanation. It allowed him to scale back and spend time with his family at a difficult time.

Michael noted he would want to development the relationship between the school committee and the superintendent.

V. To Appoint Interim Superintendent (Vote) –

The school committee wants to get the ball rolling with Ms. Costello's departure being at the end of August and the new school year beginning.

The committee went over things they liked about each candidate. Both candidates bring good specific experience to the table and have served in this role before. Mr. Wood has been the interim several times before. They liked Mr. Ganem's energy and explanations and book study groups he implemented in the past. Mr. Ganem brings new eyes and Mr. Wood brings experience in the district and still wants to stay to move it forward. They felt the idea of being in the community was a positive idea and moving the district forward. The spoke that the hard part is that each candidate had different strengths.

A full search would still be done for a full-time superintendent. Mrs. Hart thanked Mrs. Grill for all of her work as chair and the time she has put in. **Motion made to appoint Mr. Al Ganem as interim superintendent made by Mr. Michael Totman and seconded by Mrs. Lisa Mair. Members of the committee felt good with the recommendation from MASC of Mr. Ganem as interim. Roll call vote: Mrs. Lisa Mair – aye, Mr. Michael Totman – aye, Mrs. Julie Lee – nay, Mrs. Lori Hart – aye, Mrs. Jessica Degliaberti – aye, Mrs. Meagan Grill – aye, 5-1, motion passes.**

The committee will meet Thursday with Mr. Ganem to discuss a contract.

VI. Adjourn – Motion to adjourn made by Mrs. Lee and seconded by Mrs. Hart, 6-0 motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 6:25pm.

Future Meetings

Upcoming Meeting • August, 27, 2024 Regular Meeting