

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 625
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
360 Colborne Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102, and**

Available Streaming Online at www.spps.org/boe and Saint Paul Cable Channel 16

**December 5, 2024
4:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Halla Henderson, Chair.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Education: J. Vue, C. Allen, Y. Carrillo, C. Franco, E. Valliant, H. Henderson, U. Ward
Interim Superintendent Thein

C. Long, General Counsel; S. Dahlke, Assistant Clerk

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF THE MAIN AGENDA

MOTION: Director Henderson moved approval of the order of the main agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Franco.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes
Director Ward	Yes

4. 2024 SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE

Chair Henderson then introduced this update, and welcomed Steve Griesbach from BWP and members of the task force to present this information.

Background information was provided, including information on the selection of the search firm, BWP, and appointment of interim superintendent, Dr. John Thein, as well as extensive feedback from the community that influenced the parameters of the search process. The timeline of the superintendent search was also

reviewed, starting in the Spring of 2024, and will end in December 2024 with the selection of the preferred candidate, followed by contract information and start date determinations in January 2025. The members of the Superintendent Search Task Force were also shared. Information on the first round of interviews was also detailed, including a highly qualified pool of candidates who best matched the leadership profile and stakeholder priorities, and robust discussion among task force members.

The three top candidates are:

- Dr. Brenda Cassellius
- Dr. Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed
- Dr. Stacie Stanley

Information was then shared about each candidate, including background, current role, areas of focus, and education.

The full presentation can be found in the BoardBook.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION:

- Director Franco appreciated the representation on the task force, and noted that this process has been strong and is very confident in the process that was developed together. Initially with the task force, there were 18 folks and it was an opportunity to see the diversity of our district and to see those committed to the success of all students and groups represented. He echoed Director Henderson's appreciation and believes that many folks in the room with a common goal and different perspectives of candidates was critical. It was also important for the group to develop questions, and get to know each other to align the leadership profile and questions and to ensure that the questions asked in this round were derived from community. He also thanked the thousands who participated in engagement sessions and surveys and other data sources to inform our priorities.
- It was also noted the documentation within the process was important, and ensuring that each step was documented, especially in the revision of questions, where the original ones were also kept. It was an opportunity to see the transformation and impacts, and the intentionality baked into the process which was critical. This Board entrusted 18 people to deliver and we want to make sure their job would be difficult, and that is very evident, and the job to choose the superintendent will be difficult and there was a strong pool of candidates who are interested in the work occurring in the District.
- Director Ward noted that he feels fortunate to be a part of the task force, and the members approached the work in a genuine, open and collaborative way who were driven towards finding a consensus. Everyone's opinions were validated and heard. One of the most important roles of a Board is to pick the superintendent, and though there was frustration expressed at the legalities of certain parts of the process, the way this has been run has been great. It has been amazing to see a task force for parents, community members, labour groups and students, as well as three board members, who did an amazing job with rich conversations. As part of the discussion, there was alignment to the rubric. He is excited about the process and the end product, and there are three great candidates to consider.
- Director Carrillo thanked BWP for their work on the process, and helping with coaching and understanding the implications of questions. He noted the building of a leadership profile through community engagement, and hopes that this process will allow the community to feel connected and that their fingerprints are in this work. He also noted the role of the Board in making decisions, and that community input is more than at the ballot box - it is everything. We meet in the middle to be transparent and decisions cannot be made alone in a vacuum. It's impactful

to connect and he shares his seat with many voices to learn and make decisions with input from the community. He hopes that the new superintendent will be one to lead us to a great place, and he thanked everyone for their input, and to Dr. Thein to lead us with a steady hand.

- Director Vue requested information on the state statute that applies to this work and how it was adhered to. Response: It is under the Data Practices Act, Statute 13 on applicant data, which states that the names of applicants shall be private data, except when applicants are considered by the appointing authority for public employment, then the individual is to be interviewed by the authority (the Board of Education in this case), and when they become a finalist, the names become public.
 - How did we adhere to this in this case? Response: BWP screened the initial applicants, and based on the criteria, brought forward 7 candidates to be presented to the task force. Because a majority of the Board was not at those meetings, it was not a quorum, and therefore, it was not subject to the requirement to be made public. Candidates applied through the BWP website and then held by BWP. The board members also agreed that the process with the task force and the quality of the applicants would be stronger if their names were kept private until such time. The names introduced tonight have significant roles in other non-profits or school districts, and there may have been a hesitancy to apply if their names became public further upstream in the process.
- Director Allen requested information on the total number of candidates who applied. Response: There were 21 candidates who applied, from 13-14 different states, with a larger majority from the state of Minnesota.
- Director Allen thanked everyone involved, including community members, board members, and the task force members. It was so valuable to have community involvement. She is excited about the three strong candidates.
- Director Vue requested information on the primary challenges to come to a consensus and how those were addressed. Response: During deliberations, the task force highlighted the pros and cons for each, with weaknesses and strengths, and the candidates' responses. It was a difficult decision to get to the last two candidates. Task force members are glad that everyone on the task force spoke up and spoke about what they liked or didn't like. Every voice was heard and they were able to speak their piece. It was also a teamwork approach, and when the group didn't agree, board members facilitated the discussion to think of different ways to come together as a group. There were multiple votes which also helped to ensure everyone's voice was heard. Members were also respectful of each other.
- Director Vue also noted questions on ways in which the leadership profile was used in the process. Response: When the task force first met, there were a number of activities and walking through the profile accompanied by data from community. They were then able to take that information and determine the main points and craft questions. Within the rubric, there were sections highlighted from the leadership profile with corresponding questions.
- Director Vue also posed a question about improvements within the process for the next superintendent search. Response: Task members noted they wished there was more representation within the candidate pool for those who look like our community, and that more time was given to applicants so that they could apply or be opened to more communities.
- Director Vue also requested information on the role of BWP and their support of the task force. Response: BWP's role was consultant and facilitator of the interviews. They were not present in interview until deliberations began, and the role was to be the moderator and facilitator. They were agnostic in the process, and did not champion any one candidate, and the goal was to make certain that the task force left with a belief that the people presented at tonight's meeting were the candidates that the task force came together to agree upon as the three finalists. He noted that the group worked hard on that, and it was a challenging decision, but they listened to each other,

and people changed perspectives on candidates by listening to each other and the different conclusions based on evidence. He was an outside observer in aew of the work together and decisions that were made together. His role was also to ensure the process moved forward, all voices were heard, and everyone wanted to share their thoughts, especially the students who were strong throughout the discussion. He also helped with facilitation tools and votes to get the discussion going. His role was facilitator, moderator, not passing judgment or contributing to the slate of candidates presented.

- Director Carrillo noted the hard work of the past two days and wondering if the task orce felt there was a presentation of a robust enough set of candidates and they felt comfortable with these three going before the Board. Response: Yes, we are confident in these individuals, but next time do hope for better representation because our district is very diverse. They feel confident on the three finalists presented, including their experience and eagerness to work in SPPS.
- Director Carrillo noted that he is excited about the three candidates, and noted the questions on the representations of the pool of candidates. The District needs to look at “building its bench” and how to ensure we are investing in diversifying folks that are going to be moving into positions here and in other places. The task force members noted that all seven candidates would be able to do the job of superintendent, and there was a lot of rich discussion and positions did change throughout the process. All three candidates are strong leaders, and they all have very different strengths. They are all incredibly strong and brilliant leaders, and we want students to feel seen and heard, and we see that in all three candidates.
- Director Valliant noted her appreciation for the involvement of parents, and engaging parents. She thanked the team and is excited for this work.
- Director Franco also thanked the district staff for their work thus far, including staff from Office of Family Engagement and Community Partnerships to provide support and childcare for task force members, Chief Turner for her work in ensuring alignment with BWP, to Kaying Thao and Sarah Dahlke for their work to ensure the interviews ran smoothly. He also thanked Chair Henderson for her work. Director Ward echoed the appreciation.

BF 34065 Selection of Candidates to be Interviewed by the Board of Education for the Position of Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent

MOTION: Director Henderson moved to approve the recommendation and that the Board of Education selects the following candidates, Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Dr. Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed, and Dr. Stacie Stanley, to be interviewed by the Board of Education for the position of Saint Paul Public Schools Superintendent. The motion was seconded by Director Carrillo.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes
Director Ward	Yes

5. ADJOURNMENT

Director Henderson moved to adjourn the meeting; Director Franco seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by roll call vote:

Director Vue	Yes
Director Allen	Yes
Director Carrillo	Yes
Director Franco	Yes
Director Valliant	Yes
Director Henderson	Yes
Director Ward	Yes

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

For clarity and to facilitate research, these minutes reflect the order of the original Agenda and not necessarily the time during the meeting the items were discussed.

Prepared and submitted by:

Sarah Dahlke

Assistant Clerk, St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education