

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE

### (Official Report)

#### Special Meeting

October 16, 2015

Called for 12:30 PM in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of Superintendent Finalist candidate interviews with the School Committee

Members Present: Ms. Cronin, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding, Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Osborne and Mayor Maher

Also present: Ms. Barbara Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 12:40 PM.

Mayor Maher made opening remarks and explained how the three (3) finalists for Superintendent of Schools were selected. He noted that each of the three (3) finalists spent the day in the district visiting the schools and meeting with the staff and students at each level. The finalists also heard from the community at large at a community forum held at the CRLS auditorium on October 15, 2015.

Using a round-robin format, the Members interviewed the three (3) finalist candidates from questions drawn from HYA and the SSIC as well as unscripted questions of their individual choosing as follows:

- Can you provide specific examples of how you spearheaded student achievement where you directly impacted, including but not limited to MCAS, particularly where you show any evidence on closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities, African American students and low income students.
- Please talk about instructional leadership and how you have and or will mentor, support and evaluate principals to get the best from teachers while paying attention to accountability and at the same time autonomy.
- We have four (4) upper schools which feed into one (1) high school. How would you ensure that we have equitable instruction in these schools and that all of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders arrive at high school prepared?
- As an educator, how do you define equity?
- Some upper school principals indicated that students are coming into 6<sup>th</sup> grade from feeder schools not prepared to do 6<sup>th</sup> grade work. If you were superintendent, what would be your response?
- Some parents feel that their children are labeled as bad behavior students; some of this could be related to cultural differences. Other parents feel that their child's learning time is being taken away due to another child's behavior. Have you encountered this before and how could you reassure all of our parents?
- What was your relationship with the teachers' union and how would you define the role for the teachers' union in Cambridge as you see it?

- How would you tackle short and long term planning for the district and how would you move our district to be the number one urban district in the state and/or the country.
- How do we make sure that our district is in alignment to support the vision that we set for ourselves?
- Can you talk about those difficult moments when you need to make the tough call to move people out of certain positions?
- Can you describe your knowledge and experience of school finance? Describe the budget making process you have used. What has been your experience with budget management, budgetary controls, and budget reductions?
- How would you and the School Committee come together to identify the priorities and resource them? How would you advance student achievement through the budget process and how would you consider adding new budget initiatives or phasing out old programs?
- How do you view and work with subcommittees of the School Committee?
- What is your philosophy on students with disabilities and your experience if any in changing practices in the environments that you have worked in?
- Would you be comfortable evaluating principals specifically in the middle schools and in the level 3 schools?
- Talk about instructional leadership and how you mentor, support and evaluate principals to ensure that they have accountability and autonomy.
- Talk about a conflict you had and how you handled it.
- Where do you see your role in utilizing the partnerships that exist in the community?
- Would you be willing as superintendent to have a mentor?
- Talk about relationships between the School Committee and the Superintendent.

The Mayor welcomed Dr. Páez (12:45 PM).

**Dr. Sergio Páez**  
**Current Position: Consultant (former Superintendent of Schools)**  
**Holyoke Public Schools**

Dr. Páez offered opening remarks about his observations in Cambridge over the past few days. He spoke about the great experience he has had during his visit in Cambridge and he could see firsthand the culture of the City and the tremendous potential it has. He indicated that he heard the community's strong desire to have a world language program in the elementary schools. He also noted that the community has a great interest in making connections with private sector for real world opportunities for our students and that we should be maximizing those opportunities. He stated that the Cambridge School district could be 100% at level 1 within two years.

Mayor Maher asked Dr. Páez to provide the Members with an explanation of his experience in Holyoke as Superintendent and the reasons why it recently went into receivership. Dr. Páez explained that he took the job to try to improve the performance of the Holyoke Public Schools which is one of the poorest-

performing districts in the state. He noted that they were making progress over the two years in which he was Superintendent but the DESE Commissioner would not let the city delay receivership.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Páez stated that it has been a dream to be here as a person and as an immigrant and that he is very happy with the successes in his life. He stated that he feels that Cambridge is a perfect fit for him and would be very happy and proud to be our superintendent. He thanked the Committee for this professional and accelerated process.

The Chair declared a fifteen minute recess.  
The time for recess having expired, the Chair reconvened the meeting.

The Mayor welcomed Dr. Kenneth N. Salim (2:23 PM).

**Dr. Kenneth N. Salim**  
**Current Position: Superintendent of Schools**  
**Weymouth Public Schools**

Dr. Kenneth N. Salim offered opening remarks about his observations in Cambridge over the past few days. He spoke about the wonderful opportunity he had to get to know the various stakeholders in the community, to speak to students and to hear the perspective of teachers and administrators. He also indicated that he had the chance to talk to parents after the community forum. He noted that it is apparent to him of our clear commitment to educational excellence and equity at all levels in this district. In speaking to students, he said that he found them to be very informed about the achievement gap. He spoke of his observation of the students' incredible pride in CRLS and the belief in diversity and respect that exists among them. He shared that when he thinks about areas of opportunities for the system, he thinks about the instructional gaps that may contribute to the achievement gap and asks if all students have access to a rigorous curriculum and instruction and to teachers that are using culturally proficient and relevant practices in the classroom. Dr. Salim talked about the uniqueness of the Cambridge community and the possibility of maximizing partnerships both in business and higher education.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Salim stated that he valued the time spent in Cambridge and hopes to bring to Cambridge his passion and belief of educational excellence for every student and to help Cambridge become the national model for closing achievement and access gaps.

Student School Committee members Ben Austin and Griffin Andres joined the meeting (2:40 PM).

The Chair declared a fifteen minute recess.  
The time for recess having expired, the Chair reconvened the meeting.

The Mayor welcomed Dr. Stacy L. Scott (4:05 PM).

**Dr. Stacy L. Scott**  
**Current Position: Superintendent of Schools**  
**Framingham Public Schools**

Dr. Stacy L. Scott offered opening remarks about his observations in Cambridge over the past few days. He spoke about it being a pleasure to walk through some of our schools and marveled at the work our teachers are doing to build learning. He shared his excitement with our lab classrooms and his observations that Cambridge is using tools to create a clear definition of quality instruction. He commented on our talented principals who are committed to students and who think strategically. He shared that as Superintendent, he doesn't schedule anything first thing in the morning so that he can be in the buildings. Dr. Scott mentioned that he heard from some of our principals that they feel slightly hindered about their need for additional support guidance, resources, and coaching. He shared his amazement with our high school and that our students are articulate, engaged, motivated and have an appreciation for mentoring. He noted his excitement about the ways CRLS students are supporting

difference in the community. He found that the Innovation Agenda has had some positive impact on the district but additional work needs to be done to strengthen that model to be successful.

Dr. Scott distributed the following for the Members review: copies of his book, *Making Equity Work*; Framingham Public Schools Annual Data Report Spring 2013; District Improvement plan 2015-2016; "Vision 2020: Excellence and Equity", a Strategic plan for Achieving Educational Excellence in the Framingham Public Schools; and charts entitled "MCAS High School ELA – Proficiency (Proficient/Advanced Levels)" and "MCAS High School Math – Proficiency (Proficient/Advanced Levels)" for Framingham High School. (hand-outs on file in the School Committee office)

In his closing remarks, Dr. Scott explained that the chart entitled "MCAS High School ELA – Proficiency (Proficient/Advanced Levels)" gives a very clear indication of closing the achievement gap in ELA in Framingham. However, the chart entitled, "MCAS High School Math – Proficiency (Proficient/Advanced Levels)" which Ms. Nolan questioned indicated an area where Framingham has continued to struggle. Dr. Scott stated his hopes to help Cambridge in mapping out a 5 to 10 year plan of critical actions needed and to guide those actions through fruition. Dr. Scott shared his hobby of researching his ancestry and mentioned that his grandfather migrated from Macon, Georgia to Washington Street in Cambridge.

**Distributed Back-up Documents** (copies on file in the School Committee office):

- Interview schedule
- Finalists' resumes
- Statement on each finalist

The Chair declared a brief recess (5:36 PM).

The time for recess having expired, the Chair entertained a motion to convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for contract negotiations with non-union personnel, including potential contract parameters for the Superintendent contract, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the strategy and negotiation position of the School Committee. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Kelly, on the following roll call, it was voted to convene in Executive Session for the purpose stated: Ms. Nolan YEA; Mr. Osborne ABSENT; Ms. Cronin YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Mayor Maher YEA. The Chair announced that the Committee will not reconvene in Open Session and that votes will not be taken.

The open session adjourned (5:40 PM).

Judith T. Martin  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee