

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **(Official Report)**

#### **Special Meeting**

**October 15, 2015**

Called for 5:30 PM in the Fitzgerald Auditorium, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a Community Forum/Town Hall meeting to meet the finalists for Superintendent of Schools.

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  
Mr. Hank Gmitro, President of HYA (acting as tonight's Moderator)  
Mr. Ed McCormick, HYA Consultant

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM and introduced the School Committee Members. He thanked Ms. Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources; Ms. Mallon, Mayor's Education Liaison; and Mr. Gmitro and Mr. McCormick of HYA for their hard work and commitment to this search. Mayor Maher informed the audience that there were 42 completed applications for Superintendent of Schools. Those applications were narrowed down and with the input from the 19 members of the Superintendent Search Interview Committee, three finalists were announced. The Mayor turned the meeting over to Mr. Gmitro is the moderator for the community forum.

Mr. Gmitro explained the process for the evening noting that hand-outs included a brochure listing the Superintendent's candidate bios; a 1 page sheet on each candidate listing a statement of interest and a list of 5 accomplishments in their professional career of which they took greatest satisfaction and why they did so; a blank card to submit questions and 3 half-sheet feedback forms so that the audience could list a candidate's significant strength(s) or area(s) of significant question or concern. A box would be available at the exit to collect the feedback forms for the School Committee's review. Mr. Gmitro noted questions were also received on-line which he would ask each finalist at the beginning of the session and then the finalists would be asked the questions submitted on the index cards from the audience as time allows. These index cards would be collected throughout the evening. Each finalist would have 45 minutes to speak and answer questions. Mr. Gmitro noted that each candidate would remain in the lobby area for a few minutes after his segment to meet the public and answer additional questions.

Mr. Gmitro introduced Dr. Sergio M. Páez, consultant to Holyoke Public Schools and former Superintendent, and asked him to speak about the highlights of his professional career and his hopes for Cambridge and what he would strive to accomplish here. Dr. Páez shared his professional background noting that he began his career as an elementary bilingual teacher in the Fitchburg Public Schools and later became an Assistant Principal there. He worked in the Worcester Public Schools as a Manager of ELLs and Supplemental Support Services which is the same level as an Assistant Superintendent. He indicated that he took on the most challenging job in Massachusetts as Superintendent in the Holyoke Public Schools. He shared that he is proud of his partnership with providers in Holyoke to create free Pre-K services for the children and described that initiative. He spoke about his work in Worcester in ensuring that AP options were available for all students to "raise the bar and diminish the gap". He mentioned that South High was named one of the best high schools in the country and had an increase in qualified AP scores. He indicated that his vision for Cambridge as Superintendent would be to define how Cambridge could be number one at the state level and at the urban level and to transform the district

from good to great including leading the district to the forefront of global education. Dr. Páez then responded to questions submitted by the audience on question cards and from online submissions.

Mr. Gmitro introduced Dr. Stacy L. Scott, current Framingham Public Schools Superintendent, and asked him to speak about the highlights of his professional career and his hopes for Cambridge and what he would strive to accomplish here. Dr. Scott shared his professional background which began as a teacher. He was also Associate Superintendent for the Montgomery County Public Schools and Superintendent for the Dracut Public Schools and has been Superintendent in Framingham since 2012. Dr. Scott noted that as Cambridge Superintendent he would come together with the community to think about the future and set a vision and noted that every day he wakes he hopes that he will make a difference. He indicated his hope would be that all Cambridge 3<sup>rd</sup> graders would read on level. He would strive to build bridges and partnerships with the business and academic community. He spoke about his work in Framingham including the establishment of long range planning in several areas and a long range strategic plan. He gave examples of the expansion of the music, arts and drama program in Framingham. He shared that he was proud of a book he wrote on the history of Ed reform which culminated from years of work on closing the achievement gap. Dr. Scott then responded to questions submitted by the audience on question cards and from online submissions.

Mr. Gmitro introduced Dr. Kenneth N. Salim, current Weymouth Public Schools Superintendent, and asked him to speak about the highlights of his professional career and his hopes for Cambridge and what he would strive to accomplish here. Dr. Salim shared his professional background which began as a biology teacher at Brighton High School where he spearheaded the first science inclusion program for deaf students from Horace Mann School or the Deaf. He also spoke about his facilitation of the "Biology Scholars Program" in collaboration with Harvard Medical School. Dr. Salim mentioned that more recently in Weymouth where he has been Superintendent since 2012, the proficiency gaps in ELL have closed at a faster rate and there has been an increased graduation rate of low income students and students with disabilities. He noted that the number of students who have qualified AP scores of 3 or higher has nearly doubled. Dr. Salim spoke about the strategy he developed in Weymouth which includes three levers: professional learning focused on the instructional core, effective use of data, and partnerships with families and community. He shared his belief that Cambridge can become a national model for closing the achievement gap and feels he can provide the leadership to get us there. He indicated that as Cambridge Superintendent he would strive for every student in Cambridge to get the education he/she needs not just to graduate high school but to be successful in college and beyond including having the social and emotional competency necessary.

The moderator asked each candidate a selection of questions from the following list which was developed from questions either submitted on-line or from cards collected from audience members during the community forum:

1. Cambridge is a mecca for science and bio-tech both in academia and business, yet the science that is taught in our schools does not take advantage of the wealth of resources in the city. What would a rigorous science program look like in your administration and what would you do to ensure a first class science education?
2. Our elementary school children are learning reading and math earlier than their parents ever did and have a limited amount of time for recess. Do you think play is important in the early years and how would you ensure that all schools in the district include more of it for young children?
3. Cambridge has long desired to diversify its teaching and administrative staff but has struggled to have the proportion of teachers of color reflect the diversity of its student body. What specific experiences do you have increasing the numbers of teachers of color, particularly black teachers in schools? How do you plan to increase the number of teachers of color in Cambridge?
4. How will you balance the need for principal, teacher and support staff autonomy and freedom to do good work with the requirements of rigorous and regular evaluation systems?

5. Please share with us the thinking about the birth to grade 3 continuum.
6. Cambridge is becoming more and more divided economically. Often those with the most resources are those with access and the loudest voices. As superintendent, what would you do to ensure that all parents have access to the central office and have their voices heard?
7. What is your philosophy about the middle schools and their specific and complicated needs?
8. A lot of discussion has been focused on equity and access to resources for those at the struggling end of the spectrum. What is your approach to those whose abilities fall at the high end of the spectrum? How will you help to ensure that they too will be supported in achieving their full potential?
9. What is your philosophy for ensuring proper support for children with special education needs while maintaining an inclusive environment with rigorous standards?
10. As superintendent, how do you intend to work with the unions in Cambridge Public Schools?
11. What are your thoughts on the impact of the MCAS and now possibly PARC on both the achievement gap and the overall curriculum?
12. What kind of effective communication, structures and practices will you put into place for the School Committee, the community, the students and for the educators in Cambridge?

The community forum concluded at 8:35 PM.

Judith T. Martin  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

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

- Brochure
- Question card
- Feedback form
- Directions on how to comment online
- Statement on each finalist