

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **(Official Report)**

#### **Special Meeting**

**September 16, 2015**

Called for 6:00 PM in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, to meet with the Superintendent Search Firm, Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates (HYA) for the purpose of hearing a presentation of the Leadership Profile Report and for discussing the Superintendent Search timeline.

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

Also Present: Hank Gmitro, Lead Consultant; Ed McCormick, Consultant; and John Connolly, Consultant of Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA), Barbara J. Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources (Superintendent Search Liaison Designee to the School Committee), Alanna Mallon, Mayor's Education Liaison.

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

#### **Public Comment:**

The following individual was heard:

Jake Crutchfield, River St., commented on the low attendance at most meetings which this upcoming report is based from; noted that he attended the majority of these meetings and sometimes he was the only person in attendance; expressed his concern that due to timing and scheduling, teachers' input was under represented; he wants to inform all of the people that are interested in this search that this report may not fully represent our districts thoughts and concerns. (statement on file in School Committee office)

On a motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to close public comment.

The Mayor invited Mr. Gmitro, Mr. McCormick and Mr. Connolly to present the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by HYA for the new Superintendent of Schools in Cambridge. The draft of this Leadership Profile Report is on file in the School Committee office. Data was obtained from input received by HYA consultants during individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The School Committee members also held smaller focus group meetings in the community. Community groups and individuals interviewed by HYA included community leaders, city government representatives, former School Committee Members, business members, senior citizens, and attendees at a community forum.

Mr. Gmitro informed the Committee that HYA met with 132 participants during August 26-27 and August 31-September 1, 2015 in personal interviews or focus groups and that 539 individuals participated in the online survey. He noted that there has been a great deal of effort and opportunity to encourage input from the stakeholders which also included Members' attendance at many community meetings. Ms. Mallon has forwarded the input from those community meetings to HYA to include in this report. Mr. Gmitro noted that the data is not a scientific sampling.

Mr. Gmitro and his colleagues discussed the highlights of the executive summary, consistent themes, strengths of the organization and the issues which came up repeatedly across groups.

Mr. McCormick talked about strengths of organization which were heard repeatedly. He summarized it in one sentence as follows: the stakeholders describe the district as diverse, dynamic and well resourced with a great deal of pride and support.

Mr. Harding joined the meeting (6:28 PM).

Mr. Gmitro noted that the challenges and strengths go together. He heard the theme repeatedly of how important it is to parents and teachers that students are being challenged to the maximum of their potential. He indicated some challenges/concerns/issues which often came across:

- Diversity issue – students and families of color express desire to ensure that they are being provided with outstanding educational opportunities, e.g. ethnic make-up of A/P and honors classes at CRLS
- Desire for deeply embedded restorative justice approach to discipline and cultural competency for all staff
- IA/Middle school approach, concerned about implementation and that it would reach its full potential
- Socio economic profile in the city was described as loss of the middle class because of property values; some families can't afford to live here
- How do we ensure a challenging and viable curriculum
- What's the right balance for us in Cambridge
- How do you protect the art and science of teaching in the classroom
- Diversity is valued in the community; don't want to lose it
- Mr. McCormick added that controlled choice led to discussion about inequities among schools

Mayor Maher asked the Members for their thoughts, questions and concerns about strengths and challenges. Discussion pursued with the HYA consultants and the Members on the following issues:

- Differentiated needs – students of color, access issues, language issues, immigrant families, cultural understanding
- Attention to leadership and management issues
- Long range planning and a process to get there
- Accountability and school level leadership
- Struggle in the community over balance
- Community-wide desire that we graduate students who can succeed post graduation
- Relationship between School Committee and the Superintendent; the importance of building a team of 8 and building a team of trust
- Concern about heterogeneous groups in elementary and high school levels of classes
- Equity and social justice
- Collaboration
- Communication with the different communities in Cambridge

Mayor Maher asked how long a good strategic plan would take and what time is the right time to bring in the plan. Mr. Gmitro responded that some districts wait and let the new leader guide the process. Other districts have a strategic plan in place and select a superintendent based on that. It could be an expectation for goal setting. The question could be asked in the interview as to what they think would be necessary to get a strategic plan started in Cambridge. Mr. Gmitro indicated that a strategic plan is usually completed within a year. Mr. Connolly added that the first role for a superintendent is usually to participate in a strategic plan. It was mentioned that the new superintendent in Boston started with an entry plan. At the end of entry plan, the new superintendent would be ready to give a report to the School Committee and that could be the beginning of a strategic plan.

Mr. Harding noted that the data gathered over time in Cambridge provides an obvious indication of our needs and challenges. Since Cambridge is very different, he expressed his preference to give the next superintendent the data up front and that a 100 day entry plan would not be required as done in Boston.

He questioned whether the Members want someone to come in understanding the strategic plan and implementing it or spending a lot of time trying to figure it out.

Mr. Fantini asked if this Leadership Profile Report would be available to the candidates. Mr. Gmitro responded that it would be available once the Members comments and revisions are included and then it should be posted online. Mr. Fantini asked if we should be explicit of the desired characteristics to include emphasis on the middle schools. Mr. Gmitro responded that you want a candidate to be able to focus on everything and the Members could delve into those issues as they interview the candidate. It could be translated as to how they are as problem solver. He noted that the word "visionary" came across consistently during the community interviews. Mr. Fantini asked about the possibility of the new superintendent starting earlier than June. Mr. Gmitro responded that there could be a possibility for transition time. Mr. Fantini asked to revise the wording of "have experience as a superintendent or assistant superintendent in an urban district of similar size and/or complexity". He hoped that some of the candidates would have other types of educational experience and didn't want them excluded from this process. Ms. Nolan suggested the following wording: "have experience as an educational leader in an urban district of similar size and/or complexity". Mr. Fantini asked about doing an in-basket exam. Mr. Gmitro indicated that some districts have chosen to do that. Also, Mr. Gmitro noted that the application has two writing samples.

The Mayor asked Mr. Gmitro the logistics of moving forward. Mr. Gmitro indicated that the Committee needs these characteristics defined to share with the interview committee. Questions need to be drafted before the scripts are created for the interviews on October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. HYA will make the revisions based on the Members comments and forward to Ms. Allen.

Mayor Maher announced that the three School Committee Members who are selected to be on the search interview committee are: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding and Ms. Nolan. They are the three longest serving Members of the School Committee and have been on the School Committee when a superintendent's search has occurred in the past.

Mr. Gmitro asked the Members to express their thoughts about the desired characteristics for the superintendent:

Ms. Nolan

- Understands and knows how to make effective use of evaluation and program reviews
- Strategic thinker who can lead a district-wide plan
- Need proven track record of making progress and closing the achievement gap
- Looking for someone who has demonstrated improvements above Cambridge's current standing
- Understanding and supporting the needs of teachers

Ms. Cronin

- Need something more explicit on leadership style and follow through with evaluations and accountability
- Theme of balance

Mr. Fantini

- Meeting deadlines
- Proven relationship with bargaining units
- Mention students in the desired characteristics
- Would like to change the word "disenfranchised" in the following: "Understands the struggles and challenges facing disenfranchised individuals and communities within Cambridge and have a proven track record of improving educational opportunities for these individuals and groups". Mayor Maher suggested using the word "under-served" instead of "disenfranchised". Mr. Gmitro indicated that he heard the word "disenfranchised" many times during the community focus groups and interviews.

Mr. Gmitro noted that drafting characteristics is different than establishing goals. Some of these thoughts would be better to be included in the goals.

Ms. Kelly

- Effective and committed team builder
- High emotional quotient; empathy

Mayor Maher

- Ability to inspire all staff and the School Committee
- Bold thinker or bold actions

Mr. Harding

- Expectation to inspire our educators to move the district forward
- Energy needed to run this school system now
- It all begins and ends with the students

Mr. Connolly noted that inspirational people are the most passionate. Emotion and passion will show during the interview. If a person has the emotional quotient, they are more likely to be successful. Teaching is a noble profession; make sure it is part of the mission statement.

Mr. Gmitro indicated his hope to have a draft back to the Members by the end of the week and hopefully finalized by midweek next week.

Mr. Gmitro updated the Members on the following:

- ✓ HYA has been reviewing applications in the paper process over the last several weeks simultaneously factoring in information from the leadership profile
- ✓ 57 total applications are either fully submitted or partially submitted of which 40 are totally complete and 17 are some place in the process
- ✓ These 57 applications include those candidates which HYA has recruited
- ✓ So far HYA has interviewed 24 people of which 10 are candidates of color, 9 are females, 14 are current superintendents, 7 are current deputy or assistant superintendents, 3 fall into other categories, e.g. dean, consultant
- ✓ Numerous candidates have the strengths around the issues identified

Mr. Gmitro indicated that HYA will be meeting with the Interview Committee members on September 29<sup>th</sup> to share the desired characteristics, share ideas about questions, solicit interview questions, work on the parameters of interviews and confidentiality issues, and draft a script for the interviews. During the afternoon of the 29<sup>th</sup>, HYA will share the applications with the Interview Committee members and inform them of the candidates which HYA recommends they interview and also those candidates that have many of the strengths and characteristics identified. Two days are blocked off for the interviews (October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). HYA will create a scoring matrix that Interview Committee members will be able to use as they interview candidates based on desired characteristics defined by the School Committee. Mr. Connolly cautioned about interviewing too many candidates in one day.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (7:55 PM).

Judith T. Martin  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

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

- DRAFT Cambridge Public Schools Leadership Profile Report (September 16, 2015)

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- Cambridge survey comments
- Statement read by Jake Crutchfield during public comment