

UNION 28 JOINT SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, July 7, 2015
FINAL Minutes

Present: Scott Bastarache, Son Hui May, Sean Woodard-McNiff, Alan Mully, Bethany Seeger, Kip Fonsh, Kate Fiander, Johanna Bartlett, Jessalyn Zaykoski, John DeWitt; Dan Hayes, Chair; Bob Mahler, Superintendent Emeritus; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent.

(Prior to a quorum being present, non-voting items were discussed by the committee; these are presented out of order below.)

6. Regionalization Update

Kip reported that at the last meeting of the Regional School Committee, a five-part motion was presented for discussion and vote that established a timeline for the regionalization proposal going forward. The first part of this motion was narrowly passed (forwarding the “raw” proposal to legal counsel); the RSC would then review the results this fall and winter while it holds forums in each town in order to solicit further feedback.

7. News/Updates from Each School

Wendell / New Salem: Johanna reported that they ratified a contract with the teachers and everyone seems happy about it at present. John added there were a number of festivities around the retirement of SRS's beloved, longtime music teacher Ed Hines. There has also been a lot of discussion regarding parking lot/road safety, with parents volunteering in the end to put up fencing along the road and lot to help prevent accidents.

Leverett: Alan reported that Margot Lacey said they had a wonderful end of year, including a slideshow, an original play, and a release of trout that the 5th grade have been raising during the course of the year. Each grade also held special events related to projects they have been working on.

Erving: Scott reported that the end of the year went equally well, with a slideshow and 6th grade graduation. There are a lot of fun events that finish off the year, including a biographical “wax museum” in which students played the roles of historical figures telling their stories. Son Hui reported that students in other grades shared their original stories; School Council also discussed a cohesive image that should represent the school, and the tree out front of the school was chosen for this.

Shutesbury: Kate reported that there was a flurry of activity ending the year; the 6th graders had a successful field trip to Boston, and while there are a number of personnel changes, the positive atmosphere is being maintained by the principal and new staff. Sean praised the Poetry Walk at which parents wandered the school grounds reading poems written by students.

1. Meeting Called to Order by Dan at 6:55 P.M. upon reaching quorum.

2. Public Hearings: None.

3. Approval of the Minutes from May 20, 2015

SCOTT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MAY 20, 2015. SEAN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

4. Director of Finance and Operations Position – Update

Dan reported that a search committee was formed with both Superintendents as well as representatives from every town, town finance and U28 staff representatives. In the end, 5 candidates were interviewed out of 18 applicants. The second round of interviews involved 3 candidates and references were then checked. Tonight, the committee is confidently putting forward a candidate. Johanna said that Aaron Osborne is such a strong candidate because of his quick intelligence, amiability, and appropriate background, particularly his experience improving the finances of a school district facing significant difficulties. Son Hui added that he stood out and gave the impression that everyone in the central office would enjoy working with him. Jennifer said he had also been a teacher, so knowing both sides of the school picture is a plus as well. Dan said everyone was impressed with how knowledgeable and articulate he was; his references were also very positive and informative. Bob noted that he is certified by a state educational body as well.

SEAN MOVED TO OFFER THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF U28 FINANCE AND OPERATIONS TO AARON OSBORNE. SON HUI SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

Dan thanked the committee for their effort and input; it was very nice working with both Superintendents, and the atmosphere was one in which everyone's voice could be heard. Johanna described the committee as extremely harmonious; it was extremely pleasant to serve on it. John in turn thanked Dan for his leadership.

5. Central Office Recommendations – Rent/Renovations/Repairs

Scott reported that he and Bob met to discuss central office needs, since U28 is housed in an Erving town building. U28 pays rent, which is split among Wendell, New Salem, and Shutesbury; Erving does not pay rent, but pays for utilities (last year, \$18,600). Significant capital improvements are required to maintain the building, but if these are brought to the town, it is likely the rent might be raised. In this case, the U28 towns could restructure how the rent is divided. Bob said that the town does not treat its paying tenant (U28) that well, asking that U28 pay for mowing the lawn, for example, and updating the unoccupied floor rather than replace carpets, etc. in the floor U28 rents. He noted that U28 gives life to that building, and the town should treat its tenant with more

regard. Dan volunteered to go with Scott to the town to discuss these capital improvements. Kip asked whether this wasn't an opportune time to consider a feasibility study committee that would look at moving the U28 office to someplace more centralized, perhaps to a place with more modern/updated infrastructure. Dan wondered whether there was a school that could absorb that, but there simply isn't that amount of space. Kip said we could give Scott more leverage by forming a feasibility committee; Johanna said she was confident leaving the negotiations in Scott's hands since he knows the politics of the town. Scott said it's only due diligence to look around at what's out there. Sean said that the employees should have a voice as well, and Bob said it's already pretty centrally located, about 11 or 12 miles from each school apart from EES. Alan said that commercial office space would cost considerably more than what U28 currently pays per square foot; John added that there would be moving costs as well. Scott concluded by saying the capital improvement plans would be rolled out over time, and he doesn't feel U28's requests would be a hard sell, as town officials are already talking about some of these improvements.

JOHANNA MOVED TO DESIGNATE SCOTT AS THE SPOKESPERSON FOR NEGOTIATING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE U28 OFFICE AND BUILDING. JOHN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

8. Superintendent Evaluation

Dan directed the committee to the Summative Evaluation, which incorporates the relatively few responses received (6 in total). The general feeling is that Bob has done an exemplary job supporting the schools; in particular, his openness and communicativeness have been vastly appreciated by all. Kip thanked Dan for his own exemplary work summarizing the responses, but he is deeply troubled by the low number of submissions; evaluating the Superintendent is one of the primary duties of the school committees, and not participating in this process is not only a dereliction of that duty, but disrespectful to Bob. Prior to the start of this process next year, we need to have a discussion about the importance of turnout. Bob agreed with this idea; he was surprised at the low turnout. However, he identified structural problems with the process, including timing (it starts late, for example). In addition, only 6 out of 15 responses would not serve the JSC were they stuck with a bad Superintendent who ought to be dismissed.

Johanna noted that initialing comments would add a layer of responsibility to the process that might improve feedback. Jennifer said that the Superintendent evaluation process should follow the same pattern as the rest of the staff is asked to do (improvement goals, checking in, etc.). Kip said that we waited too long to ask members to submit materials for the evaluation; new members were being asked to evaluate the Superintendent when they had just come on board. He proposed starting the timeline in the fall. Johanna said that any subcommittee tasked with checking in with the Superintendent on progress toward goals should be made aware of problems by other JSC members as they arise, rather than letting complaints or concerns fester.

Dan said we could have the conversation about whether to create a new subcommittee for Superintendent evaluation and guidance in September. Perhaps it would be better to bring it to the Budget and Personnel Subcommittee instead. Dan said that B&P can start to review the process. Jessalyn said it might help to put physical copies of the evaluation in front of committee members as early as possible to make them aware that that work must be done; the onus of bringing the filled-out form to the next meeting might spur them to action. Dan said that compiling the information is no small task, and would like B&P to address this issue in all its aspects.

Kip asked Bob to speak about artifacts in terms of the process; Bob replied that keeping the artifacts as narrowly focused as possible is best, since “brevity is next to godliness.” Jennifer said that there should be 6-12 pieces of evidence that knit together district, practice, and school goals as well as state and national standards. Bob added that the timeframe is really tight for an April target. Sean agreed that starting the process earlier is desirable since it would give committee members time to request more representative artifacts should those submitted fail to demonstrate the requisite goals/standards.

Moving forward, Dan requested that B&P start to look at the Superintendent Evaluation process to make a recommendation about how to improve it, including the possible formation of a new subcommittee to facilitate it.

9. Superintendent Exit Interview

Bob strongly suggested doing interest-based negotiations with the teacher unions without the lawyer and MTA representative at the table; some negotiations can move forward a lot more quickly as a result. Lawyers and reps can be consulted later, of course, but if you have a strong enough relationship with your teachers, you can be honest with them about moving toward resolution.

A second recommendation focused on looking at the position of Director of SPED as a U28 position, since the work is split among schools, and when the work shifted from one school to another in the past, there was a pay cut involved. Making this position a U28 position would introduce schedule flexibility without punishing the employee.

Regarding Food Service Director positions, they have full-time jobs as bookkeepers and report writers for the Commonwealth *besides* providing 80-100 meals per day. Bob isn't sure how to handle this huge amount of overtime; hiring someone to do the paperwork introduces a new cost, while some people are better with paperwork in their job than others.

As for the demand that the Superintendent attend all school committee meetings, this is challenging, but really the best way to deal with the individualized issues each school faces.

Bob urged the committee to look at how pay is determined for the central office workers; the system is not as fair at present as it could be.

The 360 evaluation model is strong and promising, but it takes some planning; he recommended using a two-year timeframe to incorporate this model.

Finally, Bob spoke about regionalization; he distributed minutes taken from a 2014 meeting of the RAWG that spoke about the rationale for regionalization. He cannot identify any educational benefits to students in the regionalization proposal, and some of the claims made about these benefits imply that the U28 schools are under-serving their students in this regard, which Bob takes strong objection to. In his view, regionalization should be first and last about improving the education for our students.

Dan invited the committee to ask Bob questions.

Sean asked for Bob's thoughts on collaboration among the four schools; he thinks there will be more and more of this based on identical needs and because there is now a stable group of four principals.

Dan thanked Bob for sharing his thoughts with the JSC. He also expressed his appreciation for both Bob and Jennifer's participation during this transitional period.

10. Future Items to Discuss:

a. Next Meeting Date: September 9, 2015, 7:00 P.M, Leverett Elementary School.

Before adjourning, Dan recognized Bob Mahler for his hard work, dedication, and inspiration during his stint as Intern Superintendent. He has helped the district coalesce, and helped us all feel good about our schools and about the union as a whole. He also thanked Jennifer for taking the position and attending the meetings with school committees and with Bob; we look forward to working with her to keep our schools thriving.

11. Executive Session: Contract Negotiations, Director of Finance and Operations

SCOTT MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS, NOT TO RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION. VOICE VOTES ALL AYES. MOTION PASSES UNANIMOUSLY.

12. Adjournment