

**The Hamilton Wenham Regional School District
School Committee Meeting
Buker Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room
Wednesday, March 11, 2020 7:00 P.M.**

Present:

David Polito, Chair
Michelle Bailey, Vice Chair
Stacey Metternick, Secretary
Michelle Horgan, Assistant Secretary
Gene Lee
Peter Wolczik
Tai Pryjma

Also Present:

Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent to Finance & Administration
Dorothy Presser, MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees)
Mary Alice Cookson, Interim Recording Secretary

1) Call to Order

7:00 PM

Chair David Polito calls the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He explains the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the finalists for interviews for the new Superintendent for the 2020-21 School Year and to prepare the interview questions.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

All in attendance rise for reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) New Business

a. Announce finalist for the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Superintendent

Dorothy Presser reports the Screening Committee had done much hard work and, as a result, chose three candidates: Mary Beth Banios, superintendent for the Windsor Central Supervisory Union in Woodstock (VT), who would like to relocate back to Massachusetts; Philip Conrad, principal of Andover High School; and Dan Richards, principal of Georgetown Middle/High School. She provides information about each candidate and their backgrounds, citing that their resumes in the packets are public documents and everything else included is considered a personnel document and will not be made public. Ms. Presser will provide these resumes to the press. She makes one note of disclosure in that the candidate in Vermont had participated in merging seven school districts into one and there was a financial finding in the audit. Gene Lee asks for a sense of the deliberations. Ms. Presser responds it was done in confidential Executive Session and the Screening Committee basically matched the resumes and interviews to what the School Committee was looking for. It was discussed that only one of the three candidates was a superintendent and none had doctorates. All the Committee members expressed surprise that Interim Superintendent Dr. Julia Kukenberger was not on the list of finalists and many spoke in favor of adding her, citing the quality of her work, especially on the recent budget issue. Committee members discuss what they know about the candidates and another person not chosen was mentioned. Ms. Presser notes the Screening Committee is advisory and says it is not unheard of to alter a recommendation of a Screening Committee. School Committee members discuss that the choice of the three had been unanimous by the Screening Committee. They note a doctorate was said to be preferred but was not a requirement. Ms. Horgan brings up a concern about breaking trust as the Committee had specifically made it a point to involve the community in the selection. The Committee members thank the Screening Committee and express interest in meeting the candidates.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPTS THE FINALISTS PUT FORTH BY THE H-W SCREENING COMMITTEE.

**MOTION by Michelle Horgan; SECONDED by Michelle Bailey.
Unanimously approved by 6 members present.**

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPTS DR. JULIE KUKENBERGER AS THE FOURTH FINALIST.

**MOTION by Michelle Horgan; SECONDED by Peter Wolczik.
Unanimously approved by 6 members present.**

Michelle Bailey said the Committee needed to be clear this was not a “done deal” and would need to ask questions on their site visits. The schedule will need to be revised to accommodate four candidates.

b. Schedule site visits and interviews

This agenda item was taken out of order (was listed as “c” on the agenda). Ms. Presser presents potential dates for site visits by the School Committee at the candidates’ respective schools: March 16, 18, and 19. There was concern that the coronavirus outbreak may alter plans and the visits may have to be conducted remotely. Ms. Horgan and Ms. Bailey say they can visit Vermont on March 16; Woodstock is a little more than two hours away. Mr. Polito and Mr. Pryjma agree to visit Georgetown on March 18. Ms. Horgan and perhaps Ms. Bailey will go to Andover on March 19. The site visits are to be conducted during school hours. Assistant Superintendent Vincent Leone is involved in the discussion/decision concerning dates and times for the candidates to have their site visits to Hamilton-Wenham (March 13, 17, and 18). The evenings of March 18 and 19 are said to be available for conducting the interviews, with a meet and greet for the candidates and the public on the 18th. The decision on the final candidate is expected to be made on March 19, although all of this is subject to change due to the present circumstances. Ms. Presser says she will confirm the schedule with the School Committee prior to sending an email to the candidates.

c. Develop Superintendent Interview Questions; facilitated by Dorothy Presser, MASC

[Exhibit](#)

When asked how many questions the School Committee should develop, Dorothy Presser recommends compiling a list of approximately 12-14 to ask the candidates in hour-long interviews, allowing time for follow-up. Twenty-one draft questions submitted by School Committee as well as another list of questions by the Screening Committee were considered. These appear in two documents in the packets. The School Committee members review all the questions and decide on which they like best, combining some and tailoring others for the purpose of obtaining what they would consider best responses from the candidates. In some cases, as they frame the questions, they spell out the answers they will be trying to illicit. This process lasts longer than planned. In the end, they formulate a list of 12 questions total. They discuss that they want questions specifically pertaining to the needs of Hamilton Wenham. Some topics include professional growth by the candidates, upgrading facilities for modern learning, building a responsible budget, building consensus for capital planning, communication and decision-making styles, developing a culture, maintaining the schools’ high standing, and knowledge of Hamilton-Wenham’s strategic blueprint. Ms. Presser will compile the questions and write up the final list for use during the interview process.

Some further details are discussed regarding times for the interviews. It is agreed that the next School Committee meeting on March 18 will take place from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. with interviews following the meeting.

4) Vote to Adjourn

**I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN
AT 8:51 P.M.**

**MOTION by Michelle Horgan; SECONDED by Gene Lee.
Unanimously approved by 6 members present.**

Respectfully submitted March 18, 2020 by Mary Alice Cookson, Interim Recording Secretary