

MINUTES – WAYLAND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Special Session – September 20, 2010

A Regular Session of the Wayland School Committee was held on Monday, September 20, 2010, at 6:30 P.M. in the School Committee Room of the Wayland Town Building.

Present were:

Dr. Louis Jurist, Chair

Mrs. Barb Fletcher, Vice Chair

Dr. Malcolm Astley

Ms. Beth Butler

Dr. Shawn Kinney (arrived approximately 6:50 p.m.)

Chair Louis Jurist convened the special meeting at 6:35 P.M., noting the main purpose was to meet with the representatives of the selected superintendent search firm Future Management Systems, Mr. Bill Garr and Dr. Richard Warren.

The Chair also noted that there would be a couple of items added to the agenda to address at the end of the meeting, including committee member liaison assignments in relation to other town committees. He indicated that the School Committee would go into Executive Session at the end of the meeting to discuss negotiations with the Wayland Teachers Association.

1. Comments or Written Statements from the Public:

Mr. Sciacca gave out a copy of an article from the Globe indicating Wayland's recent designation as #1 in tax rate in relation to other Massachusetts' towns, and he suggested that the finding would lead to a reduction in property values in the town. Chairman Jurist thanked Mr. Sciacca and noted that the School Committee was well aware of the financial situation in the town and had been working with the Finance Committee for the past few years to try to be as economical as possible and would be continuing that philosophy.

2. Meeting with Future Management Systems re: the Superintendent Search:

Discussion began regarding the search process. Mr. Warren began by focusing on a review of the role of the superintendent in Wayland and the kinds of skills that those involved in the process would be looking for as a result, as well as some cautions to be considered to insure a fair search. He wanted to review a draft of a timeline with the Committee, culminating in an expected February appointment of a new superintendent; the composition of the Search Committee, which the School Committee would be asked to appoint in the near future; considerations regarding arriving at salary guidelines; reflection by the School Committee on the strengths and challenges of and threats to the town and school system, both short and long term; and development of a leadership profile of qualities and skills needed related to those reflections; and procedures for communication in the process.

Mr. Warren focused the discussion on the role of the superintendent and its changes with technology. He listed a wide variety of aspects of the role for the Committee to keep in mind as they worked toward development of the leadership profile to be used in the search. Dr. Astley asked if their theories of superintendency leadership and what the Committee should be thinking about related to the process to insure the success of the superintendent, as well as factors to keep in mind to avoid failure, and the consultants indicated consideration of that matter would fit in well with consideration of the leadership profile. They would bring in related research associated with the Meyers Briggs instrument as well as review the full range of capacities of candidates with that concern in mind.

Mr. Warren reviewed precautions for a fair search, emphasizing the importance of confidentiality regarding the candidates. He noted that some search committees had school committee members on them, and if so, the school committee member could not reveal confidential information to the school committee because of the importance of the privacy of the candidates. Non-discriminatory practices were important in the process with a focus on skills. Applications need to be secure. Candidates have a legal right to have their names kept private during the early screening process. They cannot be asked certain questions during the process, such as arrest records, but the consulting firm is able to look for such information and said they did a thorough search for information. CORI checks are possible, but do not apply to candidates from outside the state. Candidate permission is also required for a CORI check. Mrs. Fletcher asked if SORI checks regarding

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sexual offenses were part of the process. The consultants agreed such checks were important on all candidates. Dr. Astley asked what a thorough search involved. Mr. Warren said he carried out a careful search, and entered requests through a variety of entries and search engines, and followed up further on any information that came to light. School committee associations and superintendents' networks were also useful channels. The firm also knows most local candidates, though not as much out of the northeast.

Mr. Warren reviewed the time line, and indicated the goal was to start on the profile tonight and place ads by the end of the week in Education Week for publication the week of October 6. Recruitment would begin tomorrow, 9/21. A search committee would be appointed by November 10. Focus groups and phone interviews would be conducted beginning the week of October 4, involving administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and community leaders. About six focus groups would be involved in 45-minute sessions. By October 22, a focus group report will be completed and the leadership profile firmed up. An orientation of the search committee would be carried out about November 15 and interview questions developed. The deadline for receiving applications would be November 19. Applications packets would be brought to the School Committee November 22. The search committee would screen applications through December 3. Screening interviews would take place the weeks of December 6 and 13. Firm consultation with the School Committee would continue the first or second week of December regarding the format for the final School Committee screening of candidates and any ways the system would like to promote itself. The first two weeks in January, the Search Committee would see candidates forwarded by the search committee. About the week of January 24, the School Committee will narrow the list and make site visits as needed in the following weeks and make a decision by February 14.

Ms. Butler asked where Wayland was relative to other communities in the search process, and Mr. Warren stated we were on the early side and in good shape. Mr. Warren said the firm would monitor where candidates were in other processes and keep the School Committee informed as to whether we needed to adjust our schedule to take action in relation to a given candidate. About 20 searches were said to be going on in eastern Massachusetts at this time, and about 45 would be going on before the end of the year here. There are many retirements. Suburban superintendents tend to leave after about 6 years and urban leaders after about 3 years.

Ms. Fletcher asked about the firm's recommendation of having a community forum. The firm said small isolated groups sometimes showed up, and the approach had not been successful. A survey on a website was recommended and agreed to with a "Monkey" web instrument (respondent names to be included) along with the small focus groups.

Discussion followed as to how the six different focus groups (a central administrator group, a principal/assistant principal group, a teacher group, a parent group, a town resident group, and a town leadership group) could be set up and how to achieve appropriate balance in each group. Group size was said by the consultants to be optimal at 8-12.

Ms. Fletcher will contact a PTO parent to help set up the parent group. Ms. Butler asked how non-PTO parent representatives might be involved.

Mr. Garr will contact Town Administrator Fred Turkington to help set up the town leadership group.

Ms. Butler said various groups, such as seniors and different churches or the League of Women voters could use representation with the community group. Ms. Butler will receive and develop suggestions for community group participants.

The Committee agreed to have the ad run for a single week in hard copy, and the ad would automatically stay on the website of Ed Week for 30 days.

Dr. Astley asked how the many different points made in the groups and surveys will be weighed and sifted. Mr. Garr said if an idea comes up several times and the need is apparent to several groups, it will receive

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priority. Other ideas will be listed. The School Committee can also decide which ideas seem most significant. Attending to what is said with passion is also important. The final report will also emphasize what different groups see to be different priorities and what priorities are held in common. These matters gradually are organized into the leadership profile.

Ms. Fletcher asked about student involvement and alternative approaches were considered. It was decided that a consultant would meet with members of the Student Council.

Dr. Jurist will receive suggestions for phone interview candidates.

Mr. Warren reviewed the kinds of questions that focus group members are asked, such as the strengths of the system and the kinds of challenges the superintendent will face in the short and long term.

Technology support in the system would be solicited to set up a survey for Wayland citizens using something like "Survey Monkey." Emphasis would be placed on considering ideas voiced by numbers of people. It was decided that names would be required for surveys or suggestions from the public, though names would not be used in reporting.

Discussion proceeded to the selection of the search committee, ideally 10-12 people so the group can arrive at consensus. Composition of the committee was discussed and a variety of means of seeking possible committee members. It was decided not to include School Committee members, but allow the Search Committee to have its own fresh view and to reserve the School Committee for the final decision to select from those forwarded by the Search Committee or to restart the search. Other groups considered for representation were teachers, parents, someone from central office, a building principal, and a municipal government official,

Ms. Butler asked how confidentiality could be insured among the members of the Search Committee. The consultants indicated the issue would be emphasized with Search Committee members and members would be asked to commit to the various parts of the charge, including confidentiality.

The time requirements for the Search Committee members was discussed and seemed to be about 22 hours, including day and night times. All day interviews were not recommended.

Mrs. Fletcher asked if the matter of seeking citizen letters of interest should be decided to allow enough time for volunteering and selection.

The Committee discussed how potential members could possibly and effectively be discussed at a public meeting.

The Committee discussed whether or not to solicit letters of interest in taking part on the Search Committee to the general public, and whether that could cause hard feelings in that only two could be selected. It was decided to avoid that approach.

Teachers would be expected to create their own selection process.

Mr. Garr was to speak with Dr. Burton about the selection process for the administrators' and teachers' focus groups and Conrad Gees would be asked about the teacher focus group selection. Mrs. Fletcher would speak with PTO chairs about the parent focus group selection. Committee members were to send Ms. Butler suggestions about who was to be in the community focus group. Committee members were to send suggestions for names of individuals to be called and interviewed by Mr. Garr to Dr. Jurist.

The Search Committee would be comprised of 3 teachers selected by the teachers; no School Committee members.

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Confidentiality regarding candidates would be maintained until the Search Committee selected 3 to 4 final candidates, based on the leadership profile, to recommend for consideration by the School Committee, at which point the names would become public. It was noted that if Mr. Garr and Dr. Warren thought there were particularly strong candidates that the School Committee should consider in addition, the consultants would make that recommendation.

The charge to the Search Committee will be to come up with a short list of names, but not in any order of preference. It is the responsibility of the School Committee to make the final decision independently.

The list of those to be called would be developed based on selection of those appearing on several School Committee members' lists, and then, if needed, by an alphabetized list of those remaining from which the School Committee would make a selection.

It was decided to run an ad in Education Week once, with the ad to appear on the publication's website for 30 days, more than a week being seen as an unnecessary use of funds. Focusing on the network was considered important. Publication would also occur through the MA Associations of School Committees and Superintendents.

The ad would be reviewed by the School Committee members informally with the aim of getting the ad published the week of 11/6.

The Ed Week website will also contain additional information for candidates.

The School Committee discussed how a diverse group of candidates would be procured.

The topic of how candidates from other parts of the country tended to fair in a region new to them. Consultants said it was important to look closely at the candidate.

It was agreed that the salary and benefits package would be described as highly competitive. Questions from strong candidates would be relayed as needed to the Committee. The range of salaries around the eastern state was reviewed for possible comparison. It was emphasized that a whole package needed to be considered, as well as figures from the two peer lists the Committee uses. The consultants will set the stage for the negotiations with the final candidate.

With the guidance of the consultants the Committee went through the questions used to begin to arrive at a system description and a leadership profile. The Committee listed first the strengths of the system:

- a cultural of achievement
- strong community support aimed at having excellent schools
- a priority on teachers including compensation, development and support
- keeping staff over time
- advanced teacher degrees
- involved, active, supportive parents
- stability of leadership
- high graduation rate to competitive institutions
- a large and diverse set of programs including before and after school, and preschool
- new high school to open Dec, 2011 under strong high school building committee
- high pass rate on graduation MCAS results in all three subjects
- strong core academics and also support for strong extracurricular programs with high degree of student participation
- strong value financially in terms of results compared with costs
- strong foundation support in town for program renewal, in the range of 200,000 per year

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- strong emphasis on technology
- commitment to close the achievement gap between sub-group performances and the norm
- district participation in professional information exchange with national collection of high performing schools (Project Blue Print)
- award winning organizational and student performances
- highly supportive parent organizations for various programs
- unusually strong fine arts program
- WaylandCares program with emphasis on addressing student needs
- Strong Special Education planning and programs
- Strong affiliated vocational program in Minuteman
- “Wayland Finds a Way”

Immediate Challenges the New Superintendent Will Face

- Along with many towns and the state, budget shortfalls
- Riding the tension of town dialogue, evident in many towns, and guiding the dialogue to be positive and productive
- Keeping curriculum up to date and appropriate for students’ current and future needs, for example, how to consider initiating a Chinese language program
- Looking after the needs of property owners pressed by taxes
- Integration of technology to promote education and also to save money
- Finishing the high school and moving in
- Maintaining standards in the face of budgetary constraints

Challenges to Be Faced 3-5 Years Out

- Consequences of the cyclical drop in enrollment, now reaching the high school and anticipation of reverse of the trend
- Diversifying revenue sources for town
- Another cycle of retirements
- Leadership for relatively new administrators
- Projecting what high schools will emerge into with distance learning and internships taking on more importance and our current emphasis on core academics

Existing Skills Valued in the Superintendent

- Strong management skills
- Skills in getting to events and out into the community
- Approachability
- Skills in working with budgetary constraints
- Advocate for schools and programs
- Skills in developing new administrative staff

New or Additional Skills Sought in the New Superintendent

- Emphasis on ideas, leadership and vision
- Effective use of appropriate metrics in setting goals and assessing program
- On-going examination of best practices elsewhere and consideration of ways to improve on the status quo
- Sense of potentially effective and progressive uses of technology
- Skills in developing and following through on effective strategic plans including metrics that measure the most important learning dimensions
- Alert to what the life of a young person is like and the challenges the culture presents to them

While the Committee would prefer someone with superintendent experience, the leadership qualities and skills of the individual would be paramount.

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The Committee is open to the hiring of a leader from another state. The Committee would prefer a candidate who would stay at a minimum of 5-10 years or longer.

3. **Comments from the Public:**

Resident Tom Sciacca of Rolling Lane noted that his neighborhood traditionally has had very little turnover, but he has noticed more turnover on his street and thinks the school population will rise rapidly in the next few years. He also noted that a previous superintendent was well regarded and had not been a superintendent previously. He finally noted that there were many high level leaders in the town, and that they could have useful input into the hiring of the new superintendent, perhaps through phone interviews. He also valued the emphasis on vision in the evening's discussion.

John Flaherty agreed with the Committee's discussion about vision and leadership skills for the next Superintendent.

Another resident, Heather Pineault, appreciated the planned opportunity for use of a "Survey Monkey" by residents. She suggested a member of the business association be involved in the hiring process. She also thought that a strength in the town was the collaborative relationship between parents and teachers. An immediate challenging issue was also the pressure emphasis on standardized measures and balancing that pressure with a more holistic emphasis on student learning.

4. **Assignment of Members to Other Boards:**

Dr. Astley reviewed the potential conflict of interest he faced in being a consultant with The Educational Cooperative and also serving on its board. The School Committee agreed to have Ms. Beth Butler take Dr. Astley's place on the board. She indicated her son was doing an internship there, and the Committee did not see it as a conflict.

Dr. Jurist asked that someone take his place as the WPSF liaison, since his wife was on the board. Dr. Astley was appointed with Dr. Kinney as alternate. Ms. Butler will serve as liaison to the MASC with Dr. Astley as alternate.

Dr. Kinney will be liaison to G-4, the project involving collaborative reflection among four local districts.

5. **Operations Review:**

The Committee agreed to work with the Fincom to cover the additional \$15,000 not included in the amount appropriated by Town Meeting.

6. **Superintendent Search:**

The Committee discussed sending out a communication to its distribution list with a summary of the timeline for the Superintendent Search with a link to the online survey.

7. **Executive Session:**

Upon a motion duly made by Mrs. Fletcher, seconded by Dr. Kinney, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) in a roll call vote to convene in Executive Session at 9:35 P.M. for the purpose of matters pertaining to Collective Bargaining with the WTA, as set forth in Section 23B of G.L. Ch. 39. The School Committee agreed that discussion regarding union contracts with the WTA would be in Executive Session, as conducting these discussions in open session will have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's negotiating position.

<u>Roll Call</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Dr. Louis Jurist	X	
Mrs. Barb Fletcher	X	
Dr. Malcolm Astley	X	
Ms. Beth Butler	X	
Dr. Shawn Kinney	X	

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The Chair announced that the Committee would reconvene in Open Session immediately following the adjournment of the Executive Session for adjournment purposes only.

7. **Adjournment:**

Upon a motion duly made by Mrs. Fletcher, seconded by Dr. Kinney, the Committee voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the Regular Session at 9:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Astley
Wayland School Committee

Observers:

Tom Sciacca, WVN
Heather Pineault, Wayland
Betsy Brigham, Wayland