

NORTH ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday, February 15, 2007
Place: North Andover High School Auditorium
Present: Assistant Chairman, William Kelly, Dr. Charles Ormsby, Tim Pybus, and Barbara Whidden

Also Present: Dr. Daniel O'Connor, Superintendent, Richard Bergeron, Assistant Superintendent, Paul Szymanski Director of Management Support Services and members of the school department and the community.

Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

1. Superintendent Candidate Interview

Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly introduced Mr. O'Neill the first candidate:

You have visited and researched our school system, how different is it from where you are now working?

Mr. O'Neill- I have lived and taught in this community. The district where I am now is smaller and doesn't have the physical attributes of the North Andover School System.

We have half the students and we have better resources per student at the present which makes a difference in what we can offer our students.

Mr. Kelly- Please describe your management style and tell us how you would implement a district wide plan that takes root and achieves success.

Mr. O'Neill- I am not a micromanager, you need to create a plan that will be endorsed, make this public. You need to move forward with what is in the best interest of the children. We enacted a new math initiative in our district. I pulled together principals and math teachers. This was a research based program. We visited two to three other schools narrowed the choice down to two or three and we piloted in the fall of the second year. I made the recommendation in December. We implemented this program this year. We used a similar process in the middle school and the high school.

Dr. Ormsby- You have been given a copy of the Academic Outcome goals and Expectations Initiative passed by this School committee 5-0. Are you willing to embrace and commit fully to supporting these goals and this initiative?

Mr. O'Neill- I see a clear desire to focus on academics that are measurable, and communicate that information to parents. Make homework real, not just busy work. Building improvement plans are needed. We need a program such as the MAPS (a data based computer testing program that assesses a child's growth annually) to chart growth over 12 years. Rigor for all students is important. We need to maintain excellence and standards.

Barbara Whidden - What do you believe are five key components to a successful middle school education?

Mr. O'Neill- Middle School is a point in early adolescence. We need to let these kids grow through these physical and emotional changes. You need to focus on academic, social and guidance. Many unhealthy decisions crop up in Middle school.

Barbara Whidden - We have several vacancies at the central office. You will have the opportunity to build a team.

Mr. O'Neill- I would like the opportunity bring together a team. The assistant superintendent would need to be strong. I would utilize the skills that this person brought to the job. Members of the central office need to compliment each other. I have a contract with my present school district, but I realize that this position starts tomorrow.

How would you define a high performing teacher?

One who has the capacity to understand the needs of each student and be able to implement a program to help with these needs and compassion and commitment to children.

Tim Pybus - What are the three of the most important accomplishments you have made in the last 5 years?

Mr. O'Neill-

1. Major construction bond to upgrade High School and Middle School and add athletic facilities.
2. We implemented full day kindergarten. You teach children how to read until third grade and then you learn from reading from then on.
3. The institution of a teacher evaluation system, all our teaching staff bought into this. It wasn't just paper and pencil. We could talk about a common set of terms and language.

What do you see as two challenges you would focus on as superintendent?

Central office staffing, reestablishment of credibility between the superintendent and the community. I support the budget before the community, those items in the budget are critical.

Mr. Kelly- What would describe as North Andover's strengths.

Mr. O'Neill- Facilities, highly motivated staff, community involvement. I talked to two students. You have great kids. You have a great base to build from. A community waiting for leadership. The School Committee has to be the leader for the transformation. There are some major challenges.

Dr. Ormsby- On building a Central Office staff. Define how strong your skills are as far as academic leadership.

Mr. O'Neill- this past summer I attended a two week conference on curriculum auditing. I learned how to look at the how curriculum is offered and developed. I have gone through NESAC accreditation before. I have developed an eight column curriculum

spreadsheet. I have some significant experience. The curriculum auditing process is complicated, it takes time and it is well worthwhile.

Bill Kelly- In terms of our current situation, we have a budget request; we think it will probably be funded. Ultimately, the town will decide the budget. We will be left with some tough decision. How do we move forward?

Mr. O'Neill- You need program budgeting. You do an analysis of the programs and get a group together and prioritize your programs fully funded. Then you cut programs. No one is comfortable with cutting programs, but nipping and tucking doesn't help. You can never be everything to everyone; you have to focus on what you can really do well.

2. Superintendent Candidate Interview with Mr. Mark Kerble

You have visited and researched our community and school system and how we are different from you school system.

Mr. Kerble- I feel the community wants a superintendent who wants to build relationships with the community, the staff, and the School Committee. In Winchester the relationships are terrific. Everyone is concerned about the budget, meeting expectations throughout a budget crisis. I would like to say don't give up. We will need to march on. In terms of achievement, I work in a high performing system. We have been ranked #1. Three of our five elementary schools have been in the top ten. I have been through nine budgets and each year I have had to cut things. I have the skill set to make a difference.

Bill Kelly- Describe your management style. How would this take root and have staying power.

Mr. Kerble- I am an applicable person, I have integrity, compassion. I have high expectations, I am inclusive. People work hard for me. I understand this. My management style is to inspire and motivate people. Our principals and I have great working relationships. I am responsible for curriculum development. I think I can build relationships between the staff. I am approachable and easy. I know about schooling and think I can make a difference here.

Can you describe a new curriculum initiative?

Mr. Kerble-K-12 math program review. We had 150 recommendations to our program. McGraw Hill will give a great award. Our original draft was unacceptable. The school committee told us you need to go back and capture the minority voice. The 10% of parents felt there was a lack of communication. We retooled. We came before the School Committee and got their full support. Next month I will be reporting on the science review. We changed the elementary report card; we spent a few years developing an instrument and we piloted last year. We got feedback all along. We developed rubrics so everyone understood what students were getting on their report cards.

Dr. Ormsby - You have been provided a copy of the Academic Outcome goals and Expectations Initiative passed by this School Committee 5-0. Are you willing to embrace and commit fully to supporting these goals and this initiative? In your answer, please discuss example actions you would take to achieve these goals.

Mr. Kerble- I loved this. In your long term goals there is a message that you believe in kids and teachers. You believe that kids can get here. I try not get caught up in numbers.

I focus on drivers, things that impact outcomes. A driver is an excellent teacher. I think the goals are in line with what I think. I am going to make some presumptions, that our entire curriculum is aligned with the frameworks. In Winchester, I have a team of teachers insuring the science and language arts standards are aligned. I am going to take our curriculum outcomes and put them on line. This keeps us current and relevant. We know that writing is problematic. During the summer we made that a goal. We want teachers to work together. We want principals and teachers to ask questions on how to reach this goal. Professional learning teams have built up a lot of momentum.

Dr. Ormsby- Can you describe what you think a superintendent is. What is your level of responsibility?

Mr. Kerble- You have to ask the tough questions. Is a course a course, do I get rigor, am I challenged. I think all kids need access to rigor. As Superintendent I am the ambassador of what we do here. I think it is important to express myself. To get my point across of what is expected in our school system. Feel comfortable with newspapers and television enough to get my message across. I love kids and I like parents, as well. One strength I have is I find it easy to connect with students.

Barbara Whidden- We need to provide a k-12 continuance. What should a Middle School be?

Mr. Kerble- I spent 8 years as a middle school teacher. I think those kids are going through a huge growth period. Every child needs to have someone they can go to at the Middle School. Kids need to know you are fair and approachable. You need a pod of teachers that work together and a curriculum that is hands on. After 8 minutes middle school students lose focus. You need relevant curriculum and exploratory classes. I think these classes need to be all year long. You need teachers and administrators who understand this age group. They need help with the transition, someone they can trust.

Barbara Whidden- Please describe how your ideal central office would look like and how you would put that together.

Mr. Kerble- I think this is an opportunity. I would like to see Paul and Dick stay. People speak very highly of them. I will embrace an opportunity to bring in a new team. I can't imagine the superintendent in Winchester doing my job, or versus for me to do his job. I think you need a director of finance. I work very closely with the finance director. You need someone who can make things clear and transparent. You need an IT person, Director of SPED and nursing.

Mr. Pybus- How do you plan to reach out to the teachers and bring them into the decision process?

Mr. Kerble- Teachers are leaders in our school system. When I look at building a team, you have to have quality people in house. I encourage these people to lead. We ask them to get involved right away.

Mr. Pybus- What impacts have you made in Winchester in the last five years.

Mr. Kerble- I think the thing I liked best that has happened to me is I made a personal contact with all of our staff in Winchester. I led the effort to restructure Special Education. I was the facilitator, in the end we came up with a model that we implemented on July 1st. The work I have done in curriculum. Our high school and middle school curriculum have been rewritten. We are leading an effort in curriculum

renewal. I have worked one on one with some folks and impacted the work they are doing.

Mr. Pybus- Please describe some challenges upon which you would focus.

Mr. Kerble- Developing relationships. Creating a bridge between different committees. Trying to ask people to live up to expectations under fiscal difficulties.

Tim Pybus- How do you feel about selling the school budget to the town?

Mr. Kerble- I think I can reach out to the community. I would take the opportunity to talk to people about our budget. I have to speak in terms people can understand. The people of North Andover feel a sense of helplessness.

Barbara Whidden- In our restoration budget we have a curriculum initiative for science and math, and balancing class size. When would class size outweigh curriculum?

Mr. Kerble- What I am used to doing is working as a team. Assessing the choices, talking to the leaders and finding out the impact. Reaching a consensus. I have always come down to class sizes. Not cutting programs. We shrink but we don't devastate.

Mr. Kelly- We have level funding now, bad, but level. Town meeting will decide what are funding will be. Decisions will be made, we need to start planning. We are looking at shrinking programs that we only have a shell of now. Where would you fall on making the choice?

Mr. Kerble- You have to reduce class sizes. I would look at the balloon enrollments. The new reasonable class size, knowing full well you might have to cut out whole programs. You need to prioritize your restorations.

Mr. Kelly introduced Mr. Danforth who did an investigation of the Superintendent candidates.

Mr. Danforth- Our investigations are conducted in two phases. 1. Criminal checks, finances and neighborhood checks. 2. Past practice as leaders, budget issues, experience in the leadership they have held. We conduct interviews with unions, school committees, and community members. We don't evaluate the decisions made, but the leadership through out the issues.

Dr. Ormsby made a motion to move into executive session to hear the report of Mr. Danforth for about 15 minutes. Mr. Pybus seconded the motion. Roll call vote. Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly, Yes, Dr. Charles Ormsby, Yes, Tim Pybus, Yes, Barbara Whidden, Yes. All in favor. Motion passed. 4-0

Committee moved into executive session at 8:30 p.m.

No recording necessary, per Vice Chairman, Kelly.

Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly called the meeting back to order at 8:54 p.m.

Motion to move discussion of a superintendent of schools made by Dr. Ormsby, seconded by Mr. Pybus. Roll call vote. Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly, Yes, Dr. Charles Ormsby, Yes, Tim Pybus, Yes, Barbara Whidden, Yes. All in favor. Motion passed. 4-0

Mr. Kelly stated that candidate selection will require three affirmative votes. Mr. Kelly cautioned the committee members to speak to the positive attributes of the candidates.

Barbara Whidden- We need a person who can hit the ground running. We need strong superintendent experience. We face substantial financial restraints. Under normal circumstances they would be fine. Our community deserves to have this search reopened. We need a strong candidate. It is clear candidates are looking for higher salaries. We need to reconvene our search and find a strong candidate.

Tim Pybus yielded his time to Dr. Ormsby

Dr. Ormsby- We have three choices, the two candidates and no decision. Both men have the potential to handle the job. Dr. O'Neil has superintendent experience. I think he knows the need for data driven statistics. He had direct experience in a teacher evaluation system. I like that his first two degrees were not in education. I see he stayed in teaching through out the years. He was teaching biology at the college level. I was impressed by that. He said "The job starts now." I am struggling with the fact that his school system is not as big as ours.

Bill Kelly - We have a difficult decision to make. The vote will have an impact for many years. We are wrestling with the past. I understand we are seeking the finest quality individuals. They are both fine and qualified individuals. This committee needs full confidence. Committees come and go, Superintendents have lasting effects. We need a consensus on who we are going to bring in. For that person to succeed they will need a unanimous decision.

Tim Pybus- I will say that in talking to the private investigator the background checks everything was positive and above board. They both are superintendent material. We have so many challenges. I question whether either candidate is up to the task.

Poll vote taken, which candidate would you vote to hire?

Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly, None, Dr. Charles Ormsby, Mr. O'Neil, Tim Pybus, Mr. O'Neil, Barbara Whidden, None.

No motion needed relative to the election of a superintendent.

Barbara Whidden made a motion to reconvene the search and increase the salary from \$160,000 to 180,000. Motion was seconded by Mr. Pybus for discussion.

Mr. Pybus asked whether the salary range included benefits. Mr. Kelly stated there would be some negotiations.

Members spoke with some of the search committee members.

Members concurred that raising the salary would expose the search to a different pool of interested candidates.

A member of the public gave a suggestion: Recruit rather than solicit, don't be a slave to the process, seek the advice of those people who have already been lead by that candidate.

Bill Kelly- Thanked the members of search committee.

Barbara Whidden withdrew her motion to reconvene the search committee.

Motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Whidden. Motion was seconded by Tim Pybus. Roll call vote. All in favor. Vice Chairman, Bill Kelly, Yes, Dr. Charles Ormsby, Yes, Tim Pybus, Yes, Barbara Whidden, Yes. All in favor. Motion passed. 4-0

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.