

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC) MEETING  
Approved Open Minutes

Library  
R.J. Grey Junior High School

Monday, March 12, 2018  
7:00 p.m. Open Meeting  
8:00 Executive Session (approximately)

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Members Present: Diane Baum, Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Maya Minkin (by remote, left at 9:12 p.m.), Paul Murphy, Kathleen Neville, Deanne O’Sullivan (left at 9:38 p.m.), Eileen Zhang  
Members Absent: none  
Others: Bill McAlduff, Beth Petr

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1. The ABRSC was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Amy Krishnamurthy.

2. **Chairman’s Introduction** – *Amy Krishnamurthy*

The Chair announced that member Maya Minkin was participating remotely due to geographic distance per policy BEDJA. Mary Brolin mentioned that Open Door Theater’s production of Cinderella will open this weekend. She spoke very highly of this special community organization and urged the public to see the show.

3. **Public Participation**

Four members of the public spoke separately in favor of reopening the search, given their perceived lack of significant experience on the part of the 2 finalists and an internal candidate that they believe has that experience. One person stated that part of a good search is to identify candidates internally and externally, and that the process should be slowed down. Marie Altieri was thanked for her years of invaluable service to the schools and community.

Angie Tso thanked the search committee and the candidates. She was on the site committee and felt that that was well organized and very helpful to get to know the finalists better.

Amanda Bailey, chair of AB SPEDPAC and a member of the screening committee, was very positive about the process and the finalists, describing committee members as people who cared deeply about the kids, staff and community. The committee paid close attention to the candidate profile that was agreed on by the School Committee throughout the search process.

4. **Superintendent Search Discussion**

Amy Krishnamurthy thanked the public for their input, especially those that had just spoken. The remainder of the meeting would be School Committee discussion. She reviewed the steps taken emphasizing that a large amount of time and effort were spent on them, and that it was a process that the District can be proud of. She described the screening committee as a diverse group of very intelligent people.

Mr. Parker visited the District on February 28 and Amy reviewed that day. Tessa McKinley shared a summary of the community feedback and forms. On March 2, the site visit team went to Weston High School. Mary Brolin shared their summary. She thanked all of the stakeholders in Weston and Franklin as well as the visiting team. Reference checking was done by Dennis Bruce.

Mr. Light visited the District on March 1 and went through the same process. Tessa McKinley shared a summary of the community feedback and forms. Paul Murphy reported on the site visit to Franklin. Brigid Bieber did references for Mr. Light.

The Committee discussed the two finalists.

Strengths and positive qualities were noted for both Mr. Parker and Mr. Light. They were described as thoughtful and committed to this next step in their careers, although neither of them had been a Superintendent before and both lacked some of the desired experience.

Mary Brolin expressed concern that the Committee was looking for significant Central Office and regional budget experience and she didn't see it. She felt both could grow into the job, but that the District doesn't have time for that. Brigid Bieber agreed but felt the process had to be respected. Paul Murphy agreed with Mary and would support reconsideration if the Committee wanted to discuss it. Tessa McKinley strongly defended the process and was inspired by both of the finalists, despite them not having all of the desired experience. She and Maya Minkin noted the strong professional staff in place that could help the new Superintendent. Katie Neville agreed and was enthusiastic about Mr. Light.

Deanne O'Sullivan stressed that the process needs to be trusted. In response to a comment from the public, she does not think the School Committee has ever "cowered to the public". She said that Mr. Light took the initiative to understand our town before coming. Although Mr. Parker was thoughtful and logical in his interview, he didn't seem to take that initiative as much. She was inspired by both.

Diane Baum emphasized that the candidate profile, carefully built by everyone in the district, drove the process and was a credo outlining the critical qualities the Committee was looking for. She believes that the finalists are outstanding leaders to consider. Mr. Parker understands how to empower people, and is a galvanizing force in his district. She wonders about the scalability of his skill set given we are twice his size as a district, but he could do it. She felt that Mr. Light could hit the ground running and is a phenomenal communicator. She quoted him saying that it is the district leadership team that sets the pace and that is key to her.

Eileen Zhang did the two site visits and was very impressed by both districts and how their staff and students felt about Mr. Parker and Mr. Light. She likes both finalists.

Amy Krishnamurthy enjoyed both days hosting the finalists at AB. Both were very creative and charismatic and focused on the students. She felt Mr. Light was stronger because of his communication skills and experience. She stressed that whomever is chosen, it is important to be very thoughtful about how Central Office Administration is used to fill in the experience gaps that either of these finalists will have. A strong support system must be in place.

Mary Brolin stated that if she had to choose, she would lean toward Mr. Light. She liked them both and admired their work to date, but asked the Committee if they think it's ok to bring someone in that will need a growth period given the complexity and needs of our district at this time. Mary does not see how that could happen without Central Office having to pick up more work.

Mary agreed that the process was set and should be trusted, but if an appropriate pool of candidates wasn't received, another process could be started. Tessa strongly disagreed, saying that she is willing to take the risk and hire Mr. Light because he will learn what he needs to know. Maya Minkin emphasized the need for the Committee to present ourselves as a district that stands by their process. She added that it would be very bad to insert new finalists into

the process now. They needed to trust the search committee's selection of finalists. Members advocated for not starting a new process.

Brigid Bieber stated that Mr. Light definitely hits more of the points on the profile. To her personally, it's important to have the ability to move things forward and make decisions and Mr. Light can do this. He also recognizes what he needs to know and reaches out to get the knowledge that he needs from others. She thinks Mr. Light has many of the qualities needed but not the depth of experience. She agreed that he is a visionary and that is exciting to think about. She would support his candidacy.

#### 5. Possible Recommendation to Appoint

Dennis Bruce moved:

**to appoint Peter Light to the position of Superintendent of Schools beginning July 1, 2018 pending successful contract negotiations.**

Tessa McKinley seconded the motion. Discussion continued.

The Committee discussed and agreed on the importance of providing appropriate support to the new superintendent, including participation in one of the MA Association of School Superintendent programs.

The Committee **VOTED and APPROVED** the motion by Roll call:

IN FAVOR: Baum, Bieber, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Zhang

OPPOSED: Brolin

At 9:02 p.m., the meeting was suspended by the Chairperson. She returned to the meeting at 9:10 p.m. and stated that she had called Mr. Light and he was excited to learn about the appointment. Maya Minkin left the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

#### 6. Executive Session

At 9:13 p.m., Amy Krishnamurthy moved, Mary Brolin seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED BY ROLL CALL**: To enter Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel per M.G.L. Ch. 30A, Section 21(a)(2) (IN FAVOR: Baum, Bieber, Brolin, Bruce, Krishnamurthy, McKinley, Minkin, Murphy, Neville, O'Sullivan, Zhang)

The Chair stated that the Committee would return to open meeting for the sole purpose of adjourning.

At 9:49 p.m., the Committee returned to open meeting and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: Agenda, Summary of Community Feedback regarding the Superintendent Finalists, Summaries of Site Visits, NESDEC Candidate Profile, Finalists Memo dated 2/15/18, Resumes for A. Parker and P. Light