

Pembroke Public Schools

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PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 24, 2016

Pembroke High School Library

6:00 PM

Call to Order

Mr. Tropeano called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Present from Committee: Michael Tropeano, Chair; Paul Bosworth, Vice Chair; Ginny Wandell, Secretary, Patrick Chilcott and Suzanne Scroggins

Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors

Mr. Tropeano welcomed the audience and explained the protocol for speaking at the meeting.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None

Communications

None

Approval of Bill Schedule

Bills were circulated for committee approval.

Appointment of the Superintendent of Pembroke Public Schools

Mr. Tropeano said the school committee just completed the last site visit and he will explain the search process as it started back in October. He said audience members may speak on behalf of a candidate first and then the school committee members will discuss the candidates. He explained that the superintendent search yielded 24 candidates and the screening committee met for 14 hours to select semifinalists. He said interviews took seven hours and the school committee members met with 72 people over last day and a half. He added that he took 34 pages of notes. He explained that for the site visits the school committee gave the candidates a list of people they wanted to meet with and also let the candidate add anyone they felt should give feedback about them. He thanked the search committee members for their time and hard work and said the group did a fantastic job getting the school committee to this point. He thanked Mrs. VanDerMolen for doing all the scheduling and Mrs. Duncanson for doing an excellent job putting all the meetings together. He said the school committee met with teachers, parents, student councils, chiefs of police and town administrators in an effort to hear how each candidate would solve problems for Pembroke and to find out if they knew the challenges the district faces. He added that each candidate had nine hours in Pembroke to interview district and Town staff.

Sarah Quatrle said it was amazing to be part of a search committee. She said there was something about Pam Gould that seemed that she could lead the district and she thought she did an excellent job.

Julie Morris said she is speaking on behalf of the Friends of Pembroke Public Schools. She explained how she reached out to Mrs. Obey last year after finding out about budget cuts and that Pembroke might lose

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great teachers. She said the Friends of PPS group came together to work on an override and they counted on Mrs. Obey many times and asked her for countless requests. She added that Mrs. Obey was precise, timely, accurate and approachable and as a result the override passed and class sizes are now an envy to many surrounding districts. She said the Friends of PPS owes a lot to Mrs. Obey as she helped the group deliver the facts and make the override successful.

Jeff Szymaniak said he has a 2nd grader and kindergartner and he is a high school principal. He said Pembroke is a growing district and needs an educational leader. He said Pam Gould will put her heart on the table for all children. He added that Andrew Stephens has done a great job and you can't go wrong with either candidate. He said Pembroke needs an educational leader that cares about kids first and staff second.

Mrs. Szymaniak said she went to all the candidate interviews and heard Pam Gould and Andrew Stephens talk a lot about the kids. She said she believes the district can't go wrong with Pam because she will come in and know what she is doing. She said she liked what Andrew said and said he inspired her and will inspire staff.

Tom Hogan said thank you to the school committee and educators. He said at the end of the day three valid candidates were brought forth. He said the district needs a candidate with a heart in education and to be a leader that will bring Pembroke educationally forward. He said Pam is a visionary and she has been attending school committee meetings before she had the job.

Mrs. Wandell said she had the opportunity to meet so many people in this process. She said all three candidates are well qualified but it comes down to who is the right fit and the committee together has to make that decision. She added that candidate letters of recommendation were insightful and the site visits were filled with incredible information. She said regarding Mrs. Obey's site visit, she heard she has a strong plan for the district's social emotional issues. She said the Duxbury site visit was the greatest contrast from the candidate. She added that she would be proud to have any of the three candidates as superintendent.

Mr. Chilcott said he took 46 pages of notes between the interviews and site visits. After the interviews he said he had some doubts but took time to think about it and be objective. He said the site visits changed his entire prospective. He said he wants a superintendent candidate with a vision, that can take technology and make it an effective tool, can relate to kids and also involve teachers. The person has to show that they can do that and be a leader and lead Pembroke to a different place. He said the district can't lose ground as there are social emotional issues to be dealt with. He added that Pembroke has a brand problem and is lacking a sense of involvement and the new Superintendent has to make Pembroke a town within a town. He said hearing from the groups of students at the site visits was great. During Andrew's site visit Mr. Chilcott said he was told by students that Andrew is an amazing representation of a leader and staff said he is the most visible administrator. Mr. Chilcott said he thinks Andrew demonstrates leadership and said he struggling with the decision because two candidates site visits were amazing.

Mrs. Scroggins said she agrees with Mrs. Wandell that three quality candidates have been brought to the committee. She said she can't stress enough how productive the three point process is. For her, fit means everything not just one piece, it includes kids, teachers, relations with faculty and negotiations. She said the committee is trying to make the best decision for Pembroke in order keep doing some things we've doing and at the same time have a vision and plan to continue to grow. She added that she heard great adjectives describing each candidate at their site visits.

Mr. Bosworth said he is looking for someone with a vision that can also execute it and this vision must fit with the district. The district needs to hire two new principals and he said he wants to know how each

candidate would handle it. He added he wishes the committee could put the three candidates together into one and hire that person.

Mr. Tropeano said each candidate has two to three qualities that the other doesn't. He said regardless of experience this is a first time superintendent job for the candidates. He added that he hoped one candidate would separate or fall off during the site visits but instead the site visits produced different results. He said with the site visits he found out all the candidates are student focused, approachable, hardworking and visible, which are all traits the Pembroke is looking for. With Pam, he said he heard she is strong in personnel and a strong delegator and said it is important to get right people involved. With Mrs. Obey, he said staff spoke about her business background including her work in Boston. He said he also heard everybody in Pembroke talk as a team and he didn't hear this in the other districts. With Andrew, he said he got a sense of excitement from parents. He said the students were amazing, open and honest.

He said he found that all candidates were well respected. He said he agrees with Mr. Chilcott that the district needs somebody to hit the road running with a plan of action on technology and the social emotional needs of the district.

Mr. Bosworth said Andrew has worked with suicide prevention and involves students and parents. He said there was an example of a parent that did not agree with Andrew and Andrew got him on the school council.

Mr. Chilcott said with Mrs. Obey's site visit, the support of town officials stuck out. He said Chief Wall worried if the other candidates are a good fit. The Chief said Mrs. Obey has been a great team player and works well with the Town. Mr. Chilcott said Mrs. Obey has incredible recall and is very bright and she believes every kid should have an amazing experience. He said the teachers were asked if they will follow someone who doesn't have the curriculum piece and they immediately said yes and asked if it was Mrs. Obey, they immediately said yes. Mr. Chilcott said having the support of teachers and town officials is very important. He said with Andrew's site visit he found the kids have so much respect for him and said the guidance staff said he is the best person to work for. Mr. Chilcott said he was not convinced that Andrew was ready for the superintendent position, but when asked, everyone at the site visit said he absolutely is. They said he will be the face of the district and lead your district. Mr. Chilcott said he heard Andrew finds the kid that nobody else is noticing and reaches out to them.

Mrs. Wandell said she saw a difference with Plymouth having a big budget to work with. She said other towns have line items with unused funds and Pembroke has never had this. She said the new leader has to understand that we have to roll up our sleeves and deal with budget issues.

Mrs. Scroggins said she asked the candidates about budget. She said continuity is really important for Pembroke but she is not sure what it looks like. She added that the district has worked hard to get where it is.

Mr. Bosworth said with Mrs. Obey's site visit he heard the philosophy that every kid should have an amazing experience and "here and happy to help". He said he heard how Mrs. Obey leads in meetings, facilitates and doesn't overpower and these jump out as leadership qualities. He said he heard about all candidates' visibility in their community. He added that he heard about Mrs. Obey and Andrew being present in classrooms but not Pam.

Mr. Tropeano said curriculum and budget were the top items in the superintendent search survey. With Mrs. Obey's site visit, he said he heard about her strong budget background. He said he has concern with Andrew going from high school principal to superintendent but said he heard from the site visit that Andrew is a team builder and ready and up to the challenge. With Pam, he said he heard about her

presence in the schools/classrooms. He said her role is the most separated from the classroom but kids said she connects with them.

Mr. Chilcott said Chief Wall said there is a difference between leadership and management and he sees Mrs. Obey as a leader. Mr. Chilcott said he thinks parents were split between two candidates, teachers were leading toward one way but not definite and Town Hall was leaning one way. He said the interviews and site visits were very different. He added that Pembroke needs a visionary, a leader to move the district forward. He said there was not a lot of depth in Pam's site visit as her position seems very HR related, negotiations specific. He said Andrew understands curriculum and technology. He said he is not sure that Pam is the right fit, right now for Pembroke.

Mrs. Wandell said each site visit put candidates in a 1-3 spot. She said she likes to look at the positives. With Andrew she said he has implemented real programs with real actions but questions if he is ready for a superintendent role. With Mrs. Obey, she said she is smart, emotionally intelligent, so organized and compassionate. She said Mrs. Obey has rolled up her sleeves and at the same time realizes her weaknesses.

Mr. Bosworth said Mrs. Obey's weakness is classroom experience but in a way this is a strength because she will have to learn it. He said a leader should include people and she will have to do that.

Mrs. Scroggins said she agrees with Mrs. Wandell about Andrew's skills translating into a superintendent role. She said she realized a superintendent today is not the same as when you look back 10-20 years ago because school districts have different challenges. She said she is concerned about Andrew's skillset translating from high school principal to superintendent. She said with Mrs. Obey's site visit, it was pleasant to hear from the current team in place and she gives credit to the people for meeting and talking very candidly about her.

Mr. Chilcott said it struck him when a team member said Mrs. Obey has brought back a team atmosphere. He said the staff feel it is safe to disagree with her. He said Mrs. Obey has showed leadership and has been doing the job and running with it. He added he is convinced that Andrew can make the job leap with no doubt in his mind.

Mr. Tropeano said he see Pam's weakness to be her lack of budget experience. Mrs. Obey's weakness to be lack of curriculum and her communication in front of large groups. He said Andrew's weakness is also lack of budget experience. He said a strength of Mrs. Obey is that every educator said they would be good with Mrs. Obey as superintendent. A strength for Andrew is his social emotional work – "dot program". He said he thinks all three candidates have equal reputations among their peers. He added that parents were excited about Andrew but the teachers did not seem as excited.

Mr. Chilcott said the survey responses top items were curriculum and finances and Mrs. Obey has the best background with the budget piece.

Mr. Bosworth said he has a concern bringing in a new leader with other ideas around curriculum. He said it's all about the momentum. He added that Mrs. Obey answered the question about principal openings best. He said the new leader needs to understand what Pembroke needs and not base it on their previous experience.

Mr. Chilcott said Mrs. Obey understands and wears multiple hats and Mr. Tropeano pointed out that Mrs. Obey walked through buildings with the Technology director and showed him what the issues are. Mr. Chilcott added that Mrs. Obey has been in really difficult situations this year. Mr. Tropeano said Mrs. Obey was at PCMS every morning after the incident and didn't hide at Central Office. He said the district wants someone that is going handle situations and he thinks both Mrs. Obey and Andrew will.

Mrs. Wandell said communication came up a lot and she thought communication was broad in the other site visits. She said a Pembroke parent said even if there wasn't a clear answer, Mrs. Obey was compassionate and she came away feeling comfortable. Mrs. Wandell said this a good reminder for her.

Mr. Bosworth said Mrs. Obey has been on a nine month interview. He said he questioned some things nine months ago and she has brought a lot of insightful stuff to the Education Subcommittee. He said Mrs. Obey never once passed off something as her own but gave a lot of credit to whose idea it was.

Mrs. Wandell said people said the new leader needs to be visible and needs a greater sense of community.

Mr. Chilcott said Renee Bock talked about consistency and having Mrs. Obey continue as superintendent brings consistency. He said Marybeth Brust said Mrs. Obey is just accessing her potential and she is ready to launch now. He said it struck him today that teachers and administrators said the budget is more important than curriculum in Pembroke. Mr. Bosworth said maybe it is because they feel it is moving forward.

Mr. Tropeano asked the committee if they thought the other two candidates could handle the budget and curriculum during tough times. Mr. Chilcott said he thinks Pam could get there but it might be tough relating from her bigger district budget to Pembroke.

Mr. Bosworth said he heard about Mrs. Obey up on the school roofs shoveling snow and heard about Andrew carrying food for the senior prom. You think of budget person being penny pinching but Mrs. Obey makes decision based on the kids. Takes data and assimilates it and makes best decision for kids.

Mr. Chilcott said what he saw in Duxbury was great and what he heard in Pembroke was great.

Mr. Bosworth questioned whether Andrew will base everything on his experience and not what Pembroke needs.

Mrs. Scroggins said she heard during the site visit the district is making good progress considering having an interim superintendent and people think a year will be lost if a new person is put in the role.

Mr. Tropeano said he doesn't think it will be a full year loss. He said Mrs. Obey has worked closely with others and they have spoken highly of her. Mr. Chilcott said the way colleagues and teachers speak so highly of her speaks volumes.

Mrs. Wandell said all the site visits were very telling and negative things did come out. She said the committee found out a lot of facts and everybody has strengths and weaknesses and the committee will have to make their best decision for the district.

Mr. Chilcott said he would like to see at least two of the candidates in the district because he thinks they would make a great team.

VOTE: On a motion made by Paul Bosworth and seconded by Suzanne Scroggins, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to appoint Mrs. Erin Obey as the superintendent of Pembroke Public Schools subject to successful contract negotiations.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, Paul Bosworth, Ginny Wandell, Patrick Chilcott and Suzanne

Scroggins

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

VOTE: At 8:04PM, on a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Suzanne Scroggins, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to enter Executive Session Pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) to discuss a personal service contract as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the legal position of the School Committee, as declared by the Chair.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, Paul Bosworth, Ginny Wandell, Patrick Chilcott and Suzanne Scroggins

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

APPROVED: April 12, 2016

MOTIONS

VOTE: On a motion made by Paul Bosworth and seconded by Suzanne Scroggins, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to appoint Mrs. Erin Obey as the superintendent of Pembroke Public Schools subject to successful contract negotiations.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, Paul Bosworth, Ginny Wandell, Patrick Chilcott and Suzanne Scroggins

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

VOTE: At 8:04PM, on a motion made by Patrick Chilcott and seconded by Suzanne Scroggins, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to enter Executive Session Pursuant to Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) to discuss a personal service contract as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the legal position of the School Committee, as declared by the Chair.

Voting Yes: Michael Tropeano, Paul Bosworth, Ginny Wandell, Patrick Chilcott and Suzanne Scroggins

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none