



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE
SPECIAL BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

March 2, 2022

The Boston School Committee held a special remote meeting on March 2, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Mr. Tran; and Student Representative Xyra Mercer.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: February 15, 2022

Superintendent Search Firm Request for Proposals (RFP)

Memo: Superintendent Search Committee Membership and Community Engagement Process

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Mr. Tran was absent but joined the public meeting following the executive session. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez and Mr. O'Neill joined at the start of the executive session. All other members were present.

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Ms. Robinson announced that the Committee would immediately adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union and to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with the Superintendent of Schools (non-union personnel). She said that the Committee would return to public session at 6 p.m.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Approved - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union and to prepare for negotiations with the Superintendent of Schools (non-union personnel).

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson reconvened the meeting in public session at approximately 6:25 p.m. She announced that the Committee has just returned from an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union and to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with the Superintendent of Schools (non-union personnel).

Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). The interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions in their native language on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel. Translated meeting documents were posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the February 15, 2022 School Committee meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE

Ms. Robinson provided an update on the superintendent search process. Since Mayor Wu, Superintendent Cassellius and Chair Robinson jointly announced the Superintendent's departure in June 2022, their teams have been working collaboratively to outline next steps and have remained in close contact while also ensuring that school district operations have remained tightly managed.

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She outlined the Committee's main objectives for the meeting: review the separation agreement between the Boston School Committee and Dr. Cassellius; review the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the search firm; review the make-up of the Superintendent Search Committee and discuss next steps for approving the membership; and review the schedule for the upcoming community engagement process.

Ms. Robinson thanked Superintendent Cassellius for her leadership and dedication over the past few years which have been extremely challenging.

Superintendent's Separation Agreement: Over the last few weeks, the Corporation Counsel for the City of Boston and counsel for Dr. Cassellius discussed and negotiated the terms of a mutual separation agreement. Both the City of Boston and Dr. Cassellius have reached an agreement and tonight Chair Robinson will ask the Committee tonight to authorize her to sign the separation agreement on behalf of the School Committee.

Ms. Robinson outlined the terms of the agreement. Its terms are consistent with previous separation agreements between the School Committee and outgoing superintendents. The agreement is consistent with the terms of the Superintendent's employment contract and state law and does not provide any more than what the Superintendent's contract and state law requires.

Under the terms of the agreement, Dr. Cassellius will receive one-year of her annual contract salary totalling \$297,138.00. She will also receive \$16,900 in back pay for contractually-required minimum salary increases that she had not received over the course of the last two years. Dr. Cassellius will also receive payment for her accrued but unused time off at the time of her departure. These payments are consistent with what is required pursuant to the terms of her employment contract and state law. Ms. Robinson said that the separation agreement is fair for all parties, provides Dr. Cassellius with what is contractually owed to her under her employment contract and state law, and is consistent with previous separation agreements with outgoing superintendents.

Dr. Alkins thanked Superintendent Cassellius for laying a strong foundation and spoke about the importance of rebuilding trust with families.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez echoed Dr. Alkins' comments about rebuilding trust following the movement of superintendents across the system. He emphasized the importance of reflecting on lessons learned and incorporating those lessons into the next superintendent's employment agreement.

Mr. O'Neill thanked City's corporation counsel for their work on the agreement.

Mr. Tran thanked Superintendent Cassellius for her service, praising her leadership.

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Search Firm RFP

BPS posted an RFP to hire a search firm to manage the process to hire a new superintendent last week. It is posted at bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search. The RFP outlines the scope of the work to be completed. The deadline for firms to respond is March 18th at 12 p.m. EST. The proposals will be evaluated by an RFP evaluation team that will include 1–2 members of the Search Committee, as well as Al Taylor, BPS Chief Human Capital Officer, and Naveen Reddy, Business Manager for BPS. The RFP team will present their analysis of the proposals received and recommended selection to the full Search Committee for its review. The Search Committee will make its recommendation to the School Committee for a final vote, which is tentatively scheduled for April 6th.

Mr. O’Neill said that the cost of the RFP will be paid from the BPS budget. He said that the exact cost will be disclosed when RFP is known.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez encouraged the RFP evaluation team to connect with the evaluation team from the previous superintendent search to discuss lessons learned. He asked if there was a ceiling for the cost of the search. Ms. Robinson said that the Committee will examine the costs of past searches. Mr. O’Neill explained that some search firms offer a fixed price cost, while others offer a percentage of salary plus expenses. He noted that many nationwide superintendent searches are currently underway.

Dr. Alkins requested clarity about the role of community engagement. Mr. O’Neill said that public input is critical in the early and late stages of the process with a quiet period in between when confidential interviews are being held.

Search Committee

Ms. Robinson explained that given the tight timeline, she is proposing a more compact search committee than in previous years to increase the probability of identifying openings for scheduling.

The Search Committee will include:

- Dr. Pam Eddinger, President of Bunker Hill Community College
- Roxi Harvey, Chair of the BPS Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SpEdPac)
- Lorena Lopera, Member of the Boston School Committee
- Marcus McNeill, Student at Fenway High School
- Michael O’Neill, Vice Chair of the Boston School Committee
- Dr. Carline Pignato, Head of school, Channing Elementary School at Boston Public Schools
- Gene Roundtree, Secondary School Superintendent and former Head of School at Snowden High School at Boston Public Schools
- Jessica Tang, President of the Boston Teachers Union
- José Valenzuela, history teacher at Boston Latin Academy

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Ms. Robinson proposed that the Search Committee be led by three co-chairs: Dr. Eddinger, Ms. Lopera, and Marcus McNeill - an educator, a parent, and a student.

Community Engagement

The Search Committee will host a series of remote community listening sessions.

The dates and times of these public meetings will be:

- Wednesday, March 9th 6-8pm
- Tuesday, March 15th 6-8pm
- Thursday, March 24th 6-8pm
- Saturday, April 2nd 10am-12pm

The meetings will be held on Zoom, recorded and posted following the conclusion of each meeting, and will include live interpretation in all BPS languages. Members of the public can sign-up by RSVPing online at bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search. Additionally, members of the public can submit written testimony via email:

superintendentsearch@bostonpublicschools.org. The School Committee will partner with the Search Committee to provide alternative ways of gathering feedback from stakeholders, including but not limited to written testimony and online surveys, which will be translated into all of the major languages.

Ms. Lopera asked about plans for broad community outreach. Ms. Robinson said that the initial meetings will serve as a start, adding that the Search Committee may plan additional meetings possibly co-hosted with community organizations. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez suggested that opportunities be provided for native language dialogue as well as a student-centered forum. Ms. Robinson said that holding forums via Zoom will make them more accessible and expressed optimism for strong engagement.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Maria Mejia, Roxbury resident and Blackstone Elementary School parent, testified regarding the school's budget and facilities upgrades.
- Nancy Lessin, Jamaica Plain resident and member of BPS Families for COVID Safety and MassCOSH, testified regarding COVID Safety.
- Robert Jenkins, Mattapan resident and community advocate, testified regarding the GPA requirement for athletics.
- Sharon Hinton, Hyde Park resident and founder of Black Teachers Matter, testified regarding the Superintendent search.
- Elise Pechter, Jamaica Plain resident and member of MassCOSH, testified regarding COVID safety.
- Allison Cox, Jamaica Plain resident and Mission Hill K-8 School parent, testified regarding concerns about the district's recent actions at the school.

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- Ruby Reyes, Dorchester resident and executive director of the Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA), testified regarding the budget.
- Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident and member of the BEJA, testified regarding the budget and a variety of other educational issues.
- Bernadette Manning, Cambridge resident and Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA) teacher, testified in support of keeping the school's location at the Timilty building.
- Norma Suarez Quiles, Roxbury resident and BDEA parent and board member, testified in support of keeping the school's location at the Timilty building.
- Shakeeda Barte, Dorchester resident and BPS teacher and parent, testified in support of pay equity across schools.
- Sean Barrett, South Boston resident and Perry Elementary School parent, testified in support of lifting the mask mandate and the expansion of Excellence for All.
- Deirdre Baugh, Dorchester resident and UP Academy Boston teacher, testified in support of pay equity across schools.
- Mary Lee Marra, Hyde Park resident and community advocate, testified in support and appreciation of Superintendent Cassellius.
- Fran Brangman, Dorchester resident and community advocate, testified in support of a community engagement strategy entitled, "Real Talk for Change."

ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez emphasized the importance of transparency and reiterated his earlier comments about incorporating lessons learned into the next superintendent's employment agreement.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to authorize the School Committee Chair to sign a separation agreement with Superintendent Brenda Cassellius according to the terms outlined at the March 2, 2022 School Committee meeting.

Ms. Lopera announced that following consultation with BPS Legal Advisor and State Ethics Commission, she has filed a disclosure form with the City of Boston to address any appearance of a conflict of interest based on any advocacy her current employer may engage in as it relates to the search for a superintendent, as well as her current employer's status as a BESE member, and to address any conflict regarding her current employer's current contract with the Boston Public schools. She affirmed that she will remain impartial and carry out her responsibilities as a Search Committee and School Committee member to interview and recommend candidates for superintendent.

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Mr. Tran asked if the School Committee can have access to the list of questions posed to candidates and as well as candidates' background information. Mr. O'Neill explained the need for confidentiality among early rounds of interviews, adding that the Search Committee will provide regular updates to the School Committee. Mr. Tran spoke about the importance of balancing confidentiality with community engagement.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez echoed the importance of providing opportunities for community input.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee voted to approve the membership and charge of the Superintendent Search Committee as outlined in the Chair's March 2, 2022 memo to the School Committee. Ms. Lopera and Ms. Polanco-Garcia abstained. All other members voted yes.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Lopera applauded Ms. Mercer for completing an internship program at the Warren-Prescott K-8 School during February break.

ADJOURN

At approximately 8:22 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary