



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

June 29, 2022

The Boston School Committee held a special remote meeting on June 29, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto: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; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Xyra Mercer.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

### DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

#### Agenda

Meeting Minutes: June 23, 2022; and June 24, 2022

Memo from Chair Robinson to Boston School Committee re: Recommendation for Appointment of Drew Echelson as Acting Superintendent, June 21, 2022

Memo from Superintendent Search Committee Co-Chairs to Chair Robinson re: Finalists for Superintendent of Schools, June 21, 2022

### CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Ms. Mercer was absent for roll call but later joined the meeting in progress. All other members were present.

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

**June 29, 2022**

[bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://www.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](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) prior to the start of the meeting.

## APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Chair Robinson announced that the Committee would defer the approval of minutes for the June 8, 2022 and June 21 School Committee meetings until the next regular meeting.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the June 23, 2022 and June 24, 2022 School Committee meetings.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

*\*As prepared for delivery.*

Thank you, Madame Chair, and thank you all for joining us tonight. This is my last update to you as your superintendent. I'll have some closing remarks at the end of my report, but I wanted to share a few critical updates from the past few weeks.

I want to thank members of the Office of Family and Community Advancement for their support of Mission Hill families. I've asked Deputy Superintendent Drew Echelson to lead a cross-functional team that follows-up and supports Mission Hill students and families through the fall and beyond, as needed. Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the investigation will be finishing in the coming weeks. The Acting Superintendent and/or new Superintendent will consider and move forward with any of the recommendations from these reports and we then take any administrative or disciplinary actions he or she deems appropriate. The district will not share the portions of the reports related to individual employees at the school or district level as such information is confidential personnel information. The district will make public the portions of the reports related to any system-level deficiencies that must be addressed given the forthcoming findings from Hinkley-Allen.

One of the things I will be most proud of when I think back on my time here in Boston is the work we've done to move our facilities forward. Don't get me wrong, there is still a lot of work to do but knowing our schools have some of the basics like clean water to drink, bathroom upgrades, newer kitchens and cooler classrooms either done or on the way, as well as some exciting new schools or major renovations is just so important to Boston's future. It's why Mayor Wu announced A Green New Deal for BPS with a 2 Billion Dollar commitment to deliver the facilities quality guarantee all students deserve. Every student in Boston deserves to learn in a space that is safe, healthy, energy-efficient, and inspiring. Yet many of our school buildings lack the basic infrastructure they need. There are hard decisions to make but we've begun the community engagement on some of the recent proposals to build new schools,

**June 29, 2022**

renovate existing buildings and combine some school communities. I want to remind everyone that these are just proposals and we commit to ongoing engagement. We've had initial community meetings with the Russell, Clap, Shaw, Taylor, Sumner and Philbrick schools about any potential two campus solutions. This summer, the district is reviewing proposals provided by school leaders around the design schedule with the intention of bringing those findings to their school communities this fall. School superintendents and school leaders are also creating a series of design workshops to be hosted in August and September for community feedback. Following community engagement and once a proposal is finalized, we will bring forward a final recommendation to the school committee in the late fall. We will also begin engagement next year to determine what school communities will move into the New Builds and be identified for major renovations. There is a lot of work to be done, but I am confident that we've laid a strong plan and foundation for the next superintendent to lead on this important work.

We are pleased to share that the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools (BPS), and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have reached an agreement on a Systemic Improvement Plan to partner on specific actions in addressing long-standing challenges facing BPS. The Plan includes clear timelines and joint commitments to eliminate systemic barriers to educational opportunity, build the operational capacity to implement systemic change, and support Boston's students in achieving their full potential. The plan outlines areas where BPS must focus its attention and energy: student safety, special education, multilingual learners, transportation, facilities, transformation schools and data and accountability. BPS is eager to move forward in continuing this important work, and grateful to our school communities for their partnership throughout our ongoing leadership transition. I would like to personally thank Dr. Drew Echelson who, along with many BPS colleagues, led negotiations and preparation on behalf of BPS. I've asked Dr. Echelson to share a few details about the agreement with a specific focus on scopes of work with the most immediate timeline.

*[Dr. Echelson reviewed [highlights of the DESE- BPS Systemic Improvement Plan](#) and said he is committed to providing the Committee with regular progress reports, the first of which will take place before Aug. 31, 2022.]*

This past Monday was our last day of school. What a year it has been! I want to thank all our students, families and staff who made this year so special. It wasn't always easy, but our educators and school staff never wavered. Summer registrations are over 6,000 and we're aiming for 6,500 by the end of the week. Summer programming begins Tuesday, July 5th.

Leading BPS has been an experience I will forever remember for the rest of my life. It has been challenging, but that challenge turned into some of the most rewarding and worthy work in my career. I have learned so much from Boston and am a better leader and person because of it. I know you are too. Getting through adversity makes us stronger, but more importantly, it builds our character and guides our purpose. The next Superintendent will need your support. No one person does this work alone and it will require extraordinary effort again from all corners of our city in order to continue the good progress these past few years. Progress is possible. I offer Mayor Wu my heartfelt best wishes as she works to improve outcomes for our students, families and communities.

**June 29, 2022**

I also want to thank former Mayor Walsh for providing me this opportunity and for giving BPS an annual ongoing appropriation of 100 million dollars. That means over the past two years we have added more than 200 million additional investments. These new dollars go directly to our students and we're provided above all other increases in costs such as salaries or other maintenance costs. And now in this third year, we have 110 million approved by City Councilors. I'd also like to thank former Mayor Kim Janey whose advocacy for the most vulnerable students was unwavering, and of course to the Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Boston School Committee both past and present for their service to BPS and the support they gave to me personally.

I feel blessed to fulfill what I believe was my calling to lead Boston Public Schools through this pandemic and the significant and historic shifts to policy and opportunities we created as we endeavored to Measuring everything in child benefit, giving them what they need to succeed, and applying a focused lens of equity and anti-racism. I close by thank every educator, school leader, central office staff member, food nutrition workers, safety officers, support staff, and our custodians and facility team members. I wish each of you an abundance of success and joy and I look forward to when we meet again. I came in Minnesota nice, but I am going home Boston strong. I am a better leader and a better person because of my service in Boston and I wish the next superintendent much success.

---

Mr. O'Neill recalled joining Superintendent's Cassellius on many school visits and praised her equity work.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez thanked the Superintendent for her leadership and said he looks forward to receiving the results of the next Mission Hill School investigation. He asked a number of clarifying questions about the hiring of an independent auditor and the Green New Deal. Deputy Superintendent of Academics Drew said that DESE will select an auditor for BPS by August 15. The Superintendent said that she envisions that the next superintendent will work with the new Office of Risk Management to comply with DESE's data requirements. Dr. Echelson said that the auditor will examine data and the processes behind it and make recommendations to the data working group. BPS will then interrogate its own systems as part of a process of continuous improvement. The Superintendent said that over the next 18 months, an outside vendor will conduct a facilities conditions assessment to produce a larger, in-depth dataset of building conditions and make recommendations for repair, replacement, and renovation. The purpose of the Green New Deal is to ensure that all BPS schools are healthy, safe, and energy-efficient.

Dr. Alkins requested an update on summer learning registration. The Superintendent said that more than 6,000 students have registered for summer learning opportunities.

Ms. Robinson requested an update on summer programming offerings and transportation. Acting Chief of Family and Community Advancement Denise Snyder said every summer transportation route has been bid on by drivers. Dr. Echelson confirmed that BPS will be tracking on-time performance during the summer.

**June 29, 2022**

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked for clarification about the new auditor position. Dr. Echelson explained that BPS still has more negotiating to do with DESE regarding the metrics that will be tracked. He said that the data working group will be responsible for accepting information and recommendations from the auditor and improving processes as well as any needed policy changes. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez requested that the School Committee set a cadence for the district's DESE updates to the Committee. Ms. Robinson said that BPS and city leadership will meet with DESE leadership on a monthly basis. She said that at its July 13th meeting, the Committee will discuss agenda planning with a focus on monitoring student outcomes.

**Approved** - On roll call, the School Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent's Report.

Ms. Robinson introduced a video highlighting Dr. Cassellius' tenure as BPS Superintendent.

Committee members thanked Superintendent Cassellius for her courageous leadership and focus on equity. Dr. Cassellius thanked the Committee and the BPS community for their support and signed out of the meeting.

## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Elsa Flores, East Boston resident, BPS parent and community advocate, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.
- Shawn Stanuslaus, Dorchester resident and TechBoston Academy student, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Marcus McNeill, Fenway High School graduate and Superintendent Search Committee co-chair, testified regarding the integrity of the search process.
- Jose Valenzuela, Boston Latin Academy teacher and Superintendent Search Committee co-chair, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Alexandra Oliver-Davila, Roslindale resident and Sociedad Latina Executive Director, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.
- Will Austin, Roslindale resident and Boston Schools Fund Chief Executive Officer, testified regarding the Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School investigation.
- John Mudd, Cambridge resident and English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force member, testified regarding the superintendent candidate pool.
- Sharon Hinton, Hyde Park resident and community advocate, testified regarding the superintendent search process and the possibility of state intervention.
- Michael Heichman, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance member, testified regarding the superintendent search process and the possibility of state intervention.
- Ruby Reyes, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance executive director, testified in favor of extending the superintendent search process.
- Lisa Green, North End resident, and Bostonians for an Elected School Committee member, testified in favor of extending the superintendent search process.
- Jane Reilly, East Boston resident and BPS parent, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.

**Boston School Committee Special Remote Meeting  
Zoom**

**June 29, 2022**

- Joy Ramnarine, Easton resident and BPS teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.
- Bethlehem Ghidey, Roxbury resident and BPS parent, testified regarding concerns about the proposed merger of the Russell and Clap schools.
- Chris Fung, Dorchester resident and Russell Elementary School parent, testified regarding concerns about the proposed merger of the Russell and Clap schools.
- Sarah Wilfred, Fenway resident and BPS teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.
- Casey Allen, East Wareham resident and Suffolk Construction employee, testified regarding the career pipeline.
- Hilary Aguirre, East Boston resident and BPS parent, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Dr. Tommy Welch.
- Francia Reyes, Arlington resident, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Paula Magnelli, Somerville resident, parent and community advocate, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Jessica Boston Davis, Malden resident and Somerville Public Schools employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Christine Trevisone, Malden resident and Somerville Public Schools employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Glenda Soto, Peabody resident and Somerville Public Schools employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Eric Conti, Andover resident and Burlington Public Schools employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Darlene Lombos, Roxbury resident and BPS parent, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Ilana Krepchin, Somerville resident and Somerville School Committee member, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Kristen Leathers, Roslindale resident and BPS teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Aisha Banda, Roxbury resident, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Raul Brown, Dorchester resident and TechBoston Academy employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Karen Aylward, West Roxbury resident and Brighton High School teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Helen Moskowitz, Quincy resident, and TechBoston Academy teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Leslie Lartey, Everett resident and Somerville Public Schools employee, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Barbara Fields, Mattapan resident and Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) member, testified in favor of extending the superintendent search process.
- Siobhan Dooling, West Roxbury resident and BPS parent and teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Justin Desai, West Roxbury resident and TechBoston Academy teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.

**June 29, 2022**

- Gisely Rivera, Hyde Park resident and TechBoston Academy alumna, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Katherine Santiago, Chelsea resident, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Karen Provenzano, Dorchester resident and TechBoston Academy teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Antwain Sheffield, Dorchester resident and TechBoston Academy teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.
- Robin Citrin, Roslindale resident and BPS teacher, testified in support of Superintendent finalist Mary Skipper.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

Dr. Alkins and Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed support for the appointment of Dr. Echelson as Acting Superintendent, although Mr. Cardet-Hernandez said he wished that the Committee would have taken action sooner.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Chair's recommendation to appoint Dr. Drew Echelson as the Acting Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, effective June 30, 2022 and continuing until such time as the effective date of the School Committee's appointment of a new superintendent.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion consenting to enter into a discussion about the final candidates for the position of Superintendent of Boston Public Schools.

Ms. Robinson said that the appointment of the superintendent will require at least four affirmative votes cast for any candidate. She proposed that members each take turns sharing their reflections, close their remarks by stating their preferred candidate, then take a roll call vote on the candidate with the most preferences. Ms. Robinson recalled that last week, the Superintendent Search Committee presented the Committee with its selection of Final Candidates for the Position of Boston Public Schools Superintendent: Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools, and Dr. Tommy Welch, Region 1 Superintendent for Boston Public Schools. On June 23 and 24, 2022, both finalists participated in a series of panel interviews over the course of a single day, engaging with community partners, educators and school leaders, and students and families. The day-long sessions culminated in a public interview with the Boston School Committee. All of the videos were posted on the [search website](#) for review by the Committee and the community at-large. Ms. Robinson apologized for the delay in posting some of the videos due to technical difficulties. She invited each Committee member to share their feedback and reflections on the final candidates and then state their candidate of choice.

**Mr. Tran** thanked the Superintendent Search Committee for its work. He said that he does not support the suggestion by some to extend the search, noting that there are many urgent matters facing the district. Mr. Tran said that while both finalists are qualified, his preferred candidate

**June 29, 2022**

was **Mary Skipper** because he feels she has more experience working with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and DESE.

**Ms. Lopera** spoke about the enormous weight of the decision and the impact it will have on BPS and the city. She said the major factors impacting her decision were the candidates' commitment and track record of community engagement and family partnerships, the candidates' philosophy as it relates to English Language Learners (ELLs) and native language instruction, and the candidates demonstrated track record of improved outcomes for the most marginalized and vulnerable students, particularly English language learners. Ms. Lopera said that her preferred candidate was **Dr. Tommy Welch**.

**Ms. Polanco Garcia** said that many immigrants in the BPS community have not felt comfortable expressing their opinions on the finalists because of their immigration status, illiteracy, and/or language barriers. She said that while she deeply values Dr. Welch's work in BPS, her preferred candidate is **Mary Skipper**. Ms. Polanco Garcia pledged to work with Ms. Skipper to oversee the district's implementation of the LOOK Act and give immediate attention to ELLs, students with special needs, students of color and low income students. She spoke about the need for more collaborative decision making and faster responses from the central office. She said the next superintendent must have a clear vision.

**Dr. Alkins** spoke about the difficulty of the decision before the Committee and thanked the community for input. He said it's important to retain a diverse pool and suggested that the Committee examine the process for recruiting and retaining marginalized candidates throughout the search process. Stating that students and families need stability, Dr. Alkins said that he does not support reopening the search, noting that both candidates are qualified. Dr. Alkins said that his preferred candidate is **Dr. Tommy Welch**, whom he said demonstrated a great sense of growth, adaptability, and understanding of the challenges facing the district.

**Mr. Cardet-Hernandez** described the search process as imperfect, sharing concerns about the speed, communication, organization, timelines, and feedback loops. He expressed concern that two candidates of color dropped out in the final stages. He suggested learning from the process and making improvements going forward. Noting that both candidates are great, Mr. Cardet-Hernandez stated that **Dr. Tommy Welch** is his preferred candidate, citing impressive student outcomes in East Boston and Dr. Welch's commitment to disability justice.

Student representative **Xyra Mercer**, a non-voting member of the Committee in accordance with state law, spoke about the importance of student voting rights. She discussed the strengths of both candidates, saying that BPS needs a superintendent who can inspire students, isn't afraid to say no, and be honest.

**Mr. O'Neill** thanked the superintendent search committee, staff, JG Consulting, Chair Robinson, and the community. He expressed confidence that either candidate could be a good superintendent. He said that there is a lower interest rate in the superintendent role nationally, noting that recent superintendent searches in Dallas, Orlando, Philadelphia, and Chicago had fewer applications than BPS. He said that as the immediate past chair of the Council of Great City Schools, he actively recruited for the position. He said that many superintendents are either leaving the profession or feel compelled to stay in their current roles to support their district

**Boston School Committee Special Remote Meeting  
Zoom**

**June 29, 2022**

with pandemic recovery. He said that he did not hear concerns from potential applicants about DESE intervention and does not think the experience would be different if the search was extended. He said that both candidates are committed to equity and improving student outcomes and have the support of school leaders. Saying that superintendent experience is critical to meet the demands of the job and to support the district's work with DESE, Mr. O'Neill expressed his support for **Mary Skipper**.

**Ms. Robinson** expressed disappointment that the final pool of candidates did not yield more diversity. She said that the district's work with DESE work is critical, foundational work operating under tight timelines. BPS will need a strong leader with experience working with DESE and as a superintendent. Ms. Robinson said that her preferred candidate is **Mary Skipper**, noting that she can hit the ground running. Ms. Robinson said that BPS will need Dr. Welch's skills as the district partners with families on important issues such as the Green New Deal.

Ms. Sullivan announced that of the seven (7) voting members, four (4) members stated a preference for Mary Skipper, while three (3) members stated a preference for Dr. Tommy Welch.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion appointing Mary Skipper as Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools subject to the successful negotiation of a contract of employment mutually agreeable to Ms. Skipper and the Boston School Committee and signed by both parties or their designees.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**ADJOURN**

**Approved** - At approximately 9:20 p.m. the Committee unanimously approved a motion, by roll call, to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of discussing strategy in preparation for negotiations with the acting superintendent and superintendent-designate, both non-union employees. Ms. Robinson announced that the School Committee would not return to public session.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary