**Minutes of the Special Meeting**

**of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Mass Bay Community College**  
**50 Oakland Street**  
**Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts 02481**  
**Thursday April 17, 2025, 2:15 p.m. - 7:52 p.m.**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Katherine Craven**,Chair,Brookline

**Matthew Hills**, Vice-Chair, Newton

**Ioannis Asikis,** Brookline, Student Member

**Ericka Fisher,** Worcester

**Christina Grant**, Cambridge

**Farzana Mohamed,** Newton, *participated remotely*

**Michael Moriarty,** Holyoke

**Dálida Rocha,** Worcester

**Mary Ann Stewart,** Lexington

**Patrick Tutwiler**, Secretary of Education, Andover

**Martin West,** Newton

**Patrick Tutwiler,** Interim Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Chair Craven called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m., and members introduced themselves. Chair Craven announced that today’s Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) special meeting, like all open meetings of the Board, is being livestreamed and recorded.

**Interview Finalists for Commissioner — Discussion**

Chair Craven reviewed the Commissioner search process to date and the process for the interviews today. The Board discussed the interview questions submitted and reviewed by Board members in advance. Based on that discussion, Chair Craven assigned each Board member a question to ask each finalist (the final list of questions is located on page 3 of this document).

At 3:15 p.m., Jack Elsey joined the meeting to be interviewed by the Board. Jack Elsey responded to questions from Board members.

At 4:20 p.m., Chair Craven called for a short break. The Board reconvened at 4:48 p.m.

At 4:48 p.m., Lily Laux joined the meeting to be interviewed by the Board. Lily Laux responded to questions from Board members.

At 5:56 p.m., Chair Craven called for a short break. The Board reconvened at 6:17 p.m.

At 6:17 p.m., Pedro Martinez joined the meeting to be interviewed by the Board. responded to questions from Board members.

Chair Craven reminded Board members that the Board would convene on Tuesday, April 22nd to select a new commissioner. Chair Craven also reminded members of the public that if they would like to provide comments on the candidates, they should complete the available form.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:**  **that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourns the meeting at 7:52 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

 Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Tutwiler

Interim Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

and Secretary to the Board

**List of Questions for Finalist Interviews**

1. Managing Large Organizations. Describe your approach and experience managing big organizations.
   1. Describe your personal and professional philosophy around equity and how this shows up in your leadership of people and systems.
   2. Interfacing with Districts – How would you build buy-in and partnerships with superintendents? How would you hold districts accountable for implementing guidance with consistency across districts, particularly in a state with strong local control?
2. Educational Innovation. What educational innovations have you accomplished? And what are the long-standing results?
3. Addressing Inequities. Massachusetts has persistent racial disparities in student achievement, discipline, and access to advanced coursework. Addressing these inequities requires not just policy changes but also leadership that can navigate resistance. Can you share a time when you faced pushback while working to advance racial equity? How did you handle that resistance, and what did you learn about yourself as a leader?
   1. Massachusetts has a growing population of Multilingual Learners—especially in districts like Boston, Springfield, and Chelsea. In your experience, what policies and practices are most effective in ensuring equitable access to high-quality education for MLL students? Can you share a time when you successfully improved programming for MLL students?
   2. Massachusetts has a longstanding commitment since 1972 to students with disabilities. Describe your experiences promoting best practices and ensuring a free and appropriate public education to these students.
4. Rural & Suburban Districts. Many Massachusetts districts, especially in Western and Central Massachusetts, face declining enrollment, limited resources, and challenges attracting and retaining educators. Meanwhile, suburban districts navigate issues like affordability and changing student demographics. Can you speak to your experience addressing the unique needs of rural and suburban districts, and what strategies you’ve found most effective in supporting them?
5. Quality School District. In your opinion what characterizes a quality school district?
   1. What are the first three to five data points would you review to get a sense of how well a school or district is performing?
6. Mental Health. Our K-12 students and staff are facing mental health challenges like never seen before including the uncertainty at the federal level and students feeling safe at school. How would you ensure that mental health and social-emotional learning are top priorities and that staffing of counselors/support staff remains intact to ensure that all students have the ability to achieve their fullest potential?
7. Stakeholder Diversity. Massachusetts is home to districts with vastly different needs, political landscapes, and community priorities. Can you provide an example of a time when you encountered strong resistance or conflicting stakeholder perspectives? How did you bring people together around a common path forward, and what does that example reveal about the leadership and management approach you would bring to the Commissioner role?
8. Crisis Leadership. Public education across the country is facing immense challenges, from political debates over curriculum to funding challenges. Can you share a time when you led through a crisis, whether at the district, state, or community level? How do you approach decision-making and communication in moments of high pressure or public scrutiny?
9. Literacy. If I told you more than half of third grade students are not proficient in English Language Arts in over 2/3 of Massachusetts Elementary Schools, how will that information influence your approach to leading DESE?
   1. What has been your involvement in advancing early literacy efforts to improve reading proficiency?
10. Family Engagement in Education. Please share how your experience shaped your approach to fostering meaningful partnerships between schools and families? What strategies would you use to ensure parents and caregivers—including those from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds—are actively informed and empowered to advocate for their children’s education?
11. Number One for Some. While Massachusetts is often referred to as #1 in education among the states, that’s true only in a very narrow sense. The gap between Massachusetts and certain other states is closing as those states continue to improve, and unlike certain other states we have lost ground since the pandemic and are not yet recovering the losses, we have flatlined in performance the past ten years, and key gaps among are subgroups have grown significantly. In addition, some of the states showing these significant gains and catching up to us are not states that we have traditionally thought of as our political or educational peers including Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas and certain other similar states.
    1. The Commissioner will ultimately be judged by the progress made in our 300+ districts to reverse significant learning loss, improve outcomes after years of flatlining, and narrow and eliminate key cohort gaps. At the same time, Massachusetts is all the way at one end of the spectrum in terms of local control in education, meaning that you will be judged by your progress in achieving results that are dependent on local results in which almost no Superintendent reports to you and each reports to their own Boards, many of whom move without regard to DESE advice and preferences.
    2. Do you agree with the above assessment of Massachusetts, and why/why not?
    3. Drawing on examples in your career, how would you approach these challenges to significantly “move the needle”?