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Board of Education Special Meeting

Minutes

February 18, 1998

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.. The following Board members were in attendance:

Members Of The Board Of Education Present:

Dr. John Silber, Chairman, Boston
Ms. Patricia Crutchfield, Vice-Chairperson, Southwick
Dr. Edwin Delattre, Boston
Mr. William Irwin, Wilmington
Dr. Stanley Koplik, Boston
Mr. James Peyser, Dorchester
Dr. Roberta Schaefer, Worcester
Commissioner Robert V. Antonucci, Secretary

Members Absent:

Mr. Micah Silver, Chair, Student Advisory Council, New Salem
Dr. Abigail Thernstrom, Lexington

Also In Attendance:

Robin McCaffery, Department of Education

1. Appointment Of Interim Commissioner.

The first agenda item was a discussion on appointing an Interim Commissioner. Dr. Silber said the law clearly states that a 2/3 majority of all Board members is needed for the appointment of a Commissioner. He explained that the law does not distinguish between a permanent Commissioner and an Interim Commissioner; therefore 6 votes out of the 9 Board members would be needed for this appointment.

The Chairman opened the discussion by stating that there were two candidates, David Driscoll and Frank Haydu. Roberta Schaefer asked whether the two candidates would be available to speak to the Board. Dr. Schaefer stated that she does not know Frank Haydu and that she does not feel comfortable voting before she has had a chance to meet one of the candidates.

Dr. Silber assured the Board that Mr. Haydu is a likeable, low-key and independent person who is quite capable of leading the Department on an interim basis. He said there is much evidence of his great performance at the New England Medical Center, on the Massachusetts Board of Education and as an established businessman to name a few areas.

Board member Bill Irwin said that he knows Mr. Haydu well but that he would like to put forward the name of David Driscoll, Deputy Commissioner. After discussion, the Board invited Dr. Driscoll to join the Board for a discussion. Dr. Koplik asked Dr. Driscoll to start by giving a brief statement about himself.

Dr. Driscoll said he has been Deputy Commissioner for five years, working as a team with Bob Antonucci. He stated that he has been Deputy since just before the Education Reform Act was enacted in 1993 and has been actively involved in its implementation for five years. He stated that their record over the past five years speaks for itself. Ms. Crutchfield asked him where he plans on going from here. He answered by explaining that he will continue to keep the testing moving and keep things on track for the start of the new school year. He explained the importance of the initiatives currently under way such as time and learning, the special education bill, the Chapter 74 regulations and the state budget.

Dr. Delattre asked how Dr. Driscoll plans to keep Advanced Systems in line. Dr. Driscoll responded that if he were the Interim Commissioner, he would watch very carefully as the testing is implemented. Dr. Delattre also expressed his concern that the Department of Education might try to re-write the curriculum frameworks, and asked Dr. Driscoll to comment on that. Dr. Driscoll responded that he would follow the same approach that has been used in the past in framework revisions, relying on experts from higher education and also experts in the field such as teachers. Dr. Delattre asked him if he saw the role of the Department staff as support and he answered in the affirmative.

Dr. Schaefer asked Dr. Driscoll what would happen in Lawrence should he become the Interim Commissioner. Dr. Driscoll explained that Lawrence is still very important and if he were appointed the Interim Commissioner, others would have to become even more involved in the district. He went on to explain that either way others would have to become involved to help keep Lawrence and other similar districts on track.

Mr. Peyser asked Dr. Driscoll about the search for a superintendent in Lawrence. Dr. Driscoll explained that NESDEC had a contract prior to the agreement with the Board, but now there will be a screening committee made up of four people appointed by the Commissioner and five appointed by the Mayor. On this topic, Dr. Silber commented that search firms do not work because they have no obligation to the institution and they do not do the background investigation that is necessary to choose a qualified candidate. Dr. Driscoll said he expects the nine member joint screening committee to play an active role in the search, which should produce a good candidate. Dr. Driscoll said that he has spoken with two members of the search firm and they understand this is not a normal search. He stated: They need to, and are, doing all they can. Commissioner Antonucci said that he has also spoken to NESDEC and told them that he expects more than a routine search. He added that he has asked for names of possible candidates from many different sources.

Dr. Silber explained that the position in Lawrence is indeed unique; a courageous person can hold it because of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Board and the unique situation in the Lawrence Public Schools. He added that NESDEC has not advertised that uniqueness, which is typical of search firms.

Dr. Driscoll stated that he is aware of the problems with search firms and that everyone needs to take responsibility in the search process. He said: I intend to continue to be very active in Lawrence. Mr. Peyser questioned whether he would have enough time for Lawrence if he were Interim Commissioner. Dr. Silber stated: I do not know how you can be Commissioner and be in Lawrence at the same time. Dr. Driscoll responded: There needs to be a different model but that is the right model anyway. We need others to join in and get actively involved. Ms. Crutchfield asked if there were others who could be effective in Lawrence. Dr. Driscoll named Julianne Dow and Matt George and said there were others.

Dr. Delattre stated: Interims sometimes want to be permanent. He asked Dr. Driscoll his plans in that regard. Dr. Driscoll stated: At this point, I have no interest in being permanent Commissioner. Dr. Silber asked Dr. Driscoll what he thought of working with Frank Haydu. Dr. Driscoll responded: I can get along with Frank Haydu and almost anyone. We have seven days to transition. I would be a logical choice but I have always been loyal and professional and I will continue to be.

The Board thanked Dr. Driscoll for his time and cooperation and he then left the room.

The Board continued their discussion. Dr. Koplik said that he thought the Board should look at the special relationship between the Chairman and the Commissioner. He stated: The relationship between Frank Haydu and the Chairman would be stronger. There has to be abiding respect. Naming Frank Haydu as Commissioner in the Interim would be a good way to use both candidates' strengths. Dr. Koplik continued: Despite familiarity and personal preferences, our Board should make the best decision based on the special relationship between the Chairman and the Commissioner.

Dr. Silber said that Dr. Driscoll cannot do the job in Lawrence if he is not going to be in Lawrence. He stated: It is also important to get the insight of someone from outside the Department of Education. He went on to say that appointing David Driscoll would compromise the progress in Lawrence.

Dr. Delattre explained that he was concerned that Dr. Driscoll thought the role of the Interim Commissioner was about maintenance and not leadership. He added that the information on MCAS that went to superintendents from Commissioner Antonucci in August said one thing and now the message is different. In this regard, he said the Board needs a Commissioner who is utterly clear on these issues.

Ms. Crutchfield and Dr. Schaefer expressed concerns about the process. Dr. Schaefer said that she does not know Frank Haydu and did not know he was still in the running. Ms. Crutchfield said that she would have asked Frank Haydu to be there. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to call Mr. Haydu and speak to him via speaker-phone.

Frank Haydu joined the Board by speaker-phone at 9:45 a.m.. Dr. Silber thanked him for agreeing to speak to the Board. Mr. Haydu explained that he needed the total support of the Board of Education if he was going to consider becoming a candidate. Mr. Irwin asked him if he would continue until they found a permanent Commissioner. Mr. Haydu explained that he would like to have a permanent Commissioner long before September 1 but that he would not leave the Department hanging.

Dr. Delattre said that he has a number of concerns regarding the MCAS and the teacher test. He stated: Last August, schools were told that the test would be 70 - 80 minutes. Now they are being told that it will be 300+ minutes. The Interim Commissioner will have to listen and explain this. Dr. Delattre added that there will be an issue with the tenth grade test in History. Mr. Haydu responded that he understands there needs to be credibility and there are gaps between policy and implementation.

Mr. Haydu said the Board needs to move fast to find a permanent Commissioner. He also said the Deputy Commissioner needs to play an active role because he was here all along and knows all the issues. Dr. Schaefer asked Mr. Haydu what he would do about Lawrence. Mr. Haydu said that Dr. Driscoll would play a large role in Lawrence no matter what, but that he would need help from others.

Mr. Peyser asked Mr. Haydu his views on the logic for Dr. Driscoll continuing versus the logic for fresh eyes. Mr. Haydu said one could make a strong case either way. He stated: If there was no Lawrence, then David Driscoll would be the clear choice. He continued that he would want to ask Carole Thomson and Rhoda Schneider and other senior staff the advantage of an insider versus an outsider. Mr. Peyser then asked how an outsider should manage as Interim Commissioner. Mr. Haydu made reference to his time at New England Medical Center explaining that he had a seasoned group of consultants who worked with him. He said that he would not be able to do it without unanimous support from the Board and the Department. He said: I am a quick study but I will need support and help.

Dr. Koplik asked him if he was prepared to commit full-time and if he wanted to be considered as permanent Commissioner. Mr. Haydu explained that he was not at all interested in becoming permanent Commissioner because that position requires the best educator possible. He answered the other question by saying that he is generally an investor and is Chairman of Haydu and Lind, a senior citizen housing development company. He said that three to six months would not be a problem but that he would have to dedicate about one and a half hours a day to his trading company. He said he could commit about eight to nine hours a day to being Interim

Commissioner. He said that he would donate any money he earned as Interim Commissioner to a charter school or pilot school.

Dr. Koplik asked about Mr. Haydu's comment that they need to find the best educational candidate possible for the permanent position and asked why not for the Commissioner in the Interim position. Mr. Haydu stated: My first inclination is that David Driscoll should be the Interim Commissioner, but that is a decision the Board of Education needs to make. He explained that he was not an educational professional but that he could help through the transition.

Dr. Schaefer questioned whether the Board can afford a learning curve when it comes to issues such as the MCAS. Mr. Haydu said: I cannot answer that for you. I have a short learning curve. I am in a better position, however, to help recruit a new permanent Commissioner.

Mr. Haydu explained to the Board that if the senior staff of the Department were all planning on leaving, then he would not serve as Interim Commissioner. Commissioner Antonucci told the Board that he did not see that happening. Dr. Schaefer asked him what he would do if they did not find a permanent Commissioner by September 1. Mr. Haydu said that he would not just walk away if the Board did not have a permanent Commissioner.

Dr. Schaefer asked Mr. Haydu how he characterized the Interim position. Mr. Haydu said he did not envision going in any totally new directions and that he would keep the reasonable direction that Commissioner Antonucci and the Board have set. He said he would try to keep the momentum but that there were clearly some tough educational and political issues.

The Board then thanked Mr. Haydu for his time and concluded the phone call.

Dr. Schaefer said that Mr. Haydu seemed realistic and is probably the best candidate to help find a permanent replacement. She said that David Driscoll is more accepted by the Department of Education but that he would not balk at having Frank Haydu as Interim Commissioner. Ms. Crutchfield said that they need Dave Driscoll physically in Lawrence and that she had no doubts Dr. Driscoll could work with Mr. Haydu. She stated: This is not a vote against David Driscoll but strategically placing our strengths.

Commissioner Antonucci stated: David is a class individual and will continue to work hard no matter what the Board decides. He has always been loyal and he will continue to be that way.

Dr. Silber and Dr. Delattre both agreed that they need Dr. Driscoll in Lawrence. Dr. Silber stated: The new Commissioner search would be compromised with a Deputy or an insider as the Interim Commissioner. Mr. Peyser said that credibility is a big concern. He stated: Frank Haydu starts with credibility across the board. Dr. Delattre stated: Mr. Haydu talked about the gravity of the problems we face while still moving forward.

After this discussion, on a motion duly made and seconded, it was **VOTED: that the Board of Education appoint Frank W. Haydu III as Interim Commissioner to serve until a permanent Commissioner is appointed.**

The motion was made by Dr. Koplik and seconded by Ms. Crutchfield. The vote was 6 to 1, with Mr. Irwin opposed. At the request of Mr. Irwin and with the consensus of the Board, the vote was re-taken and the result was unanimous. Dr. Silber asked Commissioner Antonucci to solicit the votes of the two Board members who were not present.

Dr. Silber thanked the Board and Dr. Schaefer for their persistence. He said that speaking to both David Driscoll and Frank Haydu was the right thing to do. Dr. Silber also proposed a resolution which was endorsed by the Board, giving Dr. Driscoll the full support of the Board. He stated: David enjoys the full confidence of the Board of Education, both as Deputy Commissioner and as our eyes, ears and hands in Lawrence.

2. Commissioner Search

The Board had a brief discussion about the search for a permanent Commissioner. Dr. Silber gave the Board copies of the ads that ran in the newspapers. The Chairman said that by February 25, he would appoint a search committee. He said the deadline for applications is March 16, 1998, and that if the Board is ready, there would be a vote to appoint a permanent Commissioner at the June 15, 1998 meeting. Dr. Silber said: If you have any outstanding candidates in mind, we will reach out for them. Dr. Schaefer recommended engaging a firm to reach out nationally. Mr. Irwin said that he did not think a search firm would be helpful. Dr. Koplik said that he did not want a search firm but that the Board needs to reach out to those who might not normally apply. Dr. Silber stated that names should be kept confidential until the Board has the best finalists. He said the Board can discuss the search process again on March 20 if by then they do not have an excellent group of finalists. Dr. Delattre said that the advice of Commissioner Antonucci would be very valuable. Dr. Silber said that this is a very attractive position and he is confident the Board will find some good candidates. He explained that he will chair the search committee and that he will ask Mr. Irwin and Ms. Crutchfield to join him on the committee along with a couple of outsiders. He said that once they choose the finalists, Board members can review all the applications.

3. Other Business

The Board discussed upcoming dates. Commissioner Antonucci reminded the Board that February 28 would be his last day as Commissioner but that he has agreed to stay on as a consultant. Dr. Silber reminded the Board that there would be a special meeting to vote on awarding the charters on Wednesday, February 25, 1998 at 9:00 a.m. The Chairman also invited Board members to attend a report of the British inspectors who visited Boston, on Thursday, February 26, 1998 at the Federal Reserve Bank.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was **VOTED: that the Board of Education adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m., subject to the call of the Chairman.**

The motion was made by Mr. Irwin and seconded by Ms. Crutchfield. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert V. Antonucci
Secretary to the Board

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