

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 9, 2024**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held on July 9, 2024, in Council Chambers located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Charlotte Riley.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jean Acree, Dr. Gerald Calnen, Janet Cushman, Peter Jonaitis, Philip Kober, Tina LeBlanc, Amanda Pickett, Scott Ryder, and Charlotte Riley

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Ms. Michelle Middleton, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction

3. **DISCUSSION & ACTION REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOL:**

Mrs. Riley moved, seconded by Mrs. Pickett that the Enfield Board of Education hire Steven Mocchio as the new superintendent for Enfield Public Schools.

Discussion:

Chairwoman Riley stated over the past couple of months we started the hiring process for the superintendent vacancy. We solicited input from the community and from staff with a survey. We started with 12 applicants and looked at 6 potential candidates with one of the candidates accepting a position in another district. The Superintendent Search Committee interviewed 5 candidates and finalized the search with 3 candidates. We held final interviews with the potential superintendent candidates over the last two weeks. The entire Board held interviews with the finalists and last night, we deliberated about the candidates. The entire Board has not take this decision lightly. Each of the finalists were excellent candidates. This has not been an easy decision.

Chairwoman Riley stated we have chosen Steve Mocchio. He comes to us as a current superintendent from Stafford Public Schools. She reviewed his qualifications and past employment history. She added that Mr. Mocchio has many accomplishments and experiences including budget preparation and budget management.

Chairwoman Riley added throughout the interview process, he stood out from the rest as a proven leader that is ready to start here in Enfield on day 1. He has a strong background in budgeting and financial management with a proven track record to achieve strategic objectives while maintaining financial management. It was clear to us that Mr. Mocchio was the right candidate Enfield Public Schools needed. The number one want from the survey results was that the candidate be a current superintendent.

Chairwoman Riley stated as we go through this transition, Mr. Mocchio will be able to step right in and start building relationships with all staff and warmly welcome students and parents while beginning to form a strategic plan to carry Enfield Public Schools and propel the district to success. He prides himself on transparency, facts, collaboration, sustainable progress and meaningful change. She is excited for Enfield Public Schools and believes that Steve Mocchio will lead our district with integrity and steer the ship to successful outcomes for everyone. She looks forward to working with him.

Mr. Jonaitis commented that what Chairwoman Riley just stated pertains to two of the

candidates. There were two excellent choices. Mr. Mocchio will do a good job, but I feel the other candidate would also have done a good job.

Mr. Jonaitis expressed his displeasure with the Board when it comes loyalty to someone that has worked for us for 6 years at one of the hardest schools in our district. This person is qualified and knows our district and could start in this position tomorrow whereas Mr. Mocchio will most likely start in October unless he can be released by his district earlier.

Mr. Jonaitis added that some of the people felt the other candidate did not have the experience. Everyone needs to start somewhere. His brother was just hired as a superintendent in another district, and he is sure he could ask him if he had any questions. He is very disappointed with the choice we have made and the process. This has nothing to do about Mr. Mocchio. He will not vote in favor of him.

Mrs. Pickett agreed that the process has been challenging. We have been going through many changes while trying to hire a superintendent. She thanked all candidates that applied. She thanked the candidates we interviewed. It was a rigorous process. She also thanked Chairwoman Riley for her leadership. She thanked Mr. Longey for leading this process. The process was clear, and we had a healthy debate. There are pieces that Mr. Mocchio can bring to our district about instructional leadership, building systems of structure and supports using his budgeting experience along with his K-12 experience. This was a hard decision. It is challenging bringing in outside candidates that might not want their identities revealed. By using our survey results, we looked at the multiple perspectives. She would like us to welcome Mr. Mocchio with open arms and look at his leadership style and experiences. He also values the experience we have in our district and the desire to learn from others. She encourages our staff to share their knowledge with him. He is open to building joint leadership.

Mr. Ryder thanked everyone that completed the survey. He also thanked all the candidates that applied including the ones we did not interview. We interviewed a total of 6 candidates. He welcomes Mr. Mocchio and looks forward to working with him. He thanked Mr. Drezek for his tenured service here in Enfield. He was well liked and respected here. He is happy for him and his family and where he ended up. He also thanked Mr. Longey for everything he has been doing for us as our Interim Superintendent. He looks forward to starting the school year and he will support Mr. Mocchio as our next superintendent.

Dr. Calnen stated that all 3 final candidates were exceptional and any of them would have been a great superintendent for Enfield. This was a hard decision to make. He looks forward to what Mr. Mocchio will bring us especially his developing a strategic plan. The last 12 months have been particularly chaotic. We need a plan to get us back to normal. He also thanked Mr. Longey for his excellent leadership with this entire process and thanked our Board Leadership for the orderly process they conducted with our superintendent search.

Mrs. Cushman echoed everyone's sentiments. This really has been a team effort with this process. Mr. Jonaitis mentioned some of our discussion from last night. This was not an easy decision for us. Mr. Ryder mentioned the survey for the stakeholders in our community regarding the superintendent position. There was an overwhelming response to hire a candidate with experience as a superintendent. Mr. Mocchio is the current superintendent in Stafford. He was the only candidate with experience. His responses to our questions were thorough and concise. He picked up on details that the other candidates missed and reflected upon his valuable knowledge as a superintendent. Mr. Mocchio has led his district to avoid the fiscal cliff that has plagued many districts when federal covid funds ended with great detail and transparency with his budget preparations. She looks forward to working with him.

Mrs. LeBlanc supports Mr. Mocchio. Along with his responses to the scenarios we presented to him, he provided us with details and his support for staff and students. We are in the business of kids and that is an important focus to have. We are at a turning point in our district and will be rebuilding. Having new eyes and new ideas and looking at some of the things Mr. Mocchio has accomplished like his district improvement plan that focuses on strategic imperatives with short term and long term goals, along with the portrait of a graduate

and what that means. He realizes our staff is going through some tough times with the teacher layoffs and restructuring that will take place. She likes his idea of budgeting and his experience with the State legislation and special education legislation. She will support Mr. Mocchio as our next superintendent. She thanked Mr. Longey as our interim superintendent for everything he has done for us and for his leadership with our superintendent search.

Mrs. Acree welcomed Mr. Mocchio to our district. All 3 candidates were excellent. She was also impressed with his experience in education, budgeting and being a current superintendent. She also liked that he previously worked in Windsor and taught diversity and culture. These qualifications would be a great plus for our district being open and welcoming with different cultures and people from all walks of life. She openly welcomes him to our district. She also thanked Mr. Longey for everything he has done and the work of the Board leadership and our team.

Mr. Kober thanked the members of the superintendent search committee. He is glad that we were able to conduct our superintendent search without hiring a consultant firm. Mr. Longey did a great job facilitating this process. He thanked the members of the search committee for the first round candidate interviews and the semi finalists interviews. The full Board had the opportunity to interview the final 3 candidates. All the candidates interviewed well. Giving the experience and detailed answers, Mr. Mocchio edged-out the competition. If we numerically scored the candidates, he would have scored the highest as a candidate. He also looks forward to working with Mr. Mocchio. We have a lot of work we need to accomplish. He is the individual we need for the first day of school. He will vote in favor of Mr. Mocchio.

A vote by **roll-call – 8-0-1** passed with Mr. Jonaitis in dissent.

Mr. Ryder moved, seconded by Mrs. LeBlanc that the Enfield Board of Education authorizes Chairwoman Riley to finalize and execute an employment arrangement with our new superintendent of schools on behalf of the Board to include a beginning date and a term of office.

Discussion:

Mr. Kober has faith in our Chair to execute the employment contract. Are we solely authorizing the chair as the negotiator for the Board or is this something a committee like Board leadership would negotiate the terms with the Board chair endorsing the final contract.

Mr. Ryder stated the motion is for the Board chair to execute the contract.

Chairwoman Riley added this is something the Board chair has done in the past.

Mr. Kober would like for Board leadership negotiate the contract or possibly two or three members of leadership to shift some of the work off of the Board chair. He would like to see either a two or three person committee membership.

Mrs. Pickett stated her reservation is that it is important for the candidate to have a point of contact of who they will negotiate with and when it comes to discussing important guardrails. She fully trusts Chairwoman Riley knows our budgetary situation. She does not see the need for a committee.

Chairwoman Riley stated she can bring this to Board leadership, but she will be the main person of contact.

Mr. Kober is in favor of one person being the main person of contact. The more input, the better. Chairwoman Riley added she will bring the contract to Board Leadership before the contract is finalized.

Mr. Jonaitis stated the contract you will negotiate will include benefits. He would prefer to see another person be part of this. He would also bring the contract back to the whole Board to

vote on it. Chairwoman Riely added that is not how this has been done in the past. Mr. Jonaitis does not care how this was done in the past.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated she supports Chairwoman Riley handling the contract. If you would like to add another person to the process she would recommend Scott Ryder as the Board Secretary. This is one of the responsibilities of the Chair.

A vote by **roll-call – 7-1-1** passed with Mr. Jonaitis in dissent and Mr. Kober abstaining.

Chairwoman Riley stated even though our new superintendent could not be here in person, she has Steve Mocchio available on teams. She asked him if he would like to say a few words.

Mr. Mocchio thanked everyone for allowing him to say a few words tonight. He is currently on a family vacation on a cruise. They are eating dinner, and he is at a Board of Education meeting, so this is nothing new for them. He is deeply honored and grateful for the opportunity to be Enfield's next superintendent.

Mr. Mocchio extended his gratitude to the members of the Board of Education Leadership team that conducted the interviews and for entrusting me in this role. He also recognizes and appreciates your comments regarding the leadership within the schools and making difficult decisions that were made including the internal candidate. As superintendent of schools he will continue to expand the possibilities for leadership at our buildings. He looks forward to continuing this with Dr. Berrios.

Mr. Mocchio believes our schools are the heart of the community. Someone made a comment about working together as partners, and that is absolutely what he would like to do moving forward with the schools and provide all the students with the highest education we possibly can. They all need the necessary skills to be successful it whatever they decide to do with their future.

Mr. Mocchio looks forward to the opportunity to listen and learn from our teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders and most importantly the students so he can obtain a more comprehensive understanding of what they believe and the district strengths as well as the challenges that lie ahead. Running an educational system is really about collaboration, communication and transparency at the forefront when you are discussing budgets. You need mutual respect for everyone in terms of moving the district forward. If we all work together as a team, he firmly believes we can do anything that we set our minds to.

Mr. Mocchio thanked the Board for the opportunity and for allowing him to say a few brief words from a far distance away. He apologized for not being there in person. He looks forward to building a brighter future for all the students. He wants to make Enfield Public Schools a source of pride for the community. You have gone through a very difficult time over the past several months. We will get past this and move forward together. The looks forward to working together with everyone. Thank you.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Pickett moved, seconded by Mr. Kober to adjourn the Special Meeting of July 8, 2024.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously. Meeting stood adjourned at 9:23 PM.

Scott Ryder
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew B. Longey, Interim & Assistant Superintendent