

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for the Board Vacancy on Monday, January 27, 2020 at 7:00pm in the Board Room of the Administration Building, 425 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, PA 18503.

President Gilmartin called the meeting to order at 7:08pm with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call: By the Secretary.

Present: Directors Cruz, Dixon, Fox, Hume, Schuster, Welby, Yanni and President Gilmartin.

Absent: All Present.

President Gilmartin announced the purpose of the meeting is for the Board vacant seat and was duly advertised.

The floor was now open for public comment.

No one signed in to speak.

The candidates were now sequestered and called on to address the board in the order which they signed in.

Ms. Dorothy Grill, an Academic Affairs Officer, said the reason she is interested is because she has 11+ years in both education and work force development. Ms. Grill is a former Scranton School District teacher and is aware of what teachers and students face in the district.

Director Yanni's asked what her motivation is for coming forward at this time to serve on the school board.

Ms. Grill said she has recently been involved with the Junior League of Scranton and it has reignited her interest in serving the community.

Director Hume asked if she has any ideas as how, as a board, they could work on achieving a fair level of funding from the State.

Ms. Grill said communication is the key and definitely transparency needs to happen so everyone is aware of what is currently going on, but also everyone at this point needs to pull together, no more bickering and all need to work together for the betterment of the school district.

Director Schuster asked what she feels are the challenges facing the school district and if she were appointed this evening would she run for election when the appointed term is up.

Ms. Grill said, living in the community her whole life, she has seen firsthand the issues, we know people are leaving Scranton, also up against students come from diverse, cultural, and socioeconomically backgrounds, they're not going home to the most safe environment or most financially secure environment and what they're eating in school may be the only thing they're eating for the night. Ms. Grill doesn't know if she would run for office but would consider it.

Director Welby asked if faced with the decision to cut a specific program or services, what type of data she would look for to help make that decision.

Ms. Grill responded that she would first look at what the program or services are doing for the students and have to look at the bottom line and make those hard decisions and sometimes coming up with creative ways of working collaboratively with other non-profits for example or funding to keep the program might be beneficial.

Director Cruz asked what Ms. Grill believes are the strengths of our school district.

Ms. Grill said definitely the students but also the teachers who put themselves out there every day to support the students in becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

Director Fox said that since the district is under financial recovery how it will impact her service.

Ms. Grill said assisting in any way she could and that the recovery plan is something the district needs at this time in order to sustain itself for the future.

Director Gilmartin asked what qualities, skills and experience would she bring to this specific people on the board at this time.

Ms. Grill said she recently has become a leader not only with the Junior League of Scranton but also a leader at work and in both roles she's had to work with teams of women which could be challenging at times especially when they have diverse characteristics and diverse wants and needs and she would bring a sense of collaboration to the board but also continue to support transparency and communication that has been happening.

Mr. Sean McAndrew now addressed the board.

Mr. McAndrew, a Sales and Customer Service Manager at ComServe Systems, LLC and former Scranton Parks and Recreation board member, said his reason for being here is he is very excited to help the district get back on track adding that he knows over the past few years there's been some negativity surrounding the district but you can feel the momentum, a breath of fresh air with some brand new directors, a new superintendent and Dr. Finan's recovery plan. Mr. McAndrew knows it's not going to be easy, there are a lot of hurdles, financial hurdles with long term debt and also the fight for fair funding, Mr. McAndrew thinks with his education background he can roll up his sleeves and help finances on day one. Mr. McAndrew said he understands policy and procedure and he understands it's a 24/7 commitment and he wants to ensure academic excellence to our students.

Director Yanni's asked what his motivation is for coming forward at this time to serve on the school board.

Mr. McAndrew responded that the change in the dynamic of the board, it's great we have a lot of new members and with the recovery plan, there's a lot of momentum and changes we know have to be made and the board is taking the correct steps to get back on track. Mr. McAndrew is very excited to see where it goes and he wants to be part of the process.

Director Hume asked if he has any ideas as how, as a board, they could work on achieving a fair level of funding from the State.

Mr. McAndrew would start by contacting state representatives, senators and coming together as one united board with ideas, there is a fight on our hands and we have to fight for fair funding.

Director Schuster asked what he feels are the challenges facing the school district and if he were appointed this evening would he run for election when the appointed term is up.

Mr. McAndrew said besides the fair funding, the buildings that are in disrepair, we have numerous buildings that have asbestos, lead in the water, at Scranton High there's a sprinkler issue and we have to ensure the safety and welfare of our children, teachers and staff. Mr. McAndrew added also unfunded mandates, we have things we have to do, we don't get funding for that, we have to find money to do what needs to be done and there's a data issue, a lot of data given to the recovery plan isn't correct or complete so it makes it harder to implement the plan.

Mr. McAndrew said he would absolutely run for election; he knows he can make a great impact in two years and he definitely thinks he wants to be involved beyond the two years.

Director Welby asked if faced with the decision to cut a specific program or services, what type of data he would look for to help make that decision.

Mr. McAndrew said he would want to know how many students are affected, he would need numbers, financial numbers and why are we cutting it and are there ways we can find the funding somewhere else, is there a grant, and having the correct data to make a sound decision.

Director Cruz asked what he believes are the strengths of our school district.

Mr. McAndrew said first are the students; we have students that achieve great things every day, every year and we need to keep celebrating that and keep recognizing and also we have the best teachers; helping them with their professional growth will only make our district stronger and make our students stronger.

Director Fox asked that since the district is under financial recovery how it will impact her service.

Mr. McAndrew said because it is more important now than ever, we need to set a sound foundation and make adjustments and corrections so this doesn't happen again.

Director Gilmartin asked what qualities, skills and experience would he bring to this group of people on the board at this time.

Mr. McAndrew replied his education, his background in budget and finance, his experience on other boards following policy and procedure, project bids, approving contracts and he's a team player and we need to have a united board and once a decision is made we need to stand by it.

Mr. James Malloy now addressed the board.

Mr. Malloy is married to Lynn and has a son George at Prescott School, said he is glad this isn't an election because he doesn't think he would be standing here, elections expect you to promote yourself which he isn't very good at.

Mr. Malloy said sitting with the other two candidates, he is very impressed with Mr. McAndrew and Ms. Grill and if one of them is chosen they'll do just fine.

Mr. Malloy started by asking can he help with the success of this board. Mr. Malloy said he has decades of experience as a trial attorney, making big money deals for decades as a part of that deal making you have to make difficult decisions and be able to explain the reasons before and after and he feels that is a particular gift he has acquired and he would be beneficial to be a board member. He and his wife chose for his son to go to public school because they appreciate the diversity that public education offers to him.

Director Yanni's asked what his motivation is for coming forward at this time to serve on the school board.

Mr. Malloy said when there was an opening for the second time it occurred to him that someone in a position like he is, to offer what he thinks he is able to offer to the board, he would not be doing his job as a citizen of the community if he did not offer his services.

Director Hume asked if he has any ideas as how, as a board and community, they could work on achieving a fair level of funding from the State.

Mr. Malloy said it sounds to him it's a matter of organizing and getting the volunteers together, signing petitions; he wouldn't be candid with the board if he didn't tell them that he's not all that certain how to do this job because he doesn't know enough about it yet, he is a bit of a blank slate, but willing to learn about it and understand from reading certain things that there is both mandatory and elective training so again he is willing to put the work in and he does have a particular set of skills that he thinks translate very well to this position, but other than organizing, getting volunteer and petitioning he doesn't have any other ideas other than that because he doesn't know exactly how this works.

Director Schuster asked what he feels are the challenges facing the school district and if he were appointed this evening would he run for election when the appointed term is up.

Mr. Malloy answered in the reverse order and said no, he would not run.

As for the challenges, Mr. Malloy said the challenges facing the district from his limited perspective there's not enough money and the amount of money that this board wants to do, to do right by the public and the parents, teachers, unions and community at large, you have a limited amount of resources and you have to figure out how best to make decisions and how best to expend those resources. Mr. Malloy said he can help with that; he has no concrete plan as he's standing here but he knows that's the problem and a problem in a lot of districts.

Mr. Malloy further added that taking into account everybody's interests; the teachers, the kids, the parents, it's got to be tough and he doesn't envy what the board is doing, has done and he knows it's going to be difficult if you want him to take the vacant position.

Director Welby asked if faced with the decision to cut a specific program or services, what type of data he would look for to help make that decision.

Mr. Malloy said he would read up on everything about the program that is being considered to cut and see what is or was good about it, what is bad, what is essential, not essential and the same for the services, adding how important and the best way to answer about the services is who are we affecting if we cut the service because at some point somebody gets the short end of the stick and why is it more fair that this group should get it rather than another.

Director Cruz asked what he believes are the strengths of our school district.

Mr. Malloy responded that he is a product of the district himself and again, diversity stands out as one of the qualities he values most about the district and the fact is public education is the keystone of democracy. Mr. Malloy added that he sees Mr. O'Donnell at Prescott School outside every morning greeting every student, every parent and that kind of personal touch and demonstration of the care and commitment that the school district employees and the teachers he's seen has been consistent throughout his experience with Prescott School both as a student and as having his son there in his 5<sup>th</sup> year.

Director Fox asked that since the district is under financial recovery how it will impact his service.

Mr. Malloy said that other than being cognizant of it at all times, he doesn't know, seems more of a question someone making solo decisions but this is a team effort; he has a feeling that if you should chose him he would be learning on the job, and would study every issue and take mandatory educational requirements much like they do in his profession and he is definitely willing to do the work and learn about it.

Director Gilmartin asked what qualities, skills and experience would he bring to the people on the board at this time.

Mr. Malloy said he is aware of the fact that while the perspective of someone like him who is in a socioeconomic position like his, he is expected to think a certain way and act a certain way and have a certain perspective, he thinks he is outside of that particular mold; he likes to think he can put himself in anybody's shoes, and he can see all of the issues from all sides and that's what he's been doing professionally for 25 years and the fact of the

matter is that he reads all of the time, reads very fast, comprehends very well and bringing all of that and a willingness to work hard.

Following the candidate interviews, board members now turned over their selections to Mrs. Orr who tallied the results with the assistance of Mr. Paul Dougherty and Mrs. Sarah Hofius Hall from the Scranton Times. Mrs. Orr turned over the results to President Gilmartin.

The candidates were now brought back into the board room and President Gilmartin thanked them for coming forward, adding that it has been a delight this evening, everyone came beautifully prepared, with wonderful answers and she hopes everyone enjoyed this conversation as much as the board did. Ms. Gilmartin added that for those who were not selected this evening they consider running.

President Gilmartin announced that Mr. James Malloy received the most votes and asked for a motion to appoint Mr. Malloy.

Director Hume made a motion, seconded by Director Cruz and the motion passed unanimously on roll call.

Attorney Christopher Bambach, filling in for Solicitor Audi, swore in Mr. Malloy to serve on the Scranton School Board.

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Director Hume, seconded by Director Cruz and the meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

By: \_\_\_\_\_