

January 3, 2022

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for the purpose of the Vacancy on Monday, January 3, 2022 at 6:00PM in the Auditorium of Scranton High School, 63 Munchak Way, Scranton, PA 18508.

1. Call to Order

President Yanni called the meeting to order at 6:17PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present: Directors Cheseck, Cruz, Fox, Gilmartin (by phone), Holmes, Hume, McAndrew and President Yanni.

Absent: All Present.

4. Transaction of Business for Which Meeting was Called

President Yanni announced the purpose of the Special meeting is for the Board Vacant Seat and has been duly advertised.

5. Public Comment

Vivian Williams, resident and parent, spoke on behalf of her children, transparency, and the selection of a new board member.

6. Procedure of the Appointment

President Yanni explained the procedure of the Appointment following Board Policy 001-BOG-1 and questions will be asked by Mr. Paul Dougherty. The questions have been provided by Board Members and all of the candidates will be asked the same questions. Candidates will be sequestered in another room and will be interviewed in the order in which they signed in. Per policy Board Members may chose up to three names as policy states the number shall not exceed 1/3 of the submitted candidates. The names will be submitted to Mrs. Orr.

At this time, Secretary Virginia Orr announced that she just now received an email from Mr. Gambucci, one of the applicants, and he will not be able to attend the meeting so the number of candidates is seven.

Solicitor Audi now said that board members may now only select two names because they cannot go over 1/3 of the submitted candidates.

Mrs. Yanni explained that Mrs. Orr will tally the names along with Mr. Dougherty and Mrs. Sarah Hofius-Hall of the Scranton Times.

President Yanni thanked all candidates for stepping up and asked the candidates to follow Mr. Gentilezza to another room. Mrs. Yanni said Mrs. Carol Cleary is on a long-standing scheduled vacation and she will be interviewed first via phone.

7. Interviewing of Applicants

Mrs. Carol Cleary addressed the board, expressed her interest and why she would best serve on the board.

Mrs. Cleary was now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mrs. Cleary responded they need to look at the funding available, it's difficult to cut anything but school district budgets are tight. They need to look where they can be creative and come up with different ways of getting what we need and thinks music and arts is detrimental and a huge priority.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mrs. Cleary responded that the biggest thing they're dealing with now is the mental health, social, emotional learning and making sure they're not missing a lot of that especially with the pandemic and they need to see what programs school counselors are providing and if there are resources within the community.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mrs. Cleary responded that the school board essentially makes all the procedural, they make a lot of the policies, they're responsible ultimately for the running of the school district collaboratively with the Superintendent and the Superintendent has to work under the school board because they ultimately make the procedures and policies and they make the budget and final decisions that have to trickle down into the school district.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mrs. Cleary said the students are not responsible for any of those other issues and as adults and school board members it is their responsibility to make sure they're serving the students because they ultimately are the primary responsibility and all of those other things are the adult and school board issues.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mrs. Cleary responded that they have to look at finances, at how buildings are being used, she knows no one wants to close local schools but there is a budget just like you have at home and if you can't afford something you have to figure out a way and cut things to get what is most important for students and the district as a whole.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mrs. Cleary answered no, no one in her family works for the Scranton School District; they all work in other places and other districts.

Mrs. Cleary agreed we would get in touch with her after the meeting with the outcome.

Tim Schwartz thanked the board and shared his reasons why he applied and he has the availability to engage and listen to the community and the district.

Mr. Dougherty now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mr. Schwartz believes a lot of it is relational and doesn't think there is any need to build polarities in making decisions but working together and understanding.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mr. Schwartz wants to advocate strongly for the populations in the city that have fallen through the cracks and thinks the pandemic has widened the cracks in our society and allowed families to fall through those cracks. Mr. Schwartz would engage civic organizations in the community and believes in partnerships.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mr. Schwartz responded that it is a team of people who are making important decisions and helping to guide the Superintendent and other leaders in the district in the proper direction and the relationship between the two is of good communication, support and encouragement for the superintendent and staff, open channels of communication and working together in the same direction.

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Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mr. Schwartz thinks communication and accountability within the board is key as it's easy to get off course with the tyranny of the urgent but if we hold each other accountable to student achievement through conversations and communication he thinks that would be key.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mr. Schwartz would try to seek out as much as he can, he saw how heartbreaking it was when Bancroft closed and it was heartbreaking for the entire community, teachers and students and money is not the only bottom line, people are the bottom line and he would want all of the information he can get to communicate to other people.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mr. Schwartz responded he does not.

Carol Thomas said she is aware of the responsibilities that apply to this position and first and foremost are the students who deserve the very best education and opportunities and it is their job to ensure that they get it. Mrs. Thomas firmly believes programs like the arts and music need to be restored as well as enhancing life skills classes. Mrs. Thomas would help secure fair funding and she certainly does not have all of the answers but she is willing to work together and she hopes that her experience and skills that are included in her resume is what the board is looking for in this appointment.

Mr. Dougherty asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mrs. Thomas responded collaboratively of course, meet with the department heads and see where there is over expenditure and how much would be needed to put that program into process and see which programs would affect the children the best to prepare them for life after school.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mrs. Thomas replied that we concentrate so much on athletics which is certainly a skill for children but in education, they're always recognized for their honors and how they

achieve there but there's much more that children are talented in and should would like to showcase those areas so they feel just as important as the athletics and honor society children.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mrs. Thomas said setting and overseeing that the policies are being followed and believes the Superintendent and the Administration are responsible for the day to day activities and the board should not micromanage.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mrs. Thomas responded prioritizing; all of it is so important.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mrs. Thomas said it would start with the number of students that are in that building, the number of teachers needed and if they could be placed in another building without creating too much havoc and increasing their numbers beyond the allotted amount.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mrs. Thomas responded she has nieces and nephews and a sister-in-law but no one in her immediate household.

Patrick McGuire, a product of the Scranton School District and parent of four children in the district, seeks this position because he believes he has the right tools, motivation and determination to make a meaningful contribution to the district. Mr. McGuire would stand for the education for not only his children but all the children within the district, the worries and concerns of the parents and the betterment of the Scranton School District as a whole.

Mr. Dougherty now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mr. McGuire would try to understand what programs they're trying to bring back and how that would impact the students and where else budget cuts can be made to find the finances needed for these programs and possibly combining school resources.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mr. McGuire said as a parent he would love to bring back programs like the Arts and by making tough choices he thinks they can trim some of the budget to do that.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mr. McGuire said the board members role and responsibility is setting the expectations for the district and the Administration and Superintendent would be the execution piece of how to move forward with that plan.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mr. McGuire responded he thinks by looking at the results of the students, how many students do we have in Title I programs and how many are getting out of those programs and looking at those percentages is how they maintain focus.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mr. McGuire responded that if they're using a school closure as an example he would want to know if they are closing the school because of lower enrollment or for repairs. He would look at the cost of transportation to new schools, distances traveled, how long the commute is and if closing the building for repairs he would ask if it is feasible to increase class size or where does the cost come in.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mr. McGuire believes his sister is the coach for South Intermediate Softball but he cannot confirm if that is still active.

Tom Borthwick, is here because he has a passion for the school district, he has run before and has served on this board. Mr. Borthwick also has two sons in the district, he has served and understands the challenges that the board faces everyday and knows it is a thankless and stressful job. Mr. Borthwick added that they have seen his resume and cover letter but emphasized a couple priorities like continuing the fight for fair funding and Scranton is suffering because of that. Mr. Borthwick is concerned deeply about the mental health and well being of a lot of the students adjusting to the return from covid and the current stress and learning loss right now. Mr. Borthwick is also concerned with

maintaining fiscal stability, revenue generation and he is here to help and work with everybody and hopefully be a team player with the board.

Mr. Dougherty now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mr. Borthwick believes there is \$4 million dollars in a contingency fund in addition to maintaining a positive fund balance, he would go there before he removed a program as there are a lot of programs he's seen been cut that helped make him the person he is, things like music and sometimes music is the only reason a kid comes to school or maybe singing in chorus or playing in the band, so he wants to see those programs built back up so he wouldn't cut programs to do it, he would access the reserve; there's nothing better that he can see using that \$4 million dollar reserve for than giving amazing programs to our kids who deserve them.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mr. Borthwick said fair funding is the most important one because when he was on the board they only did the general subsidy, not the special education or vocational but it was about \$20 million in 2019 that we were being shorted per year and he along with other board members at the time went PTA to PTA to get a groundswell of grassroots support to let people know about this issue and they got a lot of coverage in the media and a lot of money he believes was through pressure and shame and they got a lot of one-time cash infusions from the state and also got increases in the yearly subsidy and so long as that pressure is maintained, he has no problem running that playbook again and getting on a bus to Harrisburg, he has no problem being a loud voice to make sure that our kids get what they deserve.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mr. Borthwick said functionally a board member is there for oversight and guidance so they are responsible to the people of the City so their job is to take the constituents concerns and distill it for administration whose job is to implement policies that further the goals of a betterment of education for the community.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mr. Borthwick responded that nothing mentioned matters if they don't focus primarily on student achievement because all of those things affect that so it's all part of one big pot

and he as a parent is laser focused on what's going to happen to his children and all of the children in the district. Student achievement is affected by a lot of things like program cuts and obviously the disruptions at Northeast was negative for students, and covid – they have to navigate, involve parents, ask them what their child needs because they see a side of their child that they don't see and as a teacher he sees a lot of what kids are going through and where they're suffering, whether it be from things like covid or infrastructure issues, they need to bring teachers into the mix, he thinks everybody's voice needs to be heard when it comes to student achievement because if student achievement is collapsing or suffering because of these issues then collectively they are failing and he would do everything in his power to make sure that doesn't happen.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mr. Borthwick said he is pretty data driven, he would ask a lot of questions, he has no problem talking to the sources who have the information to answer the questions and sharing that information with fellow board members but the more information he has to make an informed decision the better.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mr. Borthwick said yes, his wife is a teacher at West Scranton Intermediate School.

Mike Hanley, resident and graduate of Scranton School District and has two children who graduated from Central, spoke of his work in various organizations in the city and gave a brief background of his experience as stated in his resume and cover letter.

Mr. Dougherty now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mr. Hanley responded that he very much thinks they need to add programs and he is concerned about the programs that have been cut and what they can do to rebuild them and how they can develop that money he thinks is a priority and how to get the funds to do that. The priority is with the children and what effect it would have the them and any cuts that are made, what effect it would have on the teachers as he thinks right now teacher morale is low and they need to build that up as they're losing a lot of teachers so they need to prioritize if any cuts are made.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

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Mr. Hanley said he thinks the programs and the quality of education that we're offering is tremendously important and that has to be brought up front, bring attention to it and they need to continue to advocate for more funding from the state and community.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mr. Hanley answered the school board is to look at policies and the procedures that are put into place, to oversee those, to formulate them and the responsibility of the Superintendent and teachers is to implement the policies that the board puts in place.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mr. Hanley responded that is a huge thing and that has to be the primary thing and all the decisions made on those issues need to reflect on how that affects the children and their education.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mr. Hanley thinks they need to look at all facets of that and he is very reticent to close neighborhood schools, thinks neighborhoods are tremendously important and the school district is an intricate part of the city and strong neighborhoods mean strong schools so they need to look at the alternatives to closing schools, look at the costs not just the dollars and cents but the cost of education, the cost to our children and the cost to the educational system.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mr. Hanley said his daughter is a teacher at Neil Armstrong.

Tucker Hottes, resident, spoke of his desire to be appointed, his goals to be a voice on the board for transparency and communication, make sure the children have the best possible education and opportunities and to assist in making the right decisions.

Mr. Dougherty now asked the following questions:

Restoring programs is a priority of the Administration and the Board. If something had to be cut from the budget to accomplish this, how would you go about working on the Board to get that done?

Mr. Hottes thinks the primary thing would be to look at what the enrollment is in the programs, what the enrichment is for the students and what it means for their futures.

Mr. Hottes said it is important to emphasize a lot of the science, technology, arts and math and all the STEAM programs as well and it is always difficult to hear we need to cut anything and thinks it's important to discuss what the actual enrichment is for our students.

As a School Director you are responsible to be an advocate for Public Education. To what particular issue would you wish to bring attention and how would you go about it?

Mr. Hottes responded that moving our children out of our secondary education programs and into higher education, post secondary college and beyond we need to look at the future and look and see where our kids are going, what they can do and we need to be putting the best students forward and provide the best opportunity for our kids.

What do you see as a School Board member's role and responsibility and how does that differ from the role of the Superintendent and Administration?

Mr. Hottes said the role of a school board member is to look at the way that the funds are distributed, to look at the entire district and what we can and can't do, especially since we are under this oversight of the recovery plan and he thinks it's very important to make sure that is properly adhered to versus the Administration and Superintendent who is responsible for the day to day operations and making sure staff is taken care of and have what they need.

Given all the issues within the Scranton School District currently, such as funding shortfalls, covid, environmental issues and staffing challenges, how can the Board stay focused on student achievement?

Mr. Hottes replied they need to make sure that we're keeping the school district within our local control, the focus should be on proper funding, proper distribution of that funding within our individual schools, making sure the programs are properly taken care of and also continuing the negotiation and support of the teachers.

What kind of data would you seek in order to make a challenging and controversial decision, such as closing a building?

Mr. Hottes said this is not the best possible answer but it's the numbers; he thinks that looking at what we can achieve as a district is very important and also something like a school closing is going to impact so many people from the students first and foremost to the teachers and the staff within the schools; it's a devastating decision to make but it's a decision that need to be made, it needs to be made properly and that discussion and examination of the numbers, the facts, the figures is the primary focus of the board.

Do you have a personal or professional relationship to any Director or member of the Administration or are any members of your immediate family employed by the District?

Mr. Hottes responded no.

8. Board Seat Selection

At this time President Yanni thanked all of the candidates and opened up the floor for any deliberation or comments before each board member makes their selections.

Director McAndrew echoed Mrs. Yanni's comments and thanked the applicants for coming forward.

Director Hume thanked all candidates, agreed and added that this is a very difficult decision as every candidate shares the same commitment that the children come first and that is what unites them as a board.

Mrs. Yanni asked Mr. Audi to go over the process again.

Mr. Audi said each of the board members will have a list of the seven candidates in front of them, they will choose one or two, up to two because in this instance that would equal 1/3 and you cannot go beyond 1/3 so once they circle their one or two candidates, they will be counted by a committee and when those numbers come back that will be the order of how they will vote for its candidate; the person who has the most circled will then be the number one candidate and they will vote for them first. If there's a tie, before there is any voting, the names will be put into a hat in order to determine the voting order.

Mrs. Orr asked Mr. Audi, since Ms. Gilmartin is attending via phone she will text her choices.

Ms. Gilmartin responded she is all set to text and email her choices.

Board Members turned in their choices to the Board Secretary, Virginia Orr. Mrs. Orr, Mr. Paul Dougherty, Mr. Bert Gentilezza and Sarah Hofius-Hall from the Scranton Times tallied the votes which resulted in a three way tie between Carol Cleary, Michael Hanley and Tucker Hottes. It was determined that the three names would be drawn from a basket and voted on in the order in which their name was drawn. Mrs. Orr wrote the names down with Mrs. Hofius-Hall witnessing. The first person that gets a majority vote will be the one appointed to the board.

The first name drawn was Michael Hanley.

The second name drawn was Tucker Hottes.

The third name drawn was Carol Cleary.

A motion to appoint Mr. Hanley was made by Director Gilmartin, seconded by Director Hume.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director McAndrew wanted to say for the three people who made it to the final three, again thank you and he thinks they have three great individuals and candidates but right now from his personal belief is he is going to reserve his vote for the person he thinks who could help with a huge issue we have right now and our children are facing with mental health and every day we get a lot of emails about kids that are acting out because of the year and a half we had with covid and we really struggle in this department and there's so many more kids that are hurting inside that we need to help identify and he thinks whoever gets on this board this is a shift of where we need to start looking more focused into our mental health of our students going forward.

Motion failed with four (4) affirmative and four (4) negative. Directors Cheseck, Holmes, McAndrew and Yanni voted in the negative.

A motion to appoint Mr. Hottes was made by Director Gilmartin, seconded by Director Fox.

ON THE QUESTION:

President Yanni said she put a lot of thought into this and she will also be reserving her vote for the candidate that she thinks can help our students the best at this time.

Director Fox, debating her word wisely, she refuses to be sitting on a board where there's not transparency and believes everyone who came forward is very qualified and there were rumors of who would be voted on tonight and she is sick to sit here and see this play out in front of her because people are voted down who are very qualified. Everyone has the right to their own vote but this started back on reorganization and will continue through apparently and unfortunately she can't sit by and watch it happen without voicing her opinion so she is very sorry to those who are being voted down tonight or who were not voted on at all. Ms. Fox thanked all applicants.

Motion failed with four (4) affirmative and four (4) negative. Directors Cheseck, Holmes, McAndrew and Yanni voted in the negative.

A motion to appoint Mrs. Cleary was made by Director McAndrew, seconded by Director Holmes.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director Cheseck spoke of what Mrs. Cleary had to say in her experience, she feels she would bring so much to the children of this district especially right now in the middle of a pandemic and that is why she has been reserving her vote for the most qualified candidate.

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Motion passed with five (5) affirmative and three (3) negative. Directors Cruz, Fox and Gilmartin voted in the negative.

Mrs. Cleary was not present for the meeting, was not sworn in at this time and would not participate in the upcoming special meeting this evening.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Director McAndrew, seconded by Director Cheseck and the meeting adjourned at 8:11PM.

By: _____
Secretary