

January 2, 2020

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for the Board Vacancy on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at 7:00pm prevailing time in the Board Room of the Administration Building, 425 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, PA.

President Gilmartin called the meeting to order at 7:40pm with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call: By the Secretary.

Present: Directors Cruz, Fox, Hume, McAndrew, Schuster, Yanni and Gilmartin.
(*Director Hume was present via teleconference*)

Absent: Director Dixon.

President Gilmartin announced the purpose of the meeting is for the Board Vacant seat.

Public Comment

No speakers signed in.

Candidates were now sequestered and called upon in the order in which they signed in and given two minutes to address the board followed by questions from board members.

Diana Harris thanked the board for the opportunity and said she has no political aspirations and what she wants is to do is what is right for the students, the teachers and the taxpayers. She would also like to continue petitioning for fair funding and continue to deal with the past problems and open communication.

Director Yanni asked Mrs. Harris what is the number one motivating factor for wanting to serve on the school board. Mrs. Harris said her daughter was a teacher in the Scranton School District, her position was cut and she is now working in another district.

Director Hume's question was how important is it for the board to work harmoniously and build a consensus amongst our colleagues and what qualities and skills would you bring to the board.

Mrs. Harris responded that she has always been a team player; she was a medical professional and dealt with everything from little things to life and death. Mrs. Harris would like to show her leadership qualities as she was a supervisor for 30+ years and she hopes she could bring some balance to the board and different ideas.

Director McAndrew asked what the biggest challenges facing public education today.

Mrs. Harris answered charter schools; she believes they are taking away from public education and she has always believed in public education and thinks charter schools are

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doing a disservice to students and there is nothing better than learning with other students and to engage with other students.

Director Schuster asked if selected this evening would you consider running for office in two years. Mrs. Harris said she is unsure.

Director Cruz asked what Mrs. Harris believes are the strengths in the Scranton School District. Mrs. Harris said the teachers; there are not enough good stories about the teachers only what their demands are.

Director Fox asked if you were faced with a tough issue such as raising taxes or cutting programs, what kind of information or data would you need to help you make your decision.

Mrs. Harris said to go to the bottom line of data and go through every line item to see what could be cut, where you could do things differently, where you could do things out of the box.

Director Gilmartin asked what she perceives to be the responsibilities of the school board.

Mrs. Harris said making the tough decisions and it is very hard to know what is right to do when you're a school administrator but you have to bring it all together and if you hear of something going wrong you have to go to the powers that be and correct it.

Prior to the next candidate, Ms. Gilmartin shared with everyone that she and Mrs. Welby do sit on another board of directors together and Mr. Audi assured her that it is not a conflict.

Gretchen Welby, said she is an Academic Director for the Physician's Assistant Program at Marywood University and in charge of the entire academic instructional programs. Dr. Welby has been in higher education for over 20 years; teaching is her passion and shared her experiences in teaching and the importance of higher education.

Director Yanni asked what is your motivating factor for wanting to serve on this school board.

Dr. Welby responded being a resident of Scranton and the view that she sees moving from high school into college, students that are prepared are more successful and she understands the importance of a good education prior to moving on to the college level.

Director Hume asked how important is it that we work harmoniously and build consensus amongst our colleagues on this board and what qualities, skills and experience would she bring to achieve that goal.

Dr. Welby said harmony on the board is essential in getting work done and the experience she brings is she has been a member of many different boards over the years, interacting

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with fellow board members from small board with small budgets to big boards with big budgets.

Director McAndrew asked what are the biggest challenges facing public education today.

Dr. Welby said lack of money is definitely the biggest issue and working with limited funds.

Director Schuster asked if selected this evening would you consider a run for office in two years.

Dr. Welby said yes, contingent on how much she thought she could bring to the board beyond the appointment period.

Director Cruz asked what are the strengths of the Scranton School District.

Dr. Welby said the teachers; it always comes down to the teachers.

Director Fox asked if faced with tough issues such as raising taxes or cutting programs what kind of information or data would you need to help make your decision.

Dr. Welby said how it would impact the students; that is always the forefront in her mind and how we can change or tweek a program that would most benefit the students although it may not be the most popular choice.

Director Gilmartin asked what you perceive to be the responsibilities of the school board.

Dr. Welby said financial responsibilities, to be transparent in the decision making process, to be responsible not only to the taxpayers but to the students and families in the district and make sure that programs that are available are high quality and the teachers that are hired are qualified and are passionate about what they do and to make sure financially we put the district on sound footing and transparent in the decisions we make.

Stephanie Davis, is a resident with three children in the district and that is basically why she is here; very vested in their education and concerned where things are going.

Director Yanni asked what motivated her to turn in her application for the board.

Mrs. Davis said her children and all of the kids in Scranton because they are the future, teachers spend 6 hours/day with them and she just wants them to get a good education all around.

Director Hume's asked how important is it for the board to work harmoniously and build a consensus amongst our colleagues and what qualities and skills would you bring to the board.

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Mrs. Davis said it is very important for everyone to work together, that's the only way things can get done is if everyone works together. She can bring a lot of new perspective, a fresh pair of eyes and she has no other interest in being here but for her children.

Director McAndrew asked what the biggest challenges facing public education today.

Mrs. Davis said there are a lot of financial issues that arise, a lot of constraints and how the school district can spend their money and also the issue of Common Core and education as a whole needs to be revamped.

Director Schuster asked if selected this evening would you consider running for office in two years. Mrs. Davis said she would have to wait and see.

Director Cruz asked what she believes are the strengths in the Scranton School District.

Mrs. Davis said the students are the strengths of the district; they are the future of Scranton.

Director Fox asked if faced with tough issues such as raising taxes or cutting programs what kind of information or data would you need to help make your decision.

Mrs. Davis said numerous data you would need and possibly work with the Single Tax Office.

Director Gilmartin asked what you perceive to be the responsibilities of the school board.

Mrs. Davis responded that the board should be an outline for each school, a model per se, as a guideline how a school should perform.

Joseph Albert, said if he realized there were so many applicants he may not have applied because it's a team effort and he thinks it is admirable that the community is finally waking up.

Director Yanni asked what is the motivating factor for wanting to serve on this school board.

Mr. Albert responded that the community is finally waking up and can't sit back and think the situation is going to solve itself, and the problems that the school district faces are not insurmountable but they're magnificent.

Director Hume asked how important is it that we work harmoniously and build consensus amongst our colleagues on this board and what qualities, skills and experience would he bring to achieve that goal.

Mr. Albert replied that the school board is a team effort just like a football team can't survive without it's quarterback or safeties or coach; it s a team effort and it must be harmonious, they have to get along, has to be a compromise. Mr. Albert said the only thing

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he could bring to this board is perhaps that he is not indebted to anyone, he's been involved in major activities affecting the security and strategy of the United States at the highest levels so he knows what goes on when making decisions and sometimes you have to bite the bullet and make a hard decision.

Director McAndrew asked what the biggest challenges facing public education today.

Mr. Albert said funding. There has to be adequate funding and adequate sources of revenue and a community that feels that its necessary and important enough that they want to and are willing to make the sacrifices necessary so that those that follow have it better than those that are leaving.

Director Schuster asked if selected this evening would you consider running for office in two years. Mr. Albert said no, he didn't think so.

Director Cruz asked what he believes are the strengths in the Scranton School District.

Mr. Albert said the biggest problem the Scranton School District has is communicating with the public and having the public offer its two cents and he expected this room to be packed tonight and that is disappointing.

Director Fox asked if faced with tough issues such as raising taxes or cutting programs what kind of information or data would you need to help make your decision.

Mr. Albert said if its cutting a program he would like to know how many it affects and why that program was selected to be cut and to try and decide if it's necessary and as for raising taxes, he would look for other alternatives such as funding or grants and put pressure on public officials, especially in Harrisburg.

Director Gilmartin asked what you perceive to be the responsibilities of the school board.

Mr. Albert said to ensure that the taxpayers they're representing get what they're paying for.

Following the interviews President Gilmartin thanked the candidates for coming forward, it takes tremendous dedication and courage and all had a great deal to offer. Ms. Gilmartin asked for a consensus with the board that if the candidates not chosen this evening we would carry their applications over to the next appointment if they are still interested; if they wish not to be considered please let Mrs. Orr know. The board was in agreement.

The process of selection was now explained and board members made their selections following Policy 004-BOG-1 and submitted their choice to Secretary Virginia Orr. Mrs. Orr, Mr. Paul Dougherty and Mrs. Sarah Hofius Hall tabulated the results which were then turned over to Board President Gilmartin.

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President Gilmartin announced that Dr. Welby received the most votes and asked for a motion for Gretchen Welby.

Director Yanni made a motion, seconded by Director Cruz and the motion to appoint Mrs. Welby to the Scranton School Board's vacant seat passed unanimously on roll call.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director Schuster thanked all candidates for coming out this evening and it was nice to see the selection of individuals and hopes they all keep their applications in for the next vacancy.

Solicitor Audi now swore in Gretchen Welby to the Scranton School Board and Mrs. Welby took her seat on the board to attend the scheduled Operations Committee meeting.

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Director McAndrew, all in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 8:33PM.

By: _____