

TOWN OF LEE
SELECT BOARD & SCHOOL COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING
Tuesday June 13, 2023 @ 5:30PM
LMHS Library • 300 Greylock Street

Minutes

Select Board Members Present: Bob Jones, Gordon Bailey, Sean Regnier

Select Board Members Absent: None.

School Committee Members Present: Dr. Andrea Larmon (via Zoom), Kurt Nichols, Betsy Strickler, Aaron Aubin, Heidi Cooper, Nicole Kosiorek (via Zoom)

School Committee Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Town Administrator Chris Brittain, Superintendent Michael Richard, Middle & High School Principal Gregg Brighenti

1. Call to Order

Select Board Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 5:30PM.

2. School Committee Candidate Interviews

Daniel Blaisdell:

School Committee member, Betsy Strickler, began by asking Mr. Blaisdell to tell the School Committee and the Select Board a little about himself and why he is interested in the School Committee vacancy. Mr. Blaisdell stated that he is a longtime Lee native, he went to St. Mary's School and graduated high school in 1997. He stated that he appreciated the school, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, for keeping his child educated. He stated that his son is now eight and he feels like he has the time to give something back to the community.

School Committee Vice Chair, Kurt Nichols, asked Mr. Blaisdell if there is a particular issue that motivates him to serve on the School Committee. Mr. Blaisdell stated that he does not have a particular issue in mind, but he would be open-minded and offer a fresh opinion. He stated that his background is in insurance.

Select Board Chair, Bob Jones, asked Mr. Blaisdell what strengths he could bring to the School Committee. Mr. Blaisdell stated that when a problem presents itself, he will always try and find an answer. He stated that he may not agree on every issue, but he has learned the art of agreeing to disagree. He stated that he likes to work with people and not against them. Select Board member, Gordon Bailey, asked Mr. Blaisdell to give an example of his problem-solving skills. Mr. Blaisdell stated that he assumes the Town of Lee will be up for renewing its insurance on July 1st. As an example, he stated that if that renewal had a 20% increase, he would start resolving the issue by bringing in a team to come up with a solution to making that 20% increase look less impactful.

Mr. Bailey asked Mr. Blaisdell what he sees as the School Committee's role and responsibility. Mr. Blaisdell stated that he went online and read a bit of the manual and tried to look up each Board member to see a bit about each one. He stated that the website does not include bios on anyone, but he went on LinkedIn and tried to find out more. He stated that this is a tough job and you need to take into consideration that there are a lot of folks that can be impacted. He stated that you have to be less political. He stated that he wants what is best for his son and he hopes the School Committee is doing what is best for his child.

Ms. Strickler stated that she thinks Mr. Blaisdell raised a good point – especially in this past year – they have had some issues that they have had to work through, take a step back to look at what their role is, and take the politics out of it. Mr. Blaisdell asked Ms. Strickler for an example. Ms. Strickler stated that they did have a dress code issue at one point, and they stepped back and asked what is best for the policies and procedures because that is their role. They work with administration, not the students.

Mr. Blaisdell asked the School Committee to name one thing they would like to see happen in FY24. School Committee Chair, Dr. Andrea Larmon, stated that personally she would like to see more kids come into the Lee Public School District. School Committee member, Nicole Kosiorek, stated that she would like to see more in regards to curriculum and programs.

Chair Dr. Larmon thanked Mr. Blaisdell for coming in. Mr. Blaisdell thanked the School Committee and Select Board for having him in for an interview.

Craig Langlois:

School Committee member, Aaron Aubin, began by asking Mr. Langlois to tell the School Committee and the Select Board a little about himself and why he is interested in the School Committee vacancy. Mr. Langlois stated that he seeks out opportunities where he can make a difference professionally and from a community service standpoint. He believes strongly in community service and believes smaller towns need more of it. Mr. Langlois stated that he believes schools are the heartbeat of a community, and he believes all students have the right to high quality education.

School Committee member, Heidi Cooper, asked Mr. Langlois if there is a particular issue that motivates him to serve on the School Committee. Mr. Langlois stated that it would be a continuation of making sure all students get a high-quality education. He stated that he believes one of the roles of the School Committee is to support our teachers.

Select Board member, Sean Regnier, asked Mr. Langlois what strengths he would bring to the School Committee. Mr. Langlois stated that with his experience, he loves a good budget. He stated that that is something he is really looking forward. He stated that he does a lot of data analytics in terms of student performance in his current role. He can use that knowledge to help think and plan long term.

Chairman Jones asked Mr. Langlois what he saw as the School Committee's role and responsibility. Mr. Langlois stated that his opinion is that the School Committee is a governance committee. He thinks it is the administration's role to present ideas to the School Committee, and then their role is to look at the mission of the school and ask if the agenda item is supporting that mission and what is best for the students.

Ms. Strickler asked Mr. Langlois if he ever interacts with the City of Pittsfield School Committee with his current role. He stated he only interacts with them when asked. He supports their curriculum department but does not have a regular report for the Pittsfield School Committee.

Mr. Bailey stated that one line on Mr. Langlois' resume reads, *"Redesigned district benchmark visualizations and review protocols to align Tier 1 instructional goals and improve accessibility"*. Mr. Bailey asked Mr. Langlois to explain that. Mr. Langlois stated that one of the big things he focused on this year was how to communicate with teachers quickly about how their students are performing. He stated that he designed a TOA "Triangle of Awesomeness" which shows benchmark scores and other state metrics as a simple visualization that a teacher can look at to breakdown performance into three tiers. Tier 1 is students that are functioning well, Tier 2 is students that need to have a little more attention, and Tier 3 is students that are struggling. In an ideal world, we'd want all students in Tier 1. Teachers get a chance to visualize where their students are and then Mr. Langlois' role is to figure out what he can do to help the teachers – whether it be researching curriculum resources or being a sounding board.

Mr. Langlois told Mr. Regnier that he has lived in Berkshire County for sixteen years and in Lee for fifteen of those.

Chair Dr. Larmon thanked Mr. Langlois for his time and interest in the School Committee. Mr. Langlois thanked the School Committee and Select Board for their time.

Patrick Rooney:

Ms. Strickler began by asking Mr. Rooney to tell the School Committee and the Select Board a little about himself and why he is interested in the School Committee vacancy. Mr. Rooney stated that he has a son that he recently adopted and he is now attending Lee schools and is doing very well. He stated that he is currently retired and worked for many years in the amusement industry, building and designing entertainment centers all over the world. He stated that he did a lot of management of people and had crews that he operated with. He currently has a little mechanic shop he operates out of now as a hobby. He stated that he is interested in the School Committee vacancy because he likes to be involved in what his son is doing and play in a role in it.

Vice Chair Nichols asked Mr. Rooney if there is a particular issue that motivates him to serve on the School Committee. Mr. Rooney stated that he believes he is too new to the Lee school system to see any issues and he is very pleased. He stated that the support for his son has been incredible. He stated that his son is special needs and he is pleased that about 1/3 of the school's programs are devoted to special needs students. He stated that that is very refreshing, and he doesn't have anything to be concerned about yet and doesn't believe he will.

Mr. Bailey asked Mr. Rooney what strengths he would bring to the School Committee. Mr. Rooney stated he is a fast learner and would bring the ability to shift gears well. He stated that he worked with the Wilson School District in Reading, MA. He will bring in a willingness to do what they need to do.

Mr. Regnier asked Mr. Rooney what he saw as the School Committee's role and responsibility. Mr. Rooney stated that he believes the School Committee is there to focus on the student body and see where things may either need some adding to or some taking from. He also understands that they focus on the budgeting and how the budget is spent.

Ms. Strickler stated that she thinks Mr. Rooney has a unique background. Chair Dr. Larmon thanked Mr. Rooney for his time and interest in the School Committee. Mr. Rooney thanked the Boards.

3. Discussion among Board Members

Mr. Bailey started by saying each of the candidates would bring something totally different. Mr. Bailey stated that Mr. Langlois has a lot of experience in the school system, and he asked the School Committee if they feel he may be too focused on one issue because of that, whereas the other two candidates are greener and may be more open. Mr. Nichols stated that he came to the School Committee very green and stated that he realized his original thought of what his responsibilities would be, was not entirely correct. He stated that with time, he realized the School Committee's job is to support the administration. He stated that when he looks at the three candidates, he sees three very different understandings of what the role of the School Committee is. Mr. Nichols stated that the roles can be learned, however.

Mr. Regnier asked if there was a specific need the School Committee members felt they are looking for in a candidate. Ms. Strickler stated that previously Andrea Wadsworth was the School Committee member who was great at numbers, and maybe someone who could fill that role would be best. She stated that she appreciates someone having a strength in numbers, but she also appreciates someone that comes with experience to help with facility questions.

Ms. Kosiorek stated that she doesn't see any one of these candidates being focused on one area. She stated that she found Mr. Langlois to be overall well-rounded – although he specializes in numbers, he did mention the school being the heartbeat of the community, and working with management. She stated that if she had a checklist, Mr. Langlois would've hit everything on it. She stated that if they go back to the mission and what the Committee wants for its schools, she believes Mr. Langlois was by far the best candidate, who not only showed it in person, but also on his resume. Chair Dr. Larmon added that Mr. Langlois was the only one who specifically answered all four

questions. Mr. Nichols added that he noticed Mr. Blaisdell did not answer the questions specifically. Mr. Nichols stated that he found Mr. Rooney to be a great time but he found Mr. Langlois to be very knowledgeable. Chair Dr. Larmon added that for the past year and a half they have struggled with the finance committee and the fact that with their committee of six, the only people that can vote on payroll are herself, Mr. Aubin, Ms. Kosiorek, and Ms. Cooper. She stated that they are significantly limited on people who can vote for certain aspects of their warrants and that is a huge concern of hers moving forward. Ms. Strickler stated that all three of the prospective candidates could vote, however. Chair Dr. Larmon stated that that was true, but they needed someone who would be willing to come onto their finance committee.

Mr. Bailey asked what all of the subcommittees of the School Committee are. Chair Dr. Larmon stated that they are curriculum, policy, negotiations, finance (meets the most frequently), strategic planning, technology, diversity and inclusion, support services, and union 29.

For informational purposes, Admin Brittain stated that whoever the Boards appoint tonight will be on the School Committee until the election in May, and at that point, will need to be re-elected to fill the remainder of Randy Kinnas' term (who resigned) for one more year.

Ms. Strickler stated that she thinks it's important to look at the diversity in our schools and the diversity on the School Committee.

Chairman Jones stated that his first choice would be Mr. Langlois because he seemed to be the best communicator. Ms. Strickler stated that she knows that the Committee is currently lacking with finance, but she believes we have a lot of strength in the curriculum side since four of the current Committee members are involved in the school. Ms. Strickler stated when she heard Mr. Rooney speak of diversity and different cultures, she was excited because he was bringing something entirely new to the table.

Superintendent Richard stated that he cannot give any opinion of a specific candidate, but from his seat, his concern is finding someone who is invested in the community and willing to put the time in. He stated he believed all three candidates would be willing to put the work in.

4. Vote on Candidates by Individual Ranking

The School Committee and Select Board members ranked the three candidates 1-3, 1 being their first choice to fill the School Committee vacancy. All of the votes will be added by Admin Brittain and the candidate with the lowest score will be appointed.

Superintendent Richard announced that based on the votes of the Select Board and School Committee members, Craig Langlois will fill the School Committee vacancy.

Mr. Nichols made a motion to appoint Craig Langlois to the School Committee which Ms. Kosiorek seconded and was unanimously approved, 6-0.

Ayes

Aaron Aubin
Heidi Cooper
Nicole Kosiorek
Andrea Larmon
Kirk Nichols
Betsy Strickler

Nays

None

Mr. Bailey made a motion to appoint Craig Langlois to the School Committee which Mr. Regnier seconded and was unanimously approved, 3-0.

Ayes

Bob Jones

Gordon Bailey

Sean Regnier

Nays

None

Mr. Regnier made a motion to adjourn at 6:50pm which Mr. Bailey seconded and was unanimously approved, 3-0.

Submitted by:



Sabrina Touhey
Exec Asst TA/BOS

Approved on: 07/18/2023