

**Concord Board of Education**  
**Special Board Meeting**  
November 1, 2019

**Board members present:** Jennifer Patterson, President, Thomas Croteau, *Vice President*, Pam Wicks, Jim Richards, Liza Poinier, Chuck Crush, Nancy Kane, Barb Higgins, Danielle Smith

**Administration:** Larry Prince, *Human Resources Director*

The meeting was called to order by Board President Jennifer Patterson at 6:02 p.m. She stated that the agenda was to consider the resignation and severance agreement with Superintendent Terri Forsten.

Ms. Patterson asked for a motion to unseal those portion of the minutes of the September 25, 2019 non-public session with respect to motions and votes taken regarding Superintendent Forsten's employment with the District.

**The Board voted 9-0 by roll call to unseal those portion of the minutes of the September 25, 2019 non-public session with respect to motions and votes taken regarding Superintendent Forsten's employment with the District (motioned by Jim Richards, seconded by Barb Higgins).**

Ms. Patterson read the portion of those minutes relative to those motions and votes:

"The Board voted unanimously on a roll call vote (9-0) to terminate the employment of Ms. Forsten, moved by Ms. Higgins and seconded by Mr. Crush.

"The Board also voted unanimously on a roll call vote (9-0) to non-renew Ms. Forsten's contract, moved by Ms. Higgins and seconded by Mr. Crush.

"The Board voted unanimously on a roll call vote (9-0) to authorize the Board President to work with counsel to draft and deliver a termination notice to Ms. Forsten consistent with the findings of investigator Djuna Perkins with respect to Ms. Forsten, moved by Mr. Crush and seconded by Nancy Kane.

Mr. Richards made a motion to approve the agreement releasing the Concord School District from its obligations pursuant to the employment contract with Superintendent Forsten and to accept the resignation of Superintendent Terri L. Forsten effective November 1, 2019. Chuck Crush seconded the motion.

**The Board voted 9-0 by roll call to approve the agreement releasing the Concord School District from its obligations pursuant to the employment contract with Superintendent Forsten and to accept the resignation of Superintendent Terri L. Forsten effective November 1, 2019 (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Crush).**

Ms. Patterson noted that a public statement regarding Ms. Forsten's resignation would be released shortly.

Ms. Patterson stated that the Board would consider the conditional nomination of a candidate for interim Superintendent. Mr. Crush read a prepared statement.

"The School Board has been seeking to hire an Interim Superintendent to oversee the School District until a full time Superintendent can be found to fill that position. The School Board is pleased to extend an offer of employment as Interim Superintendent to Dr. Franklyn Bass.

Dr. Bass has served as a school administrator in New Hampshire for over 25 years. He has been a high school principal, Assistant Superintendent and School District Superintendent. He was the Superintendent of Schools for the Hanover, New Hampshire/Norwich, Vermont School District from 2011 until his retirement in 2017. Prior to that, he had served as a Superintendent for the Pelham/Windham School District. Since his retirement, he has been an Adjunct Professor at Southern New Hampshire University's School of Education with a focus on Instructional Leadership courses.

Dr. Bass will assume the position of interim superintendent on a part-time basis. He brings with him a wealth of experience and a history of positive leadership. The School Board believes that Dr. Bass can step in as Superintendent and immediately begin the process of rebuilding the School District's relationship with its students, staff and the community. The School Board will formally introduce Dr. Bass at its regular meeting on November 4, 2019 and schedule, in the near future, an event at which the community can meet and hear from Dr. Bass.

The Board will begin the search for a new, permanent Superintendent shortly. It is anticipated that the School Board will be able to fill the Superintendent's position on a permanent basis beginning on July 1, 2020."

He noted that Dr. Bass would be paid \$750 per diem for 95 days (Monday, Thursday, Friday) for one school year only.

Mr. Crush noted that he had personally checked this candidate's references. He stressed that he would be acting as an interim superintendent.

Mr. Crush made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to Dr. Franklyn G. Bass: "I move to make a conditional offer of part-time employment as Interim Superintendent for the Concord School District to Dr. Franklyn G. Bass of Manchester, New Hampshire. The conditions of this offer are Dr. Bass' satisfactory compliance with all State laws and regulations applicable to superintendents and the execution of an employment contract."

Ms. Patterson thanked Mr. Crush and Mr. Croteau for taking the lead in these discussions.

Pam Wicks noted that Board members had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Bass, who has a breadth of experience, and stated that he would be a great asset while the Board continued to navigate the difficult healing process with the community.

Ms. Higgins noted that Dr. Bass' focus would be on taking care of staff, students and the community.

Mr. Richards noted that Dr. Bass had impressed him as a person who would be out in the schools, looking at classrooms, looking at teachers, interacting with students and being very involved.

Mr. Croteau noted that Dr. Bass' responsibilities would be delineated in the first days of his undertaking the position.

**The Board voted 9-0 by roll call to make a conditional offer of part-time employment as Interim Superintendent for the Concord School District to Dr. Franklyn G. Bass of Manchester, New Hampshire. The conditions of this offer were Dr. Bass' satisfactory compliance with all State laws and regulations applicable to superintendents and the execution of an employment contract. (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Tom Croteau).**

Ms. Patterson noted that the Board would have more information at its November 4 regular monthly meeting about the independent investigator's report and recommendations.

#### Public Comment

Concord resident Betty Hoadley complimented the Board for its confidential work, requiring coordination with multiple people and agencies. She asked for clarification of the exact term of Dr. Bass' tenure, and whether there would be coordination with the part-time Superintendent leaving and a new Superintendent taking on the position. She requested that the language of the contract be very precise.

Concord resident and parent Kate Frey commented that she assumed that Board had checked that Dr Bass is credentialed. She asked whether he would access to the full report from the independent investigator, to which Ms. Patterson replied that to the degree he would be involved in any action, he certainly would.

Ms. Frey noted that the report contained critical information that, in her opinion, indicated there was substantial malfeasance; she asked whether that would be suppressed (personnel working when they weren't supposed to be working, etc.).

Ms. Patterson noted that the was the Board's firm intention to ensure that all potential personnel issues that might be raised in the report to the Board would be addressed.

Ms. Frey asked whether Dr. Bass, as a part-time interim Superintendent, would share the role with Donna Palley, and whether Ms. Palley would continue to be employed.

Mr. Crush noted that Dr. Bass would work on Monday, Thursday and Friday and would be available via telephone at other times (this was included in the per diem fee). He stated that the Board wanted to ensure that Dr. Bass would be able to closely coordinate with the current administrative team in the Central Office, ensuring the day-to-day functionality of the District functional for the good of the students and the operation of the schools.

Mr. Croteau noted that the Board did not have the jurisdiction nor did it want to oversee every detail of the day to-day operations of the District; that it had been thrust into the role recently because there was no Superintendent or high school Principal in place.

Ms. Frey stated a concern that the Board was relying on an administration that had not been honest with the Board or with the public.

Mr. Richards said he wanted to answer that concern directly, stating that there would be a transition as Dr. Bass was brought up to speed – he will be the only interim Superintendent and will perform all Superintendent duties.

In response to a question from Ms. Frey whether Ms. Forsten or Tom Sica or any other administrator involved in the hiring of this interim Superintendent, Mr. Crush answered that this was not the case, and that he had personally check Dr. Bass' credentials.

In response to a question from Ms. Frey about Mr. Sica's status, Ms. Patterson noted that he was still on paid administrative leave and was not performing any work on behalf of the District. She stated that the Board would share more information when it has it.

Concord resident and Board candidate Max Schultz thanked the Board for taking the important step toward transparency in releasing information about the termination of the Superintendent. He said that an interim would be in charge of all hiring and firing. As Dr. Bass is experienced as a Superintendent, the Board need not handcuff him coming into this tremendously tumultuous situation. Even if he's interim and working on a part-time basis, he could potentially be in the District until next summer. Mr. Schultz suggested that the Board should give him full authority, see the report immediately and read it because he would be walking right into the middle of the issue. He suggested that needed to know everything, even if he had to sign a confidentiality agreement when leaving.

Mr. Crush noted that events were happening very quickly, and the first step was to vet the candidate.

Mr. Schultz commented that this was a great step forward, but that the public was still concerned that the high school principal was on leave and still being paid.

Ms. Patterson commented that the Board intended to give Dr. Bass an opportunity to meet with the Central Office administrators, and its second step was to get a high school Principal in place.

Concord resident Delle Champagne asked whether it was possible to get a list of the new Superintendent's duties at the Monday meeting.

Mr. Crush and Mr. Croteau said that they would want to include Dr. Bass on the development of his duties, and that he was not yet employed in the District.

Mr. Crush stated that he understood community members were frustrated that this process had not been moving as quickly as they would like, and emphasized that the Board was in a process that it must follow. He explained that to have a productive discussion under NH law, the Board needed to actually meet; they could not send each other emails

Ms. Higgins noted that there had been at least one week totaling 16 hours of meetings. She said the Board members meticulously wanted to do its job correctly so mistakes would not mess it up.

Ms. Patterson thanked Board members, who she said had been working unbelievably hard, with every member bringing a tremendous value to the work of the Board. She stated that these discussions had been in non-public session because they have had to be.

Mr. Richards also thanked the community for its participation, as he sees it as a vital part of this community being able to heal.

Concord resident Tony Schinella asked Ms. Patterson to “walk people from Sept. 25 to Nov. 1 – in a generic way, explaining why it would 5 weeks to reach an agreement.”

Ms. Patterson noted that she could not do this on the spot but would work to come up with this information for Monday evening. We worked as fast as possible.

Mr. Croteau noted that the Board had been developing a list of questions it thinks the community would like to have answers to, and given the list to its legal counsel to determine what could be said.

Mr. Schinella stated that he was concerned about the safety of children and protection of victims, and that none of the media want to hurt the victims in any way at all, respecting that, at the same time, the media needs to share information.

Ms. Frey noted that many people have never been to a Board meeting and had not understood why someone would be paid for what the public may feel is malfeasance, had not understood the process, and was tired of not having any answers. That said, she said she understood the position the Board has been in, commenting that, with answers, the public could begin to heal. She suggested that it would be helpful for the Board and the public to have a dialogue.

Ms. Patterson stated that it was helpful to have this feedback and suggested members of the public email the Board questions they would like to have answered.

Mr. Croteau noted that, typically, the Board does not respond directly to public comment.

Ms. Patterson noted that recommendations from Attorney Perkins would help the Board focus on precise areas to improve policies. She said that she had been on the Board for 12 years, and nothing remotely like this had ever happened. She said she hoped the process going forward could be more transparent.

Mr. Richards noted that the goal of the work this past summer was to get changes to policies in place and be in the best position possible before the start of school. He said that policy work would be an iterative process, and would involve the community.

Concord resident David Parker said he appreciated the work the Board had done. He advised the Board to include input from stakeholders and staff in the development of its processes and policies.

Concord resident and parent Quentin Goble said he felt he had been lied to either by omission or directly. He said that at the heart of this issue was a 13-year-old girl who was sexually assaulted by a teacher, and a 12-year-old girl who was suspended by RMS Principal Tom Sica for expressing her discomfort with this teacher's behavior after speaking with a peer. He said he heard only two years later about another girl and parent who had brought forward similar concerns.

Mr. Richards strongly stated that not a single member of the Board had ever forgotten about the young girls who were involved in this horrific situation.

Ms. Patterson reiterated that the Board had not been made aware of the previous concern, and that it was the Board's intent to include staff, students and community members in its student safety work.

A motion was made to adjourn.

**The Board voted 6-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Croteau).**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Richards, *Secretary*