

Concord School District
Special Board meeting
April 21, 2020

Board members participating remotely: Jennifer Patterson, *President*; Gina Cannon (arrived late; not present for roll call); Tom Croteau; Chuck Crush; David Parker; Liza Poinier; Jim Richards

Board members absent: Barb Higgins; Danielle Smith

Administrators participating: Business Administrator Jack Dunn, Interim Superintendent Frank Bass (joined after the roll call)

Other: Art Bettencourt, NESDEC representative

Agenda Item 1. Call to order

Ms. Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and read the following emergency meeting statement:

As President of the Concord School Board, I find that due to the state of emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

The business we intend to conduct today is necessary due to the need to hire a permanent Superintendent for the District, and the need to appropriately modify the process for doing so, to ensure there is ample and appropriate opportunity for the public to meet the candidates. The purpose of today's meeting is for the Board to have a discussion with NESDEC, the consultant assisting in the Superintendent search process, about how best to conduct the finalist consideration process going forward in light of the Covid-19 emergency, in a manner that is fair and appropriate for the Concord community.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access by other electronic means:

We are utilizing *Microsoft Teams* for this electronic meeting. All Board members have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone number: (925) 391-1169, Conf ID: 644 539 830#, by clicking on the link provided on the District website (sau8.org), or by watching the meeting on ConcordTV's education channel (Comcast Channel 6 or www.youtube.com/ConcordNHTV). A recording of the meeting will also be posted on ConcordTV's website.

The Board will take public comment in accordance with Policy #136 by unmuting phone lines one by one during the public comment period. Public comments are limited to 5 minutes per person; please make your comments shorter if possible, to allow all interested parties to comment. We encourage the submission of citizen comments via e-mail at: concordinfo@sau8.org

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using *Microsoft Teams* or telephonically. The meeting and pertinent instructions were posted on the District website more than 24 hours prior to the meeting, and are highlighted at the top of the website.

c) Mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603 513-9008.

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting: In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Agenda Item 2. Roll call/determination of members participating

Ms. Patterson noted that all Board members participated remotely. Any votes taken during this meeting were done by roll call vote. She asked that each member state their presence, whether there anyone was in the room with them during this meeting, a requirement under the Right-to-Know law. She asked that members mute their microphones when not speaking, and wait to be recognized. The following members were present with the conditions described above: Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards and Jennifer Patterson. Gina Cannon arrived late and was not present at roll call. Barb Higgins and Danielle Smith were absent.

Business Administrator Jack Dunn and Art Bettencourt of NESDEC also participated, and Interim Superintendent Frank Bass joined after the roll call.

Agenda Item 3. Summary of Superintendent search steering committee process

Mr. Croteau explained that the Board was meeting with NESDEC that evening so they and Mr. Bettencourt could talk through the next steps in the Superintendent search and hiring process and help decide whether an additional non-public meeting would be held, or if the process would move immediately to public meetings. He added that perhaps a non-public meeting would be appropriate so that Board members could ask their most probing or sensitive questions prior to moving to the public phase.

Agenda Item 4. Summary of April 15 non-public meeting

Ms. Patterson noted that on April 15, the Board conducted a preliminary "meet and greet" with the Superintendent finalist candidates identified by the screening committee, and

conducted a preliminary discussion of next steps and timing, given the Covid-19 emergency. The Board voted to seal the portion of the meeting minutes that contained any information that would identify the finalist candidates. Today's meeting was then scheduled so the Board could have a public discussion of the process and procedure going forward, including the timeframe for identifying the finalist candidates and the nature and timing of process for public to "meet" finalists, e.g. through electronic "town hall" meetings.

Agenda Item 5. Discussion of next steps and timing

Mr. Bettencourt complimented the Board's process thus far and the community input that went into the development of the candidate profile. He said the screening committee, which met on a confidential basis in March, was able to screen the applicants, conduct interviews remotely, and recommend excellent candidates to the full Board. He noted that all the communities NESDEC was assisting with searches were working to adapt to the Covid-19 situation, and added that a facilitated public conversation with each finalist might be helpful for the process moving forward. As a preliminary matter, the Board should discuss whether it was comfortable moving forward to the public meeting stage of the process or would prefer additional non-public time to screen candidates before that stage. He suggested the Board might want to convene a non-public, in-depth meeting with each candidate to discuss contractual issues, etc. before moving to a public phase.

Ms. Patterson noted that that day's public meeting was scheduled so the Board could conduct its discussion of the process/next steps in public session, while also allowing for potential non-public meetings in the next week. Given that April vacation was the next week, this would enable the process to stay within an appropriate timeline overall.

Mr. Parker said he felt the Board needed to interview the candidates before names were made public and perhaps someone could facilitate the questions usually asked of candidates in this scenario. Mr. Crush said he felt interviewing the candidates in a non-public, closed session was appropriate. Ms. Poinier echoed Mr. Crush's comments. Mr. Richards said he agreed that contractual issues needed to be discussed in a non-public session. He suggested having a brief description of the candidates broadcast by ConcordTV, so they could present themselves to the public prior to public interaction with candidates.

Ms. Patterson noted that a discussion of how the public phase of this process would work was needed but was separate from the question of whether to conduct further non-public interviews.

Mr. Croteau suggested publicizing and soliciting questions from stakeholders using ConcordTV, then hosting a moderated presentation in a public forum, with the public able to hear questions and responses. Questions from students, staff, administration, and citizens could be entertained in various events so they could be addressed in publicly. Mr. Richards stated the Board was fortunate to have questions, topics, and concerns already gathered from public forums and online surveys conducted by NESDEC. Ms. Poinier said that closed interviews should have structured questions so each candidate was asked the

same things; public interviews could present meaningful opportunities to have the public's questions asked as well. Mr. Parker agreed in part, but stated that, because the candidates were drastically different, follow-up questions might be different for each. Mr. Bettencourt said he would provide the Board with backup information and candidate questions.

Ms. Patterson asked whether Board members were available in the next week for nonpublic candidate interviews if it was decided to schedule them. Board members indicated that they were available, and the discussion turned to the manner of conducting the public phase of the process, given the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. Bettencourt suggested the Board consider gathering input from various constituencies that could be put into questions submitted ahead of time, to be asked of the candidates in a public internet session, with a member of one of those constituencies moderating the conversation. Board members could observe these conversations and interactions. The public board interviews might be the last of these, and could use responses from public interviews to guide a "deep dive" into areas of discussion. Mr. Crush agreed that the Board should be the final interviewers. Mr. Croteau suggested the public should be privy to questions that would be asked of candidates, and asked if they had anything to add.

Ms. Patterson said the Board hoped to announce the candidates in early May, and if possible, to select the new Superintendent at its June meeting.

Ms. Patterson stated the Board had received a great amount of input from the community during the initial stages (survey and focus groups) but that engaging the community might now be more challenging now given the current situation related to Covid-19. She suggested asking members of the screening committee to engage their constituencies for participation in the public phase.

Superintendent Bass, who had recently joined the meeting, suggested that given the tight timeline for all of this to happen, a 30-45-minute public interview might be conducted on ConcordTV with each candidate, during which the public could call or email their feedback or concerns. Mr. Bettencourt suggested that, rather than ask the public for specific questions during the actual interview, to ask for broad themes or topics from which the moderator could develop specific questions. As each candidate came from different background and experiences, the same questions did not need to be asked in the same way of each candidate, instead relying on themes such as the budget, for example. He said he agreed with Superintendent Bass that there should be a way for the public to provide input, but soliciting questions live in an internet setting could be awkward.

Ms. Cannon joined the meeting.

Mr. Crush stated the Board could not overstress the importance of opportunities and variety of modalities for people to have comments and questions, in the name of transparency. He said people need to have multiple chances to participate, and the public should at some point have the opportunity to ask spontaneous questions. He liked the idea of having stakeholder groups and a moderator with some questions provided ahead of time, and a chance for call-in questions also.

Mr. Bettencourt suggested that the Board consider that, during its own public interviews, the public could call in with additional questions rather than using individual constituency groups. Superintendent Bass that the Board could be present during the televised interviews, while the community could provide input directly to the Board.

Ms. Patterson said the Board might want one more opportunity for the public to weigh in on how they would want to meet the candidates. She asked how to make this workable from a logistical standpoint. Mr. Bettencourt suggested doing this in a way that would be comfortable for both the Board and the community. He suggested a June timeline was realistic. NESDEC could lead the Board through the reference check protocol during the interview process through May. Mr. Richards agreed with Mr. Bettencourt's recommendation for the structure, selection and moderation of questions, and to make sure everyone had an opportunity to pose questions. Mr. Croteau suggested the public would like the Board to have a good plan and be running the show, while also appreciating the opportunity for feedback. Mr. Parker suggested it was important to have flexibility with follow-up questions. He said the process should not be scripted, but provide an opportunity for ad hoc follow-up questions.

Ms. Cannon asked whether Board members were developing questions and distributing them among Board members. Ms. Patterson recapped the discussion during the earlier portion of the meeting, noting that non-public interviews would take place in the next week in which contractual and other issues would be discussed. The following week the candidate names would be made public. After that, a public phase of semi-structured facilitated interviews with themes and topics derived from already received public input would be held, followed by final public interviews by the Board. These would provide opportunities to follow up on any previous topics or questions. Mr. Bettencourt would present a proposed schedule for the revised process at the May monthly meeting.

Mr. Dunn suggested that the meeting on April 30 be non-public. He stated the most important outcome of this process would be that the Board would get to know, be familiar and comfortable with the candidates. Ms. Patterson noted that the candidate announcement should be in early May but not necessarily at the monthly meeting.

Mr. Croteau said this Board was more involved in the process than the last time a Superintendent was chosen. That time, the search committee chose one candidate to bring forward to the Board; this committee would be bringing multiple candidates, with much more participation and transparency.

Mr. Dunn said the administration has appreciated Superintendent Bass' availability and participation even on days he has not been scheduled to work.

Agenda Item 6. Public comment

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item 7. Motions, if needed

There were no motions.

Agenda Item 8. Adjournment

Mr. Parker made a motion to adjourn.

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, *President*

Lauren Hynds, *Recorder*