

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING OF THE SHARON BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AND THE SHARON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
June 6, 2018

The joint meeting of the Sharon Board of Selectmen and the Sharon School Committee was called to order at 7:40pm in the School Committee Conference Room at the Sharon Middle School.

Board of Selectmen Members Present:

William Heitin, Joe Roach, and Emily Smith-Lee

School Committee Members Present:

Marcy Kaplan, Jonathan Hitter, Amy Garcia, Judy Crosby, Heather Zelevinsky and Katie Currul-Dykeman

Others Present:

Dr. Victoria Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Elizabeth Murphy, Assistant Superintendent; and John Marcus, Assistant Superintendent

Interviews - One Year Open Position on the School Committee

Prior to the start of the joint meeting, Ms. Kaplan, as part of the regular session of the School Committee, reviewed the reason for the vacancy and the steps under state law that are required to fill a vacancy on an elected board. The School Committee drew candidate names in order to determine the order of candidate interviews. Candidates were asked to wait in another room until they were called in for their interview.

All candidates were asked to tell the members of the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen about themselves, their backgrounds, their experience in the school district and their children's experience; why they are interested in serving on the School Committee; why they are asking to be considered now and why they chose not to run for election in May; what they feel the district's biggest strength, weakness, opportunity and threat are; and what experiences they have in balancing priorities and long-term fiscal planning.

Robert Aftosmes-Tobio

Mr. Tobio has lived in Sharon for 7 months, has a 1 ½ year old and is a teacher in the Boston Public Schools. He feels an obligation to serve and wants to make a difference in a small town. Being new in town, he doesn't know many people and that the safety and security of the one-year position is what prompted him to apply now instead of run in the town election. The district's strength is its diversity and its opportunity to continue maintaining its success. He understands special education very well and done right, it is very expensive.

Suhong Li

Ms. Li moved to Sharon 4 years ago and has two children. She served as a School Council member at Heights for 2 years and is currently the room parent in her daughter's 4th grade class. She is a professor and chair of Information Systems and Analytics at Bryant University. She values the importance of education and would like to serve, but did not run in May due to her professional obligations. She sees the district's strength is due to the dedicated families and teachers who value education, as well as the use of technology at all levels. She views the district's weakness is not offering AP courses at the lower levels and not enough face to face communication between parents and teachers. Opportunity can be found in creating more collaboration, specifically with colleges; and also garner more interest in STEM for females.

Eli Silberzweig

Mr. Silberzweig's family has been involved in public education for 3 generations. He is a product of Sharon Public Schools (SPS) and has three daughters in the system. He spoke at length about his involvement in civic engagement at an early age. He loved being a student at SPS and wants to make an impact now while his children are still in the system. His medical challenges make him sensitive to children with disabilities. With his youngest child just finishing up kindergarten, he is just now being more involved in the community. He attended one of the visioning sessions and was energized. Mr. Silberzweig views the district's strength is committed parents and community members; its weakness is over reliance on residential property taxes; its opportunity is an expansion of the foreign language program; and its threat is long term funding. He added that his experience in the financial services industry will help him work to ensure that creative solutions are developed despite limited resources.

Mena Mesiha

Dr. Mesiha served on the superintendent search committee and has three children in the school system (ages 9, 7 & 5). He enjoys working with people and was a big fan of Dr. Greer when she was being interviewed. The opportunity to serve on the School Committee and the timing is good and would enjoy working with the Superintendent, the staff and the School Committee. It is an exciting time for SPS and wants to be a part of it. He ran because of the aforementioned and because campaigning is outside of his comfort zone. He acknowledged there were strong candidates and missed the third seat by 50 votes. He feels he would bring a different flavor. Dr. Mesiha views the district's strength is its strong academics and invested parents, and explained how this could also be a weakness. The district's opportunity is with Superintendent Greer as well as collaboration with local higher education.

Fern Fergus

Ms. Fergus and her family moved to Sharon 7 years ago and has two daughters (11th grade and 7th grade). She views herself as a collaborative problem solver and is a member of the Superintendent's Parents Advisory Council. She was in the financial services industry but left due to stress and to manage her family's home renovation. She has had time to have a clear mind and is looking at the challenges her daughters have encountered and decided to submit her name for consideration. She also feels the lack of cultural competency in SPS needs to be addressed. She did not run in May because of her personal obligations consuming her time. She believes the district's strength is its reputation; its weakness is the lack of cultural competency and respect for neuro-diversity; its opportunity is to increase cultural competency; and its opportunity it to ensure the district is not static. Ms. Fergus believes collaboration is key and it is important to take a hard look at the numbers and find creative solutions with fresh eyes.

Ann Keitner

Ms. Keitner moved to Sharon 4 years ago and has two children; one has an IEP and has medical and educational issues. She is active in the PTO and SSEPAC and is part of the Parent/Community Advisory Group. She worked in the financial services industry. She took an active interest in her children's education and serving on the School Committee is the next logical step. She went back and forth but decided to submit her name for consideration. Ms. Keitner believes the district's strength is its staff, administration and faculty and its student diversity; its weakness is being unable to keep up with the needs of the student body; budgets are always a challenge and creative solutions are needed; its opportunity is to engage the parents that chose to move to Sharon for its school system; and its threat is her fear of teachers leaving if they don't have the resources they need.

Gia Barboza-Salerno

Ms. Barboza-Salerno has 7 children, 3 of which are in SPS, and they have 3 very different experiences. She is an Assistant Professor at Northeastern University and loves teaching. She wants to serve on the School Committee because she has a vision to affect certain policies and push her agenda for change based on her own experiences. She thought about running for a while but did not run due to her professional obligations. Ms. Barboza-Salerno believes the district's strength is its incredible diversity, great teachers and high academic standards; its

weakness is in mental health and the correlation with high academic standards, as well as bullying and cyber bullying; and its threat is that state requirements are burdensome for teachers and would like to try to work on that.

Deborah Lorenzen also applied but was delayed due to a flight and was unable to participate in the interview process. Via email, she thanked the members for the opportunity.

Mr. Hitter noted that they met with a great group of candidates and hopes that those not selected will get involved. Mr. Heitin echoed those sentiments and added that there are opportunity to serve on town boards and also in the community. Ms. Kaplan suggested that the School Committee and Board of Selectmen members offer names of those candidates that rose to the top.

Ms. Currul-Dykeman: Mena Mesiha, Fern Fergus and Ann Keitner
Mr. Hitter: Mena Mesiha, Fern Fergus and Ann Keitner
Ms. Crosby: Ann Keitner, Fern Fergus and Gia Barboza-Salerno
Ms. Zelevinsky: Mena Mesiha, Fern Fergus and Eli Silberzweig
Ms. Garcia: Mena Mesiha, Fern Fergus and Suhong Li
Ms. Kaplan: Fern Fergus and Mena Mesiha
Ms. Smith-Lee: Mena Mesiha, Ann Keitner and Fern Fergus
Mr. Roach: Mena Mesiha and Ann Keitner
Mr. Heitin: Mena Mesiha, Ann Keitner and Gia Barboza-Salerno

Mr. Heitin suggested that the top vote-getter here tonight get the seat and Ms. Kaplan noted her comfort with that. Ms. Crosby pointed out that there are two other candidates who also received multiple votes, both have financial experience and one has cultural experience. Mr. Currul-Dykeman felt confident that all but one member of both the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen felt that Mena Mesiha rose to the top.

MOTION: To appoint Mena Mesiha to the School Committee until the May 21, 2019 Town Election
(Heitin - Currul-Dykeman) 8-1 **PASSES** (with Ms. Crosby voting in the negative)

MOTION: To instruct the Town Clerk to include this seat on the ballot of the May 21, 2019 Town Election
(Heitin - Hitter) 9-0 **PASSES**

MOTION: To adjourn the joint meeting at 10:05pm
(Heitin - Roach) 9-0 **PASSES**

List of Documents

- Joint Meeting with School Committee Agenda for June 6, 2018
- Marcy Kaplan, School Committee Chair - Email Correspondence re: candidate interviews
- School Committee Candidates spreadsheet and letters of interest
- School Committee vacancy posting
- School Committee Member Qualifications / Oath of Office
- MGL, Chapter 41 sections 1 and 11