

South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Special Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2022

Video Conference Meeting Accessible via SHCTV1 or SHCTV1.com

I. Call to Order

Noticing a quorum, Chairperson, Jackson Matos, called the virtual School Committee Special Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. A Zoom video conference meeting accessible via SHCTV15 and SHCTV.com made possible by Governor Baker's June 16, 2021, remote meeting provision to the March 12, 2020, COVID-19 Emergency

In Attendance: Jackson Matos, Chairperson
Allison Schlachter, Vice Chairperson
Danielle Cooke, Member
Eric Friesner, Member
Lynda Pickbourn, Member
Kaily Godek, Student Representative
Mark McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of the South Hadley Public Schools
Jennifer Voyik, Business Manager, South Hadley Public Schools

Chairperson Matos stated that this is a special meeting where we don't have minutes and usual agenda items. The calling of this meeting was for discussion and vote on the appointment of an Acting Superintendent and an Acting Assistant Superintendent. There will also be Public Comment and an Executive Session following the adjourning of the public meeting.

II. Appointment of Acting Superintendent and Acting Assistant Superintendent (vote)

Acting Superintendent

Chairperson Jackson Matos stated that they have to internal candidates for Acting Superintendent and Acting Assistant Superintendent. In order to make sure they were following protocol and doing their due diligence, they reached out to MA DESE . Chairperson Matos had a lengthy discussion with Glenn Cooper, who the School Committee has relied on in the past for wisdom and counsel and who they trust to give sound advice. They were informed that they were working with two very talented people, Mark McLaughlin and Jennifer Voyik, who have helped to stabilize the school system. As the Chair, Dr. Matos agrees that as a school district we have gone through a number of changes and what we need is stability.

Allison Schlachter, Vice Chair, requested clarification on the process of the discussion and voting. Chairperson Matos confirmed that they would discuss each role individually starting with Acting Superintendent; vote on that position and then discuss Acting Assistant Superintendent.

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Eric Friesner asked what time frame they were looking at for these positions. Chairperson Matos confirmed that these positions will be until the end of the school year, June 30, 2022.

Allison Schlachter, Vice Chair, asked if that was effective tonight, which was confirmed by Chairperson Matos.

Vice Chair Schlachter started the discussion with regards to Dr. Mark McLaughlin for role of Acting Superintendent. She states that there is no hesitation from her. Since Dr. McLaughlin came on to the board in August, he's done remarkable work and has been an incredible leader while handling the responsibilities of the office. For the last several weeks, the district is moving along amazingly. It was a very big transition to make, and she admires his work ethic, attitude, and willingness to just dive in and do big work. He's having form relationships with Community Members and also members of boards. She thinks it's an excellent fit to appoint Mark McLaughlin to Acting Superintendent.

Danielle Cooke echoed Allison Schlachter's statement. She's appreciative of Dr. McLaughlin's communications, especially during the passing of Principal Skala. Just all the things he has done behind the scenes that they got to see; she could not be more grateful.

Lynda Pickbourn agrees with the previous statements. She says that Dr. McLaughlin's grace and commitment to the district is noted, and she recognizes his contributions. He has been an asset and stepped up in so many ways.

Chairperson Matos asked Dr. McLaughlin his thoughts on being appointed as Acting Superintendent with School Committee and the learning community of South Hadley.

Dr. McLaughlin thanked them for those kind words. It's really appreciated and it very humbling and nice to hear. He thinks that South Hadley is a great place, and the school system is a great school system and all school systems have had a very rough time since COVID. It has been difficult. It has been challenging. One of the things that he sees for South Hadley is this potential for resilience and coming back stronger than ever as a team. He thinks that the students, staff and South Hadley families are special and he's grateful to be part of it. It has been an unusual year, yet he's very happy to be part of this team that can do good work on behalf of the students and that's what is important. He is honored to be considered to be able to help in this role.

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Chairperson Matos entertained a motion to appoint Dr. Mark McLaughlin as Acting Superintendent until June 30, 2022. This motion was moved by Danielle Cooke and second by Eric Friesner. No further discussion. Motion passed 5/0. (Schlachter, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Matos).

Congratulations Dr. McLaughlin. We look forward to working with you. Chairperson Matos thinks that we could get a lot done before end of the school year. They appreciate the service he has given so far and the look forward to all that you have to contribute going ahead.

Acting Assistant Superintendent

Chairperson Matos opened up discussion for the second internal candidate for role of Acting Assistant Superintendent, which is our Business Administrator, Jennifer Voyik. He stated that if anyone has attended any school committee meeting, you will see that Jenn Voyik is an encyclopedia of knowledge of all things and how our district runs. If you didn't get a chance to be at the Town Meeting last night, she's just one of those types of people that can get up and tell you exactly where we are in South Hadley in terms of what kind of shape, we're in and what we can do.

Chairperson Matos opened the floor for discussion on appointing Jennifer Voyik as Acting Assistant Superintendent.

Eric Friesner stated that it's a no brainer. I don't know how anyone can have any argument for why Ms. Voyik should not be our Acting Assistant Superintendent.

Allison Schlachter stated that she thinks that Jenn Voyik is very sensible and the best candidate here for this position. She does think that we may think what we call her job title. She's thinking about what we may talk about the job description. She continued that Jenn Voyik was a very deserving candidate for this position. She has extensive knowledge, amazing communication and very sharp skills, plus and overall great human being.

Danielle Cooke stated that Jennifer Voyik's knowledge is very helpful for us in the finance area and it's worth longer discussion about who's going to handle curriculum, as well as what future job descriptions will play out after June. She would like to have items such as grants, and budgets elevated a bit, and she can't think of a better person than Jenn Voyik.

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There was a brief discussion from the School Committee about the title of Acting Assistant Superintendent. Jennifer Voyik provided a brief description of all the work that she's doing in the many roles that she is currently doing at this point. She narrowed down her job description to Finance, Human Resources and Facilities. Dr. McLaughlin suggested that they entitle the position as **Acting Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Operations**, which encompasses the main parts of Jennifer Voyik's position.

Allison Schlachter agrees that they do want to recognize and name the work that Jennifer Voyik is doing. She agrees that we could just keep "adding commas" for Jennifer because it's never-ending. Where there's a need, you go to it. She thinks that choosing a title that's inclusive and encompasses the work that you do while it fits on the letterhead; or just manageable to speak about and talk about and say in conversation, such as Finance and Business Operations. She's in favor of it...

Eric Friesner asked Jennifer Voyik if she feels like that title encapsulates what you do? Is she comfortable with the title if that's what she takes on? Please answer honestly. Jennifer Voyik responded that honestly, she is super embarrassed how long this conversation went vs. Dr. McLaughlin because she thought that should have been a longer conversation (group laughs). She believes that it's a very good and encompassing title. She continues that it has been a very unusual three (3) years. There have been a lot of hard times. There have been sometimes when we have had a chance to laugh and try to make some change to see the community built back again. She starts to see it when she is in some of the schools. She feels very lucky to be a part of this district. She feels that she has found her home. She thinks we work with an incredible team of administrators, teachers, custodians, paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, cafeteria workers, IT department, etc. She's just very happy to be a part of this community. She's truly honored for everything that has been said and humbled by your words.

Chairperson Matos entertained a motion to appoint Jennifer Voyik as Acting Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Operations, which was moved by Eric Friesner and seconded, by Allison Schlachter. No further discussion. Motion passed 5/0. (Schlachter, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Matos).

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III. Public Comment

Chairperson Matos explained that Dr. Jahmal Mosley is on leave. We needed to appoint an Acting Superintendent and Acting Assistant Superintendent. It is a personal matter that we are not able to speak further on. We cannot discuss any personnel issues whether it be someone working in the lunchroom or the Superintendent. An employee is an employee, and their privacy is to be respected.

Chairperson Matos continued with the guidelines of the Public Comments policy. Allison Schlachter volunteered to take time during this portion of the meeting. Ms. Schlachter confirmed that no hands were raised. There was a lot of participation, maybe to listen and not to ask questions. There were no Public Comments.

Chairperson Matos stated that any questions regarding the Superintendent are not questions that the Acting Superintendent or the Acting Assistant Superintendent will answer. Those are questions to be directed to the School Committee, as the School Committee's job is supervision of the Superintendent. Approaching them, calling them, emailing them, etc. is really fruitless because they have less information than we do. We want them to do their jobs. Our job is to answer those questions, their job is to keep the district running.

Chairperson Matos stated there will be an Executive Session following this meeting in Open Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (acting superintendent and acting assistant superintendent) and contract negotiations with nonunion personnel (acting superintendent and acting assistant superintendent).

Chairperson Matos entertained a motion to adjourn and enter into Executive Session, which was moved by Danielle Cooke and seconded by Lynda Pickbourn. No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously: 5/0 (Schlachter, Cooke, Friesner, Pickbourn and Matos) Adjourning Open Session and entering Executive Session. With no further business to discuss, the School Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christina Stevenson
Executive Assistant, South Hadley Public Schools.

Reviewed and Approved by,
Jackson Matos
Chairperson, South Hadley School Committee
Date: May 19, 2022