

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JOINT MEETING WITH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2015
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Selectmen Present:

Michael Barbaro, Chairman
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chair
Audrey LaBrie
Amy Salter
Austin Cyganiewicz

Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

Absent: Bernard Lynch, Acting Town Manager

School Committee Members Present:

Dawn Harris, Chairwoman
Danielle Hart, Vice-Chair
Greg Vine
Janet Corbosiero

Barrie Martins, Recording Secretary

Absent: Steven Haddad, Supt. of Schools
School Business Office Members

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Letters/Emails/Resumes of interested candidates for School Committee Vacancy (filed)
 - o Don O'Neil
 - o Lawrence Murphy
 - o Cailte Kelley
 - o Rebecca Hupfeld

The Joint Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. The meeting aired live on local cable access channel 8.

Announce audio/video recording disclosure: No one announced they would be recording the meeting this evening.

At the request of Chairwoman Dawn Harris, **Greg Vine moved School Committee member Danielle Hart act as School Committee Chair this evening; Corbosiero seconded. By vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

Chairman Barbaro wanted to clear the air about some statements made at the last meeting. He said the original posting for the School Committee vacancy was posted online incorrectly and one of the Board of Selectmen brought up that there were concerned citizens that had wanted to apply but did not understand because of the posting so the original Joint Meeting was postponed based on that. In an effort to make sure we are above board and to move forward as transparent, they wanted to let everyone know they wanted as many people as

possible to participate and this allowed this process to go forward. Going forward we should make sure the postings are accurate both in Town Hall and online.

Ms. Corbosiero asked about the School Committee's agenda listing believing they would be going through the line items one by one. Ms. Harris replied they really didn't have anything. Mr. Vine moved to take the School Committee New Business out of order; Harris seconded. By a vote of Hart aye, Harris aye, Vine aye and Corbosiero abstaining, the motion carried by majority vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

School Committee Vacancy:

Mr. Barbaro asked for the candidates to come up one by one to address the group.

Mr. Don O'Neil stated he volunteered for this vacancy because he has lived in Winchendon for almost ten years now and does volunteer quite often in many groups and boards. The School Committee has interested him in the past couple of years as he became a parent. He has had some frustration with his children in Winchendon schools and he wants to help Winchendon be the greatest town possible including the schools. He has no other agenda than to work on the schools and wants them to be the best they can because everyone benefits from that. He's proud of the Town, he is the President of the Historical Society and does everything he can to promote the Town and wants to continue to do that on other committees and boards.

Mr. Vine apologized to the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for a statement he made at the last School Committee meeting inferring that the leadership of the Board of Selectmen had moved improperly on extending this meeting. He made an incorrect assumption that he was one of the individuals who thought it best to move forward and brought it before the Board. He was wrong and apologized. Secondly, he apologized to Mr. O'Neil. When he heard there was a vacancy on the School Committee and knowing he expressed interest, he suggested he put his application in and due to some of the actions taken in the last several weeks, he wished he hadn't suggested this. The reaction to his application from some was treated with less than a great deal of respect for simply just applying is fairly well known. He still believes that if there had been so much concern about the postings the last time for the vacancy and people had approached members of the Board of Selectmen saying they hadn't had a chance to apply, the date for getting applications was October 28th. The next meeting of the Board of Selectmen was Nov. 9th, twelve days later. Nowhere during that twelve day period was he contacted either by a constituent or a member of the Board of Selectmen who said they were concerned about the process. He wondered why. The vacancy was noted at a School Committee and Board of Selectmen meeting and he thought if people had a concern or wanted to postpone the application process, they might have at least extended the courtesy to the School Committee to ask if they wanted to do that. Instead the suggestion of extending it was brought up the very last second at a Selectmen's meeting unbeknownst to anyone on the School Committee. The only School Committee member present that evening was the Chair and she said it would be fine with her. The School Committee as a whole was never given a chance to express their desire. If we had had the chance to on the 19th as planned, it probably would have been the decision as a whole to go ahead and extend it. He had hoped these kinds of actions would have come to an end.

Both Chairs asked Mr. Vine to stick to the matter at hand. Mr. Vine apologized to Mr. O'Neil for suggesting he put himself in the position that he was put in and wished him luck. Mr. O'Neil said thank you and said to the entire Board the past six months have been actually pretty good and he's impressed with the way people are working together. It was a very rough year last year and he's happy with the way things are going and he wants it to continue this way. We all have the same goal at hand and he wants to get rid of the "us versus them."

Ms. LaBrie asked about his frustration he mentioned and asked about his issues and how he would approach changing it around. Mr. O'Neil said the main problem was the absentee rate of the teachers. It was extreme and did not work well with his son who needs consistency; the same teacher at all times.

Ms. Hart asked him how he feels his life and work experience would benefit this position on the School Committee. Mr. O'Neil said he loves kids, he planned on being an elementary school teacher when he started college but he moved toward the business and IT related field. He loves being a mentor and helping people.

Mr. Barbaro asked what he sees his role as being on the School Committee. Mr. O'Neil stated that he would be a team member.

Ms. Anderson asked about a strategy for teachers' absenteeism. Being on a committee, he said he would like to try it and work on it. He would love to bring his kids back and have them graduate from Murdock High School.

Ms. Hart asked about campaigning in May and Mr. O'Neil said he would have no problem with that, having the time and energy.

Mr. O'Neil was thanked for coming in this evening.

Mr Lawrence Murphy stepped forward and said his father and all eight of his father's children graduated from Murdock High. He was a teacher in Winchendon Public Schools for fifteen years. He was a coach and advisor.

He also tries to make Winchendon the best. The focus is on the students. He's been in education for 40 years. As adults we have responsibility to provide young people with the very best. He understands budgets and feels the students should be brought in. He said he could provide advice for attendance as he has dealt with that as a principal. He is familiar with many facets of a school organization including budgets, collaboration, curriculum instruction and assessment and school climate. Those are his expertise. He is retired now and feels he can give back and serve the young people of this Town. He has nieces at school here and two of his children graduated from Winchendon. He has a track record of success as an educator and would like to share it. He said we need to pull together all the boards in Town and make sure the kids get the best education they can.

Mr. Vine asked if he felt that he is open enough to examine and consider new ideas and new ways to handle situations. He replied absolutely, whatever is successful. The School Committee role by law is budget, hire the Superintendent and creating policy. He is not going to dip into roles that are not his but he can offer advice if anyone wishes to ask him.

He is also interested in running for the seat in May.

Ms. LaBrie asked if the School Committee directs the Superintendent of Schools such as the Selectmen direct the Town Manager. Ms. Hart said we don't feel its exactly the same, we don't have the same oversight. Ms. Corbosiero added they can certainly request things from the Superintendent if they have an issue.

Ms. LaBrie asked his thoughts on business services, asking if we are doing it right. He said he has seen it done both ways and depends on the people hired to do the job. Some are successful, some are not. He prefers hiring our own Business Manager over subbing it out, for accountability and for more control.

Mr. Barbaro asked for him to share his role as a School Committee member. He said the School Committee role is hiring the superintendent, the budget and making policy. We are the face of the School District and face parents being good listeners to people, to staff and to administrators. We are to get a pulse on what is going on and what needs to get done asking good questions. He said this is a huge responsibility. There is nothing more important than creating opportunities for young people. We need to promote the school and change the image people have of the community. Our School District has produced some of the finest people in the country.

Mr. Vine asked Mr. Murphy and Mr. O'Neil if they were not chosen this evening if they would consider running in May. They both said yes.

Ms. Corbosiero asked how and when did he decide to go for this appointment. Mr. Murphy said a family member said there was an opening and now that you have the time you should consider it.

Ms. Anderson asked about his collaborations being one of his strengths how would he collaborate with the Select Board and change the atmosphere. He said he doesn't have a magic wand but he would remind people why we are here and focus on what we are trying to accomplish. He thinks we have more in common than we have differences. He feels people running for these positions mean well and want to make a difference in people's lives. He said he would emphasize to move forward; there may need to be compromise and certainly respect and remain professional.

Mr. Murphy was thanked for coming in this evening.

Mr. Cailte Kelley came forward and said he served previously for the Town on the Planning Board and was asked to leave the position from his employer, believing it to be a conflict of interest. He's always been passionate about service; has been a resident here for five years and really loves living here. He has an eight year old in Toy Town Elementary and has always looked for an opportunity to get back in service. He recently started in a new position that will allow him more time. His fiancé brought this opening to his attention. He thought with the postponement that maybe there wasn't interest and he is happy to see there are four good candidates that have shown interest. His agenda is just to support the Town and be a resource. He has in the past been a volunteer in the schools when he was younger as a track coach, middle school football in Athol and also volunteered in the Music Dept. He is a professional musician as well. He also has worked at helping businesses start up. Today he owns a coffee shop with his older brother in Fort Collin and employs homeless people. He also has an online business for people with disabilities to connect with service providers. He brings these things up because it shows creativity which is what is needed to help solve some of the problems here in Winchendon.

Ms. Corbosiero asked if he would have time for this position and he replied yes. Mr. Vine stated he loved his business model and asked if there was a way we could reach students in situations where families were close to being homeless and how we could keep students in insecure situations could be better addressed and what role he might be able to play in helping to keep those students who may be at risk of leaving school as a result of insecurities in leaving home. Mr. Kelley said what he's seen is those that have the opportunity to leave are leaving because that opportunity is there but some are leaving on no choice of their own. He feels the After School Programs are huge in the Town. Those two hours of extra time with friends, doing creative things, learning is important and those two hours are extra time for the parent to work. He's learned a lot of it is relationships and finding opportunities that are out there. His relationship with homelessness and his business model finding ways to find jobs for the homeless. He built relationships with organizations. There are great colleges in our area and a lot of opportunity to get kids excited and to do things out of the box.

Ms. Hart asked how his work experience would benefit his role on the School Committee. He replied he was a professional musician for a number of years and once his daughter was born he decided he didn't want to tour anymore and stay home and raise his daughter. He had to look for real work and from that process he ended up working for the Town of Petersham but worked in the Gardner Public Schools as an aid. It was a unique opportunity to see the school system and experiencing it gives him a unique perspective in what is happening in the school, what both the teachers and students are excited about and also what is preventing growth.

Mr. Barbaro asked him to share what he feels his role would be on the School Committee. He replied, not wanting to steal Mr. O'Neil's words but being a collaborator believing it is a big part of it. Synergy is the concept in the business world.

When asked by Ms. Hart if he would be interested in running in May for the seat, Mr. Kelley said he has been thinking about running for a seat in the elections but couldn't say for certain he would commit to that. If he is doing a good job on the committee and the Town wants to keep him than yes he would run. It is something he is definitely interested in.

Ms. Corbosiero asked when and how he decided to run for this position. Mr. Kelley replied a few weeks ago when the meeting was postponed, his fiancé, and prodding from other people in his circle said they are still accepting letters of interest. His perception was no one stepped forward and so he didn't want that to happen. These committees are important. If no one steps up to fill the positions, it's a major setback.

Mr. Kelley was thanked for coming in this evening.

The fourth candidate, Ms. Hupfeld, was not present this evening. Ms. Hart read her letter of interest into the record. The fifth candidate, Susan Cochran, withdrew her letter of interest.

The candidates were thanked for coming this evening. Chairman Barbaro stated the successful candidate needed five votes, a majority of the two boards. He opened the floor up for nominations.

Mr. Vine nominated Mr. Kelley; Hart seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Salter nominated Mr. Murphy; Ms. Anderson seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cyganiewicz nominated Mr. O'Neil; LaBrie seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cyganiewicz nominated Becky Hupfeld. With no second being heard, the motion died.

It was noted that all three would be an asset to the School and they were encouraged to run in the spring if they didn't get chosen this evening.

After some discussion on how to place the vote for the candidates it was decided for each member to vote the person of their choice. The vote was as follows:

Janet Corbosiero for Mr. O'Neil
Greg Vine for Mr. Kelley
Dawn Harris for Mr. Murphy
Danielle Hart for Mr. Murphy
Amy Salter for Mr. Murphy
Audrey LaBrie for Mr. Kelley
Austin Cyganiewicz for Mr. Murphy
Barbara Anderson for Mr. Murphy
Michael Barbaro for Mr. Murphy

Mr. Murphy was congratulated as the new member of the School Committee and informed he should get sworn in on Monday. Mr. Murphy thanked everyone for the opportunity and he looks forward to serving the students, the staff, and the community.

Ms. LaBrie noted key words mentioned tonight, respect, collaboration and was disturbed at the very beginning of this meeting when the Chair took a moment to make an issue and then went right in to the nominees. Mr. Vine was the first to speak and took the opportunity to respond and then after a few minutes was told he

couldn't go down that road anymore. She would like, procedure wise, any member that wanted to make a comment, be given that opportunity.

Cyganiewicz was a bit disappointed to hear that their vote was considered political strategy of some sort and appreciated Mr. Vine's apology. His vote yes had nothing to do with politics. He uses the Town website and doesn't go into Town Hall to look at a Board posting. He expects it to be right on the website and feels inaccuracies are unacceptable. Ms. Corbosiero questioned why the School Committee wasn't made aware of this when it became known and brought up at the end of a Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Vine pointed out that there were twelve days between the deadline for the applications and the Selectmen's meeting. If concerns were raised during the twelve day period, especially filling a vacancy on the School Committee, it behooves who knew about this to contact the School Committee and doesn't think the Selectmen should have taken it upon themselves to make that decision. It could have been done at the Nov. 19th meeting of the School Committee.

Salter said that on Sunday before the Selectmen's meeting it was brought to her attention by two people that the posting on the website was wrong. She reached out to the Acting Town Manager asking if it was appropriate to reschedule. She was advised by Mr. Lynch that the time to bring it up was during the upcoming meetings which was the last thing on the agenda. She did not do this to be sneaky. Mr. Vine's point was that the School Committee could have been notified by email letting them know this was going to be brought up and that they might want to be there. Ms. Salter said it was late Sunday and she works on Mondays so she reached out to Mr. Lynch.

Mr. Cyganiewicz pointed out again that he expects the Town website to have the correct information. He said we don't have a particular person that manages the website. It is a volunteer. He is also concerned that people go online under the moniker "Townwebmaster" and post political opinions and it appears it is opinions of the Town and that is inappropriate. Ms. Daigle was recognized and said that there is a volunteer that manages the website but that the postings go through her. Each Department is responsible for ensuring their pages have up-to-date information. If it is not, the complaint should be directed to the Department to be updated. The Home page information is sent to the Webmaster by her and the two errors mentioned this evening were hers and not the Webmaster. When notified of any errors and updates needed for the website it gets corrected immediately. She wasn't aware of the social media moniker. Mr. Cyganiewicz believes it should be an employee of the Town that actually posts to the website, perhaps a member of the IT Department.

Ms. Anderson added that she was personally insulted that their integrity was called into question. When it was brought to her attention that it was on the website incorrectly, she did email Ms. Daigle. While it was posted correctly at Town Hall, it is important to recognize the only person who applied before the deadline was a Town Hall employee. Mr. Vine pointed out that he had no problem that it was reopened; the problem was with the fact that it was a School Committee vacancy and they should have been notified of the problem.

Mr. Barbaro said there was an error, it was fixed and going forward let's make sure postings are proper. It was an accident. A motion was made at our last meeting when the concern was brought up, he wasn't aware of it until that moment, what happened has transpired and it has taken a life of its own and it shouldn't have. We've learned the lesson and will move forward with a lot of work to do together.

Ms. Ruth DeAmicis came forward and said she felt something sounded a bit derogatory to a volunteer here in town. She said the volunteer they were talking about is a member of the Communications Committee and asked to please not put him down. He volunteers his time to do that for them. Mr. Cyganiewicz said he felt Ms. DeAmicis was reading him wrong and said he thinks volunteer work is excellent. He feels when it comes to Town business, like the website, we need to hold people accountable if it is incorrect and how do you do that with a volunteer. Ms. Daigle again said those mistakes were hers. He didn't feel he was derogatory in any way but does apologize if he appeared to be.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Salter moved to adjourn; Ms. LaBrie seconded. By roll call vote of all aye, the Board of Selectmen adjourned their Joint Meeting with the School Committee at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Daigle
Executive Assistant