

**Andover School Committee Regular Meeting
Minutes of December 17, 2015**

Members in Attendance: Annie Gilbert, Paula Colby-Clements, Joel Blumstein, Susan McCready, and Ted Teichert

Others in Attendance: Interim Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning, Dr. Nancy Duclos, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration, Paul Szymanski, and AHS Liaison Tim Chen.

I. Call to Order

Annie Gilbert called the meeting of the Andover School Committee to order at 6:30 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room.

II. Executive Session

At 6:31 P.M. on a motion by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Susan McCready, the Andover School Committee voted to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for the contract for non-union personnel (interim superintendent). Roll call: J. Blumstein-Y, T. Teichert-Y, S. McCready-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, and A. Gilbert-Y. At 6:48 P.M. on a motion duly made and voted the Andover School Committee adjourned from Executive Session to return to Open Session not to return to Executive Session. Roll call: J. Blumstein-Y, T. Teichert-Y, S. McCready-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, and A. Gilbert-Y.

III. Regular Meeting

A. Call to Order and Opening Ceremonies

Annie Gilbert reconvened the School Committee Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and led the meeting in a Moment of Silence followed by a Salute to the Flag.

B. Recognitions/Communications

Dr. Berman wished everyone Happy Holidays. He proceeded to report on meetings that have been held with teachers and principals on Middle School Math, specifically Algebra, to discuss the pros and cons of the models and how to proceed. A parent forum will be held on January 12th for Middle School students. He is very optimistic that progress will be made and will move forward with a more accelerated program at the middle school level while maintaining heterogeneous grouping; Dr. Duclos has been exploring online options as well.

The AHS PAC held a forum for parents on the new high school schedule that included a discussion on the H-Block; additional parent meetings will be scheduled in the future. Parents also attended a meeting regarding the Language-based Program for our special education students.

Representatives from MGT of America will attend the January 7th School Committee Meeting to present information on the evaluation of school buildings and the plan to develop a comprehensive facility master plan. An invitation will be sent to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to join us.

Dr. Berman thanked the School Committee for their letter of support published in the *Andover Townsman* today, which spelled out information in a clear and accurate way regarding his association with other organizations and that he has never engaged in activities for profit organizations.

Dr. Duclos reported on the American Math Competition results that came out yesterday. One Andover student earned a perfect score, six students earned the distinction of being in the top 1% in the country, and sixteen students made the honor roll and were in the top 5%. Doherty Middle and West Middle are among the top ten schools in Massachusetts, with Wood Hill Middle School being number eleven.

Joel Blumstein attended the AHS PAC Meeting about the AHS Schedule and H-Block and found the discussion to be particularly informative. He also commented on the evaluation of the Language-based Program by 'Hill for Literacy' who will bring recommendations back to the District and encourages continued dialogue on the program and recommendations.

Tim Chen and the members of the AHS Student Government wish to express their appreciation to Dr. Berman for attending their Student Government Meeting and for clearing up questions the students had.

Susan McCready spoke about the Town-wide PTO meeting held last Friday which was a great opportunity for an exchange of information. Those in attendance said they would like to continue the discussion on communication at a future meeting. Mrs. McCready also recognized the students who participated in the Peace Concert held at the Collins Center; it was a very nice program. In addition, she thanked the Andover Coalition for Education for the grant monies provided for a Master Class for students in Fine Arts.

Ted Teichert congratulated Tim Chen on being named Captain of the AHS Boys' Swim Team. He also asked Dr. Berm if he could provide information on costs associated with the new high school schedule and information on space needs.

Annie Gilbert asked that a message be sent to parents on the status of the middle school math program including options and models being worked on, and to notify them of the January 12th Parent Forum and online option.

C. Public Input on the process and contract with Dr. Berman

Annie Gilbert said the School Committee has been pleased and grateful with the number of people coming to the meetings to better understand the issues that are important to them. The School Committee wants to hear what people have to say but this will not be an open debate. Anyone who wishes to speak needs to sign in on the sheet provided.

Dennis Forgue of 18 Reservation Road: given the recent editorials letters in *Townsman* regarding Sheldon Berman as Superintendent of the Andover Public Schools, he is here to support the School Committee who by statute has three major responsibility: establish policies, approve budgets and hire a superintendent to lead schools. The School Committee has had the benefit of a five-month interview process, and received feedback on Dr. Berman's performance to date from

public officials, faculty, staff, and the public. A full search effort and extensive vetting process was conducted for the interim position last spring. The School Committee had no reason to believe that an interim superintendent would want to continue after the one year period, or that Dr. Berman would be willing to forego his retirement and continue on as Superintendent. Please make a decision that you think best serves our community.

Dr. Claudia Bach of 19 Chandler Circle: spoke on behalf of Dr. Berman and urges the School Committee to vote to extend his contract as soon as possible. Dr. Berman has a long list of accomplishments and of the 350 Superintendents in the Commonwealth, Dr. Berman was recognized as a model superintendent and their go to Superintendent. He frequently went to the State and DESE to speak on issues of concern; principally, the rising cost of special education and was always armed with data to support concerns. Superintendents make difficult decisions and often receive criticism.

Liz Roos, 5 Buchan Road, read a letter signed by 19 Andover School Administrators expressing their strong support for Dr. Berman to become the Superintendent of the Andover Public Schools. During his visits to each school and classrooms, he observes, listens, shows kindness and his leadership has been impressive. He has made it consistently clear that decisions made must be based on what is best for students, and hopes he will be appointed for a permanent position.

Rita Casper, 2 Buchan Road, said Dr. Berman's working relationship and support of nursing is one of high caliber. He is very compassionate, collegial, and supportive of all initiatives and has been involved in a very direct level with the opiate issue in Andover.

Patty Barrett, 27 Westwind Road, feels most fortunate to work for Dr. Berman and is impressed with his abilities to establish connections across the community. He has high expectations and truly engages with staff. His communication skills are exceptional and he has strong interpersonal skills, and is immediately responsive to their concerns. She hopes the School Committee efforts to extend his contract are successful.

Krystal Salalmine has seen a petition for alternative math that involves Virtual High School (VHS). She asked if it will go out to public bid and if not, why not. When Dr. Berman was Superintendent in Louisville, it is her understanding that the district suffered a loss with the CAST Digital Learning program. She hopes the School Committee will take the concerns seriously and feels badly that the information she has is not being addressed.

John Zhuang, 2 Wyncrest Circle read a letter signed by a group of parents pointing out a few key items. They understand that the School Committee and Dr. Berman have done a lot, however, they feel it has been too short a period of time to make a permanent decision. They are in support of continuing the superintendent's contract for the term of one year and hope they will hold on the vote and reopen at a later time.

Gina Murray of 3 Wescott Road has had an opportunity to work closely with prior superintendents and completely supports the School Committee's decision to continue Dr. Berman's contract. She does understand that some who have not had the opportunity to work with Dr. Berman but they should focus on the experience others (staff, parents,) have had. Good

leaders need to make changes and processes accordingly. The math problem is an issue now and has been an issue for a very long time and plans are in place to find a solution.

Jack Whalen of 9 Deerberry Lane: there has been a very defensive posturing by the School Committee. This position is a critical role and should be advertised, he is concerned about the chatter from media in the districts where Dr. Berman previously worked and wonders if the School Committee looked at the information from other locations. He does not done believe there has been a very thorough investigation, and asks that the School Committee make the right decision to defer voting until they have time to look at the information that is out there.

Tao Tu, 20 Keystone Way: it is good news to hear how well Andover did in the Math Competition and that we have students beyond the advanced level. He does see positive change right now but would like the administrators to consider a track system in math starting in the earlier grades. Last week he attended the AHS PAC meeting on the new schedule and is very concerned about the change in credits, and the H-Block. He urges the School Committee and Dr. Berman to reconsider H-Block and provided a petition with over one hundred signatures to the School Committee.

Kerry Costello, AEA President: The Andover Educators Associations is interested in stability and consistency; therefore she urges the School Committee to support the extension of Dr. Berman's contract.

Floyd Greenwood: his family has been directly impacted by the math curriculum but over the past few months he has engaged in discussions with Dr. Berman. He thinks Dr. Berman is the person to make improvements, and is the only member of the administration who has rolled up his sleeves and got to work on the problem. He personally thinks Dr. Berman has the potential to be one of the best superintendents Andover has had and he is a strong fit for the district and we would do well to retain him.

Jeanne Teichert, 5 Dufton Road, read a statement. The School Committee is a public service and their decisions will impact the course of education for years to come. They are responsible for communicating needs and representing the schools for the public, to promote and support the primary responsibility of children, and to represent the entire community at all times. Parent feedback from the survey last March has been largely ignored and the School Committee should not be discussing a continuation of Dr. Berman's contract. The community has been left out of the process.

Public input closed.

D. Response to Public input

Joel Blumstein: Addressed the issue of the process of the superintendent's position and did consider that we should have discussed a full search for superintendent as talked about last spring, and understands the concerns of people. There is certain logic to that and we should see what's out there to confirm that Dr. Berman is the right person. He arrived at the conclusion not to do a full search and that we should offer Dr. Berman a continued contract based on the value of stability, and issues facing the district such as the implementation of the high school schedule,

and the math curriculum. A full search would take away time to work on these items and is concerned that Dr. Berman may decide to move onto another open Superintendent's position. Most importantly, his conviction is that Dr. Berman is the right person for the job and seems to be the opinion of those who have worked most closely with him. His skills in communication, data analysis, budgeting, long-term planning, community engagement are all critical skills that he brings to the job. For those who haven't gotten to know him well, or to interact with him, he suggests Dr. Berman schedule as many parent forums as he can. Joel is convinced Shelley Berman is the right person for the job.

Paula Colby-Clements: We fully expect the math conversations to continue and will hear more conversations about tracks, the high school schedule, and other issues facing the District as we go along. Information on the web attacking Dr. Berman's character and the School Committee's process isn't what she has experienced with Dr. Berman's performance over the past five months. With respect to the web attacks, everything that has come up in the past few weeks seems to happen whenever the School Committee is about to take an important vote. Every issue about Dr. Berman was vetted and there have been assertions but there is nothing new that has come out, and some information came from bloggers that is unsubstantiated. The vetting process was extensive and they spoke to members of Eugene and Kentucky School Districts and the recommendations received were glowing. Dr. Berman has the qualities the Andover School Committee is looking for in high-level leader. Everything we have heard and learned has supported their decision. With regard to the process, last June they did plan to do a full search, but never imagined that Dr. Berman would consider coming out of retirement and be willing to stay with Andover for a longer duration of time because he is so impressed with Andover. At an open meeting, the School Committee discussed whether they should conduct a full search or to enter into negotiations with Dr. Berman. She acknowledged that it was not what they said they would do, but they have fully vetted Dr. Berman and he is the real deal. She believes in the process and the data received and it would be a derelict of her duty to change her mind because the community expects them to make hard decisions when needed. She is going to recommend to the School Committee that they sign the contract with Dr. Berman.

Susan McCready has given this decision a lot of thought and shared some of her reflections. She has been told by many of the positive traits Dr. Berman has shown throughout the community. Mrs. McCready feels we have been given a gift and we have the momentum and stability needed to keep moving ahead and feels strongly that if we went out and conducted a search we wouldn't find someone else who is as committed to every child to give them the chance at the education they deserve. There have been many opportunities over the past five months to observe Dr. Berman in action, and the School Committee, School Administrators, and parents have provided feedback confirming that the characteristics Dr. Berman brings with him are paramount to a good school system.

Ted Teichert: Talked about the process discussed last spring and agreed that the School Committee said they would have someone for a year and at no time did he think their choice would be hear longer than that. Response to concerns he raised with Dr. Berman were addressed head-on as were legal issues, high school schedule, and the middle school math problem. Dr. Berman is making a difference. The weekly updates from Dr. Berman sharing information are reassuring that issues are being addressed. A third District-wide communication was just sent

out to parents; Ted did not see any communication in this fashion before. He fully supports extending Dr Berman's contract, as he is very impressed and very happy with Shelley.

Tim Chen, speaking as a senior form AHS, has interacted with Dr. Berman several times in the past four months, he attended a workshop held at the library, he stops in, and has been tremendously open and his interaction tremendously positive. Tim has never had a conversation with a Superintendent prior to this. Dr. Berman offers a great opportunity for much needed stability.

Annie Gilbert: The School Committee did post an advertisement and followed all protocols for an interim Superintendent, we did not advertise for a permanent position as the School Committee has the ability to decide to make an appointment and not go out for a search. The vetting of the interim superintendent was at no less a level than what was done in past superintendent searches. Candace Hall, Human Resources Director screens candidates as well, the Human Resources Department conducts reference checks, and our search consultant checks recommendations of names not listed on Sheldon Berman's resume. The School Committee is very comfortable with the vetting that has been done. Addressing the petition that has been brought forward tonight, Annie appreciates the tenor and content of the note regarding the petition which states they are not against Dr. Berman or the School Committee, but want time to listen to each other better and to further discuss items of concern. She believes that Dr. Berman will want to meet with everyone and to talk with the people who signed the petitions and address the items of concern. The School Committee is very invested in continuing a relationship with Dr. Berman as they see him as the leader they want. The superintendent's relationship with School Administrators and the Leadership Team is crucial to delivering the vision. They are seeing more movement and resolution of problems i.e. math and high school schedule, which would not be happening without a unified team. She looks forward to keeping the movement going and agrees with her colleagues that Sheldon Berman is the person they want to continue with.

Dr. Berman is deeply moved, honored, and humbled by all the people who came forward to share their comments and he expressed his appreciation to the School Committee. Andover is quite a community, and he didn't realize how much he would like Andover when he was chosen to be the interim superintendent. It is a wonderful community with an extraordinary group of teachers and administrators. He sees stellar work, creative lessons, and solid focus on social and emotional requests. He is impressed with the way the community comes together. It is a courageous act by the School Committee to make this decision and it plays to the quality of their thinking and caring. It is an honor to him and he thinks we can do great things going forward. The key is bringing people together is to have the conversations to establish processes that are open where we consider different perspectives. Thank you for welcoming him here to the community.

New Business:

1. **Coordinated Program Review** - postponed until January
2. **Budget meetings:** A broad overview of the FY-17 Budget will be presented on Thursday, January 7, 2016. Prior to the start of the School Committee Meeting a facilities review will be given at 6:00 P.M.

Two budget hearings are being proposed for the FY-17 Budget; one with school principals to talk about their recommendations and the second budget hearing will focus on the departments, i.e. Information Technology, Teaching and Learning, Finance, Human Resources, etc. Information from each school and department budget will be shared so that the School Committee is fully aware of all circumstances surrounding the budget. An invitation will be extended to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to attend the budget hearings. Currently, they are looking at the dates of January 11 through January 14, 2016.

F. Education

1. PARCC Update

Dr. Nancy Duclos provided an update on the PARCC testing, where we are and what the next generation of testing will be for spring of 2017. A paper version of the PARCC test in 2016 will be given to all students in Grades 3-8 in all of the Massachusetts School Districts. Students in Grades 5 and 8 will continue to take the MCAS test for Science and students at the high school level will continue to take the MCAS English Language Arts and Math tests as it is a graduation requirement.

The testing dates for 2016 will be made available on the Andover School website and all students have to take the English Language Arts Composition Tests on the two dates listed in March. Dr. Duclos provided an explanation of the PARCC ratings, which is on a 5-point scale with 5 being, exceeds expectations. A District comparison to State results for Mathematics and English Language Arts showed that Andover performed substantially better than the State results.

Accountability: In 2013-2014 Andover was classified as a Level 2 District and for 2014-2015 we are still a Level 2 District because we were held harmless (frozen in time) unless there was an improvement i.e. High Plain went from a level 2 to a level 1. Levels assessed by the State determine if we are meeting our target goals. All of Andover's Schools are a Level 2 except for High Plain and South School who are both Level 1 schools. Dr. Duclos will be working closely with principals and teachers to look at sub-groups to increase intervention with students in need so they reach the appropriate level. New comparable districts to Andover were provided and include Arlington, Chelmsford, Franklin, Holliston, Natick, Needham, North Andover, Wellesley, Westwood, and Winchester. Most of the high schools are a Level 2 because they did not meet the participation rate as students are allowed to opt out of the test. This is a baseline year for PARCC testing and it is significantly different than MCAS testing, so it will take a number of years to transition. We will need to have other markers of outcomes and will begin that process in early January. The choice to accept Common Core Standards is not a choice, we are held accountable to that.

Annie Gilbert suggested putting up a list of Frequently Asked Questions on the APS Website for parents.

G. Old Business

1. Superintendent Goals

The Goals provided in the School Committee Packet were previously discussed at a School Committee Workshop and now include additional goals and evidence of progress. Dr. Berman

would like to talk with principals and work with the Administrative Team on the goals. The goals all have deliverables but do not have quantitative deliverables; in the long-term the goals should be measured. The School Committee discussed and looked at what the goals should provide in terms of data to support outcomes, and will look at the data and discuss student achievement. The School Committee will vote to approve the initial goals presented and Dr. Berman will provide the long-term goals for the School Committee to consider at a later date.

Paula Colby-Clements moved that the Andover School Committee vote to accept the Superintendent's initial goals as a working document as presented. The motion was seconded by Ted Teichert and voted 5-0 to approve.

2. Superintendent's Contract

Joel Blumstein provided an overview of the major elements of the contract being presented to Dr. Berman; the current contract will stay in effect until June 30, 2016. The new contract begins July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2020 with a base salary of \$220,000. A yearly performance review would be conducted. Merit increases and/or bonuses would be at the discretion of the School Committee. The contract includes a \$22,000 yearly contribution to the 457B Retirement Plan, and a \$6,000 yearly automobile allowance. The language and terms of the contract, which were reviewed by School Committee in Executive Session, have been agreed to. Paula Colby-Clements said it was a great collaborative process, and that she and Joel as subcommittee members worked on the contract.

Annie Gilbert said there would be scrutiny on the cost of the contract but because Dr. Berman is waiving the pension, he is losing income. The School Committee strived to look at total compensation and not just in terms of salary. It is important to note that the Town of Andover avoids any OPEB Liability when Dr. Berman returns to retirement because his liability will not come from Andover.

Joel Blumstein moved that the Andover School Committee vote to enter into a contract with Dr. Sheldon Berman to serve as Superintendent of the Andover Public Schools for four years commencing July 1, 2016 and ending June 30, 2020, with Dr Berman being paid a salary at the initial rate of \$220,000; an annual retirement fund contribution of \$22,000, and an automobile allowance of \$500 per month. Ted Teichert seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Susan McCready-Y, Ted Teichert-Y, Joel Blumstein-Y, Paula Colby-Clements-Y, and Annie Gilbert-Y.

H. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes: Minutes of November 5, 2015 Regular Meeting
2. Warrants: Expense Warrants SW1612, SW1612A
Payroll Warrants 16S025 and 16S024

Paula Colby-Clements moved that the Andover School Committee approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Susan McCready seconded the motion and the School Committee voted 5-0 to approve.

IV. Adjournment

At 9:45 P.M. on a motion by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Joel Blumstein, the Andover School Committee voted to adjourn. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, T. Teichert-Y, J. Blumstein-Y, P. Colby-Clements-Y, and A. Gilbert-Y.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary

Documents: 2015 PARCC Report
 Warrants of December 17, 2015 and Minutes of November 5, 2015
 Superintendent's initial goals for 2015-2016
 Sign in Sheet