

Farouk Rajab, Temporary Board Chair called the virtual special meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. Members present were Craig Esposito, Heidi Simmons, Alisa Morrison, Temporary Board Secretary, Jack Morehouse and Frank Todisco. Also present were Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, and Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Agenda

Tracy and Jared Swain (emailed comment) – Commented on the Board's performance during the last Board meeting. She spoke on the matter of the FOI requests. See attached for complete emailed comment.

Election of Permanent Chair

Alisa Morrison nominated Frank Todisco for Chair and Heidi Simmons seconded the nomination.

Heidi Simmons thanked Farouk Rajab for stepping in and helping them stay upright and moving forward and Frank Todisco's willingness to serve. He has been in this seat before, knows the rules, players and town and thanked him for that effort.

Farouk Rajab closed the nomination.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Alisa Morrison

Motion 1: To close the nominations for Board Chair.

All: Aye

Farouk Rajab, Temporary Board Chair asked those in favor of Mr. Todisco of being Board Chair say Aye. All Board members responded Aye.

Farouk Rajab congratulated Mr. Todisco and added he is unanimously voted as the Chair. Frank Todisco thanked the Board for the confidence they placed in him. He added everything we do should be student centered. We are going to have different opinions, but as long as we do so with respect for one another and respect for those that we are having differing opinions with, we will be able to move things forward. Thanked the Board and appreciates their support.

Election of Secretary

Frank Todisco, Board Chair asked the Board for their thoughts. Alisa Morrison nominated Heidi Simmons for Board Secretary. There were no other nominations.

The following motion was made by Alisa Morrison and seconded by Craig Esposito.

Motion 2: To close the nominations for Board Secretary.

All: Aye – Motion Carries

Frank Todisco, Board Chair asked all in favor of Heidi Simmons being the Secretary of the Board of Education signify by saying Aye. All Board members responded Aye.

Heidi Simmons becomes Board Secretary.

Board Communications with Lawyer and FOIA Requests

Frank Todisco, Board Chair asked Farouk Rajab to share background information on this topic. Craig Esposito voiced he would like the Board to consider a motion to take this item and the Superintendent Review Process off the agenda. He added it is irresponsible to discuss FOIA and the evaluation without the attorney present. He also commented, he was recently in a meeting with the Board attorney and he was shocked both items were on the agenda without an attorney present. He felt we were putting us in a legal risk.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab.

Motion 3: To remove the two items from the agenda and have them discussed at a later time when we can be fully informed and when both the attorney and the superintendent are present.

Motion failed

The Board discussed the motion. Each Board member discussed why both items were added to the agenda. Heidi Simmons shared information and her perspective regarding the FOIA topic. Farouk Rajab spoke on his opinion on how these items should be discussed and where they should be discussed. He felt it is not appropriate to have these conversations in a meeting as such as this one but in an executive session. He also noted that he called the state number on discussing the superintendent's review and they said that the Board should conduct that conversation with that person present not in this meeting. That is why he supports Craig Esposito's motion. He continued to communicate what the superintendent's agreement was with the Board on how he wants this discussion had. Alisa Morrison commented on the FOIA motion and her view on this topic. Board Chair, Frank Todisco gave his perspective on both issues. Jack Morehouse was in favor of meeting with the attorney. His choice of moving forward or not with these requests and with the superintendent on his review. Heidi Simmons voiced her opinion on how these discussions should be conducted.

Craig Esposito and Farouk Rajab withdrew the motion on the table.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab.

Motion 4: To remove the item Board Communications with Lawyer and FOIA Requests off the agenda to pursue at a later date.

All: Aye

Alisa Morrison voiced that between now and the time the Board has the executive session that the attorney not make any decision about moving this case in any direction without our knowledge or discussion. Heidi Simmons added we are the stewards of the town but most importantly are the supports of the students and that has to be our primary focus. Ms. Morrison asked that when Board Chair, Frank Todisco speaks to the attorney he ask that the Board sees the memo and read it in executive session so that it falls under attorney client privilege. Frank Todisco, Board Chair supported the motion that Mr. Esposito made and will reach out to the attorney and let him know the desire of the Board. He will also ask about attorney client privilege as it relates to the student. The Board Chair will find out when the attorney is available to meet and share that information with the Board. Craig Esposito added that as far as he sees it the District has focused on the students, but has proceeded this way to protect the students' confidentiality. The Board continued discussion on how to proceed with this item.

Superintendent Review Process

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Farouk Rajab.

Motion 5: To remove the item Superintendent Review Process off the agenda for discussion later, most likely in executive session.

Alisa Morrison – Opposed
Heidi Simmons – Opposed
Jack Morehouse – Opposed

Farouk Rajab – In Favor
Craig Esposito – In Favor
Frank Todisco – In Favor

Motion does not pass.

Alisa Morrison commented the point of having the discussion was to talk about timeline, process and not to talk about the actual evaluation. She noted Dr. Riley was the one who did not like the way the evaluation was done in the past. She added this was to create a process that would be used for future superintendents. She suggested before the Board have this discussion that the Board meet with Tom Heneck for a workshop, who has done workshops for the Town and ask him directly. Farouk Rajab clarified that Dr. Riley never attempted to change the review process nor did he want the process changed, but it was the Board who asked to change the process and forced this to change. Frank Todisco, Board Chair gave his recommendation on this item and explained how this discussion should take place. We need to get the review completed but need to be on the same page as to what is holding it up. He added whichever is holding it up the superintendent has to be in agreement with the process. His recommendation with the Board's approval he will work to facilitate this as quickly as we can understanding that the Board wants to complete the review and continue to move forward with the business that is in front of the Board. Jack Morehouse voiced that what he thought was going to be discussed was not specific to Dr. Riley but to the process. He has gone through three reviews and finds that his voice gets lost in the process of the review. He spoke on the desire to keep the same format but feels his comments and points of view are not represented in the evaluation document that was given to the superintendent and made public. The Board continued discussion on the topic of the process of the superintendent's evaluation.

Farouk Rajab directed to Board Chair, as a point of order the Board continued to discuss a specific person's evaluation and requested to move the motion forward to a vote.

Board Chair, Frank Todisco asked the Board to bring the vote on the floor forward.

Farouk Rajab, withdrew himself from the meeting based on the vote as he did not want to participate in an illegal conversation. Craig Esposito also withdrew himself from the meeting.

Board Chair, Frank Todisco explained his view as to why it is considered an illegal conversation. The Board continued discussion regarding the process of the superintendent's evaluation.

Board Comments/Concerns

Alisa Morrison asked that a meeting be scheduled first thing Monday morning to re-appoint Gordon Lord to the Board.

Frank Todisco suggested that the Board start meeting in a centralized location again. We are currently doing that for some committee meetings. In light of the fact that we are going back to school and having teachers and students back in the classroom it would be a good thing to lead from the front and start meeting in a central location again. The Board all agreed. Mrs. Simmons remarked it is good modeling and experiencing what expect our students to do.

Farouk Rajab commented he is here to be a steward of the students, no one else, not The Day, not FOIA, not anybody. He stated his job is to protect the students that is his only job and will do his very best to protect the students of Stonington Public Schools.

Adjournment

The following motion was made by Jack Morehouse and seconded by Alisa Morrison.

Motion 6: To adjourn at 7:26 p.m.

All: Aye

Alisa Morrison, Board Secretary

Stonington Board of Education Members,

July 24, 2020

First Alissa Morrison, you completely owe Heidi Simmons a public apology for the unprofessional behavior and attitude you had towards her during this Tuesdays night's meeting. Jack and Heidi, thank you for being transparent as to why you were casting your vote and for Mrs. Leitner. Alissa, Farouk, and Sleeping Craig, you were so non-transparent about how and why you voted the way you did. To all the people who have heard that, I am the one that caught this state statue violation, yes it was me and the newly formed Stonington's Peoples Political Ethics reform group. We are gaining in numbers, and we will continue to catch violations.

I contacted the Town attorney, with this information and the First Selectwoman, I only reported the CRIME, they are the ones that made the legal call. The Vote for Mr. Lord was not a legal vote, no motion or a second. You only have yourselves to blame for this, not us residents. Beware we will start to report these violations to the state if this unethical and deceptive behavior continues. I hope with all these so-called letters you received in favor of the 3 out of the 6 candidates, that's right, Farouk announced that you had 6 candidates, just still wondering who the other three were? That you made sure each and every person that submitted a letter in support of a candidate, is a town registered Voter. Because reminder to you all, your acting on the voter's behalf, to replace those that have jumped ship.

On the matter of the FOI requests, THAT Should be done by majority BOE members. NOT RILEY, for him to make any such legal call, for a matter he is personally involved in. Our BOE attorney is not his personal attorney STOP allowing this unjust behavior. Last but not least, has Riley, and Shettle turned over the Financial information Jack Morehouse has been requesting for months, or are they still evading him, as usual? If they have not they both should be put on suspended leave, pending a criminal investigation. We all are getting of tired of this, aren't you? Well we know Craig is, he is always sleeping.

Sincerely
Tracy & Jared Swain
Pawcatuck CT