

TOWN MEETING  
Monday, June 1, 2009  
Education Center

The Board of School Directors and the administration of the Bethlehem Area School District conducted a town meeting on Monday, June 1, 2009, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Dining Room of the Education Center, 1516 Sycamore Street, Bethlehem, in order to receive public recommendations regarding the criteria for selection of an interim superintendent.

Members present: Members present: Directors Cann, Dexter, Follweiler, Koch, McKeon, and Tenaglia – 6. Members absent: Directors Amato, Haytmanek, and Leeson – 3.

MEMBERS  
PRESENT

Others present: Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., Board Secretary; administrators, members of the press, and other interested citizens and staff members.

OTHERS  
PRESENT

Human Resource Committee Chairperson, Director Irene Follweiler presided. She announced that the individuals who made advance contact would be given the first opportunity to speak. She added that Director Dexter would take notes in order to share the information with the board members who could not attend due to a previous commitment to attend the graduation ceremony at the Career Academy. She further explained that the purpose of the meeting was to receive input from the public to the board on suggestions for the interim superintendent.

CHAIRPERSON  
FOLLWEILER –  
INTRODUCTION

Chairperson Follweiler opened the floor to receive public comment from the following speakers:

PUBLIC  
COMMENT

1. Maureen Venkersammy – 3152 Kenwick Circle, Bethlehem  
Mrs. Venkersammy stated she was chairperson for PAC (Parent Advisory Council) and noted they had the same basic concerns, which they had at the board meeting. She said that they would like the board to do a national search for a permanent superintendent and for the interim superintendent, they would like to see someone who had experience with budgets, because of the obvious budget concerns. They also had concerns with academically troubled schools related to the PSSAs, so someone should have knowledge and experience in that area. They would like public input on the criteria for the individuals regarding the permanent position. The PAC had put together a questionnaire with three basic questions, which would be available through the district. The results would be emailed to the board and would also be presented at the first public board meeting. The questions would address what one wanted to see in the superintendent, what the strongest needs were for the superintendent, and any other areas of concern. Some of the main areas of concern were related to relations with the schools, teachers, and the actual teacher committees in the district, as far as curriculum and instruction and working with the board.

2. Sharon Brown – 234 East Goepp Street, Bethlehem –  
All Faith Racial Alliance and The Bethlehem Coalition for Quality Education –

Ms. Brown stated that in response to the request for community input into the selection of the criteria for the interim superintendent, they offered the following:

Professional – We seek a leader that is committed to the superior academic achievement of all students and who is the consummate advocate for excellence in teaching and learning. In addition, we seek a leader who will lead by example, and demonstrate superior cultural competency skills, as well as be committed to working toward the eradication of inequities within the school district that impact the lives of all students. It is our hope that the interim superintendent will engender a climate of welcome to all, will listen without judgment, and promote mutual respect. We believe the following are important qualities:

- Have an awareness of the community and their attitudes and perceptions of the school district
- Be knowledgeable and have expertise in curriculum and instruction, fiscal management, organizational administration, student services, training and development, and assessment
- Be able and willing to deal directly and fairly with teachers, staff, students, and parents
- Have effective communication skills – verbal, written, and listening
- Is knowledgeable about best practices in K through 12 education and new technologies
- Have a global perspective and be informed about current issues facing school districts – immigration, bilingual education, and tracking
- Be engaged in the community – understand the respective, yet complimentary roles of the board and superintendent
- Understand and have the ability to articulate the needs of youth from different class, backgrounds, faith communities, sexual identity groups, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the special needs population

In terms of their personal characteristics, the ideal candidate should have extensive background in K through 12 education, have experience as a teacher, principal, department head, and/or held other leadership positions within the educational spectrum. They should have at least a master's degree plus certification and received additional training in areas related to educational administration, budget, strategic planning, etc. The ideal candidate should possess solid values, be innovative, and energetic.

3. Jim Laverty – 5015 Long Drive, Bethlehem –  
Mr. Laverty expressed gratitude for the opportunity to provide input for the very important work they were undertaking. He wanted to share his opinion regarding the following qualifications which should be seriously considered when looking for both the interim and full-time superintendent:
- Business management background – He believed there were two aspects of importance with one being management of the combination of budget, taxes, and debt, so that it was managed in a way that was sustainable over a long period of time and not just one individual budget cycle but rather one that would preserve the financial strength of the school district. The other aspect would be some experience in the monitoring of financial operations.
  - Acknowledgement of the American tradition of limited government and limited taxation was a very important background for the new person to have.
  - Focus on actions to reduce the school district's debt to have a long-term view of financial management.
  - To be supportive of a curriculum rooted in the classics and develop students that compete with the local economy – The students were not just competing against students within the school district or the next district or in the next state; it was worldwide. It was very important to have that perspective built into the curriculum.
  - Demonstrated leadership in implementing proactive and transparent organizational communication – One of the tests of success on an ongoing basis would be how active the community was involved with meetings and other activities.
4. Judy Parr – 140 Bierys Bridge Road, Bethlehem –  
Ms. Parr questioned the strategy of placing emphasis on an interim superintendent and not a permanent replacement. She said that it seemed as though Dr. Lewis had given them a fair amount of lead-time to start the search for a permanent replacement. She asked the following questions:
- When did they want the interim superintendent to be in place?
  - Why did they want to have one?
  - How long did they think the person would serve?
  - When would they begin the search for a permanent superintendent?
  - When did they want the permanent superintendent placed in the position?

Chairperson Follweiler replied that they were presently looking at an interim superintendent because, as the board understood, the general availability of superintendents did not come at the present time of year and generally became available in the timeframe of January or February.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that they were seeking information from other professional organizations such as the PSBA, who would be providing a presentation, free of charge, regarding the search process. She added that the reasoning for the interim position would be to overlap between Dr. Lewis and the next individual. Although Dr. Lewis' last day on the job was scheduled for September 25, his vacation time extended beyond that date, therefore another individual could not be called superintendent at that time. The basic strategy was to speak with the professionals on the search and then determine who would help them. She pointed out that a previous spokesperson brought attention to a national search and she noted that it was also in the plan to look locally as well as nationally for qualified candidates.

Ms. Parr asked if they wanted to have somebody for September through January or February.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that the interim superintendent could serve for up to one year, depending on the availability of someone they were looking to hire.

Director Koch stated that if they were to find the perfect superintendent, which she was not sure would happen, they could probably hire them next week. They anticipated that it would not happen that fast.

Chairperson Follweiler agreed with Director Koch and added that the interim superintendent would not be someone that they would contract with for a year, but rather someone to look to fill in. The reasoning was that as of September 26, Dr. Lewis would no longer be in the office, so there was a need for someone to fill the spot.

Director McKeon stated that there was a legal obligation with Dr. Lewis until January 2, so they could not theoretically have an interim superintendent until January 3.

Chairperson Follweiler commented that they could not have two superintendents.

5. Elizabeth Jones – 2237 Lexington Street, Bethlehem –  
Mrs. Jones asked about the length of the process and inquired about the duration of the previous selection process.

Chairperson Follweiler inquired with Director Koch in consideration that she was a member of the board when Dr. Lewis was selected as superintendent.

Director Koch thought the process took at least six months and possibly longer. She commented that she thought some individuals were confused when it was previously stated that someone could not be hired until January.

Director Koch explained that if they found somebody who was perfect for the position, it would be true that they could not immediately hire them, but they could manage to get things lined up until the opening was available.

Mrs. Jones asked if the interim superintendent would be working in September when Dr. Lewis was out.

Chairperson Follweiler said that they might find them in another role sooner but they could not be hired as a superintendent. One cannot have two CEOs in one company. They could perhaps hire a consultant.

Mrs. Jones inquired if they had someone in mind.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that there had been people who sent letters and approached them, but there was no offer or contract made with anyone.

Mrs. Jones recalled that it was stated they would talk with the education association. She asked if it was because they wanted to figure out the necessary process.

Chairperson Follweiler corrected that it was PSBA; the Pennsylvania School Board Association, and it was just for help as to the process that other school districts had done. They offered the service to act as a search agent for applicants. She further explained that as members of the PSBA, they received a booklet that had a listing of job availabilities.

Mrs. Jones asked about the process.

Director Dexter stated that the board had not yet set a timeline for exactly what it would be for the permanent superintendent. They would first attempt to fill the interim spot and then move to that. While they were trying to fill the interim position, they were thinking and talking about the process which they would like to use. The PSBA was available to speak with them about the processes used by other Pennsylvania districts. In addition, they provided a service, for a fee, which could help them, but they did not yet determine whether they were interested in the service. There were other search firms that had approached them and asked for consideration, but, they were still considering whether they wanted to go with a search firm, the PSBA, do it themselves, or purchase parts of services from an organization such as checking references or perhaps doing the initial search for candidates. They were still exploring the avenues. Director Dexter commented that the board had been out just about every single night for the month of April and May with tonight being another example with two commitments going on at the same time. She added that they were not ignoring it or putting it off to whenever, but they were thinking and talking about it and making arrangements. She thought that after graduation, it would be their full-time focus. They wanted to have the meeting tonight because they were having a lot of questions about input and the answer was, definitely, yes.

Mrs. Jones said that she heard a lot of good things about what people wanted in a superintendent, but her main concern was that the public was fully aware of what was going on. The second concern was regarding some of the vibes she was getting from staff and that they felt as if they were in the dark and it was somewhat scary for them as well. She thought it was important for them to feel they were part of the process.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that they had learned from their more experienced board members and others was that superintendents who were looking to change or move up in their career typically start to look in the January or February time frame. She explained the reasoning was because they were looking to begin the position over the summer to become acclimated to the new district or new position while school was no longer in session. She explained that they received emails and résumés with interest to fill in as interim superintendent.

6. Randy Toman – 359 Tenth Avenue, Bethlehem –

Mr. Toman inquired if the public would have access to the criteria once it was gathered. He asked if a bulletin would be posted.

Chairperson Follweiler replied that it was an excellent idea and stated that the minutes from the meeting could be published with any additional input they received.

Mr. Toman asked if they would have access to the final criteria used and the suggestions from the public, which would be incorporated into their search.

Chairperson Follweiler polled the board as to any objections or reasoning why they would not want to do it.

Director McKeon thought it should be published on the district's website.

Director Dexter commented that she was inquiring about what other boards did in the searching process. She said that the available internet tool was to print out timelines and information from other boards to use as launching points. She wanted to see a timeline posted on the website that stated when the search would be opened, when they would consider résumés, what they would be doing, and when they wanted public input. Director Dexter also wanted to see a listing of the focus criteria, after they had a separate additional meeting, where they heard about the most important characteristics in the permanent superintendent. She pointed out that the meeting tonight was really about the interim process.

Mr. Toman asked why the criterias would be different for the positions, other than the fact of the duration of the job. He noted that the one would be interim and the other possibly lengthy and under contract.

Director Dexter commented that there had been some discussion and they thought what was needed in the interim position might be a little different than what they needed in the superintendent. She thought that it was mentioned earlier that there was a need regarding the budget and sustainability of the economic forecast. In the short term, they might need some additional strengths to serve the district until the superintendent was appointed. She thought they needed somebody very flexible as the interim because the nature of the beast of the job is that it was temporary.

Mr. Toman questioned Director Koch's position regarding the final criteria and suggestions being accessible to the public.

Director Koch stated that she had a few items of which she wanted to respond. She expressed that they did not want a person who would only be there for six months to make major changes because he would not be around to follow through with them. With regard to Mr. Toman's question, she replied that as long as they would understand that the criteria would be a work in progress with the opinion that they might look at it one day and then the next day they might see something added. She stated that she wouldn't want the perception to be that they changed something to be misleading.

Mr. Toman commented that they wouldn't extract one and then add one, unless it superceded it in a better fashion or it was stated more correctly.

Director Koch agreed, adding that if it were something they thought would improve it, they would change or add something.

Director Tenaglia stated that he did not have any objection to the posting of the information regarding the interim and permanent superintendent positions for the public.

Director McKeon reviewed that they were not looking for a caretaker interim superintendent. The status quo might change with the interim, based upon their background. He supported Director Koch in that they were not looking for someone to come in to make changes in six months, then to have a permanent superintendent come in and revert to an old way or come up with a third option. He did not think it was conducive to a positive work force.

Chairperson Follweiler said that some of the basic criteria would be same for either position, but the time frame was different and the availability of the candidate would be different. She believed the interim superintendent would be someone who was not looking to have a full-time career and potentially be someone who had previously retired. The permanent candidate would be someone who was looking to remain with the district for a number of years.

7. Patricia Felix – 1721 Millard Street, Bethlehem –  
Ms. Felix stated that it sounded as if the sources mentioned regarding the search, that they would be looking only at people with prior similar or related experience. She asked if her perception was correct.

Chairperson Follweiler replied that the individual had to be certified to be a superintendent.

Ms. Felix said her reasoning was that as a concerned taxpayer, she was aware that the district was in deep debt and faced some very serious consequences, and perhaps very soon, which was very alarming to her, personally, and perhaps to other taxpayers. It then raised the question about looking at a certain pool of applicants. She noted that Mr. Laverty stated earlier that the candidate should have definite financial experience, as in for profit business management experience, with the management of people who were responsible for a budget. She thought it would eliminate someone with that background if only certain certified people could be looked at.

Chairperson Follweiler expressed that she did not think they could legally hire a superintendent who was not certified.

Ms. Felix inquired if it was impossible to hire someone who had extensive financial background if he was certified as a superintendent.

Chairperson Follweiler replied that the ideal candidate would have everything with experience in education and business, but definitely needed the education portion in the résumé.

Director McKeon shared that Mr. Majewski who was assistant to the superintendent but did not have a superintendent's certificate. They might find someone who had served in Mr. Majewski's capacity, but also had their superintendent's certificate for a school district.

Ms. Felix questioned if it would be someone who had made a career change.

He explained that the district had cabinet members who came up through the educational process, but were presently at cabinet level doing non-direct educational functions.

Ms. Felix commented that it meant they did not actually have the work experience to support that function.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that they honestly did not know because they had not seen the candidates as of yet. She knew the district had the financial issues so they would be looking for that (criteria). She did not know if they would find the ideal person that Ms. Felix described, but said they might.

8. Stephen Barron – 2239 Lincoln Street, Bethlehem –  
Mr. Barron asked if any of the administration or educators would be involved in the search or in the composition of the committee, which would be making the decision on the next superintendent.

Chairperson Follweiler responded that they were intending to obtain input from all stakeholders.

Mr. Barron shared that his opinion was that to have a search committee or outside consulting firm come in was a ridiculous idea. He did not want to offend anyone who had the idea, but he thought it to be ridiculous, because they were talking about cutting meaningful programs. He stated that he saw an amazing hybrid of talent, from educators to individuals at the present meeting, who could take part in the process, including school board members and Mr. Majewski, who were stakeholders in the district. He was against paying a firm when they had talent. He also wanted to see the new superintendent be very successful. He thought that success in the situation would be if everybody felt they had a part in the selection and that the process was open and transparent, including the terms negotiated in the contract. He commented that it was obvious that some contract negotiations needed to remain private, but he believed that people needed to feel that the process was open and transparent. Mr. Barron expressed that many times, in the district, it had not been the case. Whether it was in fact, the case, or whether it was not, the media played it out that way. He thought that the superintendent's level of success was directly equal to the level of success that was allowed by making the process transparent.

Chairperson Follweiler stated that no decisions were made regarding the hiring of a firm. She noted that earlier it was said that the PSBA presentation was free of charge so they would certainly take advantage of anything offered without cost. The discussions they had with individuals and their names had to remain private, but discussions on the process would need to occur in a public meeting. She agreed that she would like to see that transparency was used as Mr. Barron suggested.

9. Mary Lou Hatcher – 925 Prospect Avenue, Bethlehem –  
Ms. Hatcher said that she heard a number of people speak to the issue of transparency and process. She thought that people would want to specifically know how it would be transparent. She believed it would be very helpful to have a series of parental focus groups in various parts of the district, in addition to faculty focus groups at all levels, and also to have focus groups of students in the secondary arena. They could use the process not only to have an end result in mind, but also with regard to how they wanted to function as a school district and if they wanted their young people invested in what happens. She suggested including them because they had a lot of talented young people.

Ms. Hatcher thought it would be helpful if individuals outside of the district, who were not board or faculty members, facilitated the focus group processes, in order to give some safety to the people who were speaking. She thought specifically of administrators and faculty and further commented that when a boss or the school board was present, one might not be as candid as when multiple focus groups were happening and peoples' comments would be shared but would not be connected with their name. She thought there was a lot of distrust and anxiety about folks' intentions. There was an opportunity to choose a process with some outside facilitation, which would be neutral, so the process itself would build trust. She mentioned that the United Way could probably provide them with a list of 20 organizations. The interim or new person would be able to come with the ground plowed a bit in order to work together in a constructive way. It would also prepare others for new leadership in a better way by giving a lot of people access to each other, get them talking and thinking about what they wanted and to help create it. She concluded that it was her idea about transparency, openness, and community building.

10. Sharon Brown – 234 East Goepp Street, Bethlehem –  
Ms. Brown had an additional comment regarding the solicitation of participation from the community. She strongly encouraged diverse groups that really represented the Bethlehem area community. She believed that the school board was fairly homogeneous at the present time with no people of color represented. It would be important in this time period to work diligently to have diversity in the group selection process for both the interim and permanent candidates. She added that diversity included class diversity and parents of special needs children. She noted that in her position at an area college, she often heard people say that they could not find people to serve on boards or committees. She commented that there were people available who were in the know, in the district, who would be more than willing to serve and/or recommend individuals so they would ensure diversity in the groups. She added that they would be back to ask if there were committees that reflected the diversity of the community. Ms. Brown said that she would hate to see one black or one Hispanic and hoped they would do something that was innovative and creative for 2009.
11. Meg Sharp Walton – 1136 Beverly Avenue, Bethlehem –  
Mrs. Sharp Walton said that she heard a lot of great things stated and thought the comments about transparency and having focus groups were a wonderful idea. Her concern was how people would be aware of the next step or the follow-up. She suggested they utilize email access for people to stay on top of what was happening. She was concerned they would make decisions, move forward with the process, and then another opportunity would be made for community input, but decisions would have been made, and the process would be put into place.

Mrs. Sharp Walton suggested they collect contact information from people to ensure that concerned citizens could stay on top of the process.

Chairperson Follweiler conferred with Mr. Majewski and noted that he suggested that anyone who wanted to be added to the email group could contact him using the district website to ensure they receive an accurate email address. She added that it was an excellent suggestion. She brought attention to the fact that the district meeting schedule was also posted on the website and noted that there were several board meetings in the month of June where there might be discussion.

Mr. Majewski requested a note be attached to inform him of the purpose of the email.

Chairperson Follweiler suggested that the subject line could state, "Email for superintendent subgroup."

12. Judy Parr – 140 Bierys Bridge Road, Bethlehem –

Ms. Parr added to what she previously stated in that she was thankful for the clarity provided regarding their strategy and reiterated that the more transparency they had going forward with their timelines and strategies, the better. She thought they needed an interim superintendent with experience related to the "No Child Left Behind" legislation with the consideration that they had so many schools in the district on corrective action and were hoping to be removed from that status. She knew that they hoped that Freedom High School was going to make AYP this year. She thought it would be extremely helpful for cabinet and the principals to have somebody holding the tiller steady who had some experience with the legislation and the strategies that schools had to employ to manage its demands and be able to work to improve their status.

Director Cann mentioned that just by necessity, the process for selection of the interim superintendent would look very different than the process for selection of the permanent superintendent. They needed to find an interim superintendent very quickly, whereas the interim allowed them the time to take a much longer process for the selection of the other superintendent, allowing multiple meetings and focus groups. They could look into all of the suggestions and have multiple opportunities for people to have input.

Chairperson Follweiler added that they were having tonight's meeting because there was a need to start the process for interim superintendent much faster.

13. Tova Goldstein – 759 Briar Road, Bethlehem –

Mrs. Goldstein thought it was very important to involve students in the process regarding both the interim and permanent superintendent. She asked that when searching for students, they put it out in a general format that any students who were interested could participate.

Mrs. Goldstein thought that lately, in the district, people went to the different principals and ask them to pick some students or went with students elected to student government. She added that they did not always speak for everyone and a lot of times there were students who would like to be involved in the process and were not involved. She saw the same students speaking for everyone at meetings. After speaking with other students, she found that it really did not span the spectrum of diversity in a number of different ways. Mrs. Goldstein also questioned the transition process as far as the interim superintendent and the permanent position involving the current administration, cabinet, and Dr. Lewis. If they were talking about someone coming in for possibly one year, they were a very distressed district in many ways including the budget and some of the schools. She asked how they were going to transition someone, whether it be six months, a year, or longer, especially with the inclusion of the current administration.

Chairperson Follweiler responded that there was no consensus on the matter, but, as mentioned earlier by Director Dexter, a timeline would be discussed and would be coming up shortly.

Mrs. Goldstein said that when they found the interim superintendent, she asked how they would plan to transition them into the role of running an incredibly large school district which is incredibly distressed in a number of different ways.

Chairperson Follweiler replied that the information was not available at the present time.

Mrs. Goldstein asked if they were working on some kind of plan because they were looking for someone to start fairly soon. She pointed out that the transition would be very crucial because a lot of times it could make all the difference in their success.

Chairperson Follweiler commented that they would talk further with the rest of the board and Dr. Lewis about the subject.

14. Regina Bryson –3445 Chipman Road, Easton –

Mrs. Bryson commented that she was concerned about why they had to have a discussion regarding an interim superintendent. She could not imagine that cabinet did not have somebody ready and able to step in. She asked what would happen if there were an emergent need for an interim superintendent. She expressed concern that they did not have a cabinet member who could be immediately tapped for interim superintendent. Mrs. Bryson thought that presently, the entire effort should be toward finding the permanent replacement, with very little effort placed on finding the interim. She thought they should have capable people, already aware of the problems, ready at the helm to take on the position.

Mrs. Bryson added that there should be someone in number two command. The efforts should be placed on immediately finding a replacement. She said there was no time to get a temporary and suggested they immediately get someone who already knew the district; whomever they thought was the most qualified and would want to step in to do the job. Mrs. Bryson concluded that they should use all of their efforts to find the permanent replacement and not waste any time on getting an interim superintendent up to speed.

15. Randy Toman – 359 Tenth Avenue, Bethlehem –  
Mr. Toman asked where one could send a letter of recommendation for a potential candidate.

Chairperson Follweiler replied that it could be sent to the Education Center to the attention of Mr. Majewski, Board Secretary, who would receive it as addressed to the board. There was also the website option to email all members of the board.

Mr. Toman commended the women who recently made comments because when he attended previous meetings, he heard that everything was fine. He thought Dr. Lewis should have been present to hear all of the complaints that the district was not running well. He thanked Mr. Majewski for his presence to see the different complexion as compared to the budget meetings.

Chairperson Follweiler clarified that Dr. Lewis was attending the graduation ceremony at the Career Academy this evening.

Director Cann made the suggestion to watch the district website as they developed and posted the timeline. She added that it might start out in a general format and become more specific as they moved on.

Chairperson Follweiler noted that the input received would be shared with the remainder of the board as soon as possible and they would start to incorporate some of the suggestions in their discussions.

Director Dexter added that if anyone wanted to share a comment and did not feel comfortable speaking publicly, it could be communicated to all board members by using the district website. She stated they read and considered their email in addition to the communication they had with residents of the district. She noted that they often printed the email communication to share with fellow board members and concluded that they welcomed the input.

16. Mary Lou Hatcher – 925 Prospect Avenue, Bethlehem –  
Ms. Hatcher stated that she heard a lot of concern about aggressively moving ahead for a permanent person as opposed to appointing an interim.

Ms. Hatcher said that there was a process that happened, at times, in religious communities when there was a change between pastors at the helm of a large denomination. She explained that there was a whole contingent of people whose job was to be an interim. It was not as if they would take someone who had just been credentialed or someone who did not have experience, but, they might find a skilled person who could help them with some of the process and knew what it was like to be in transition and could offer their skills.

Chairperson Follweiler agreed that there were people out there like that and some had started to contact the district.

17. Reverend Debra Hepburn – Bethlehem –

Reverend Hepburn stated that she was a resident of Bethlehem and also a parent of a school district student. She asked about the advantage of moving quickly or the advantage of having an interim superintendent. She thought that Mary Lou Hatcher spoke about it. Reverend Hepburn said that “moving quickly” made her think about what would happen if they did move quickly. She said that they lived in a very complex community at the present time and was growing very fast. They were not sure of all the gifts that the community actually had to offer the schools, industry, and the entire culture and community. She thought that the advantage of the appointment of an interim superintendent allowed some leveling of the playing field. She commented that when she looked at an all white school board and at a cabinet that was basically all white, with the exception of one or two people, she then thought that work still had to be done in the community in order to make the playing field a little more level for progressive leadership within the Bethlehem Area School District. She thought if they were going to draw gifted and progressive leadership for the community, they needed to take time to make sure the playing field was level, the processes were in place, and systems that had been historically racist against other people and groups were at bay, in order to allow the gifted and wonderful people that could possibly answer the call, to emerge. She felt that the advantage of having an interim superintendent would allow them to do an intelligent search and not to have a knee-jerk reaction to a situation they had in the community at the present time. Reverend Hepburn stated that the search would, in a sense, proffer a better outcome for their students, the faculty, and for the whole community. She concluded that she would like them to take the time to level the playing field, so that gifted people would hear about the search and God might put a seed in their heart, so they might turn towards looking at the area, want to contribute, and then be allowed the opportunity to do so.

Director McKeon stated that there was what called a cottage industry of interim superintendents with most being predominantly retired. He recalled that Easton Area School District went through two interim superintendents and basically had an interim on board within the district.

Director McKeon added that their district went through two searches before bringing in the present superintendent. He explained that as she was performing the duties as an interim, the board became enamored with her capabilities, and she was eventually offered the position. He commented that many superintendents had opt-out clauses, where they might be required to give 120 days notice with possibly less or more, depending on their contracts. If the district were to make them an offer, their start date would be influenced by their own personal service contract with their present district.

Chairperson Follweiler thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She pointed out that there were some conflicting recommendations, but they would take the information and share it with the remaining board members.

The meeting concluded at 6:58 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Donna Wenz