

Salem School Committee
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 29, 2019

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Kate Carbone, Acting Superintendent, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, Dr. Kathleen A. Smith, Superintendent Brockton Public Schools

Mayor Driscoll called the School Committee of the Whole to order at 6:00pm, explained that the purpose of the meeting is to have the opportunity to speak with a potential candidate for the Interim Superintendent role, and introduced Dr. Kathleen A. Smith. Dr. Smith is the current Superintendent for Brockton Public Schools and will be retiring this year. Dr. Smith has applied for the upcoming school year's Interim Superintendent position in Salem. Mayor Driscoll continued that the School Committee had the opportunity for an informal dialogue with Dr. Smith, before she applied. The School Committee collectively agreed to have a formal conversation with Dr. Smith. Mayor Driscoll announced there would be an informal Meet and Greet, in the IMC classroom, with Dr. Smith after the conclusion of this meeting.

Kathleen Smith Introduction and Experiences

Dr. Smith introduced herself and talked about her background and some of the work that she has done. Dr. Smith explained she held a number of roles as a teacher and educator in Brockton: Special Education teacher - at the elementary level, 7th and 8th grade junior high teacher for 10 years for students with disabilities, and district school adjustment counselor. Dr. Smith continued that she actively worked with families and students in social and emotional learning and later extended her education in school of law. Dr. Smith shared details of her position as an MCAS Manager and stated that she held a six-year role as Superintendent.

Q and A with Kathleen Smith, Retiring Brockton Public Schools Superintendent

In response to Mayor Driscoll's question, Dr. Smith talked of how her experiences would help her serve as an Interim Superintendent. Dr. Smith shared some of her experiences with Brockton Public Schools that would help her take on the Interim Superintendent role she is applying for and talked of the similarities between Salem and Brockton schools that included different facets such as climate and culture, instructional excellence, and safe and supportive schools. Dr. Smith talked about the importance of communication with the public and internal organizations.

In response to Ms. Manning's question, Dr. Smith shared her thoughts on how she worked towards creating a community and a district-wide culture for continuous improvement. Dr. Smith emphasized the importance of going out and being present. Dr. Smith talked of the importance of communicating and building relationships, having strong collaboration, trust and transparency with principals, teachers, directors, and staff through dialogue, discussions, and forums for the overall success of students.

In response to Ms. Wilson's question, Dr. Smith explained that the best way to support teachers and staff during this transition is to provide stability. They have to believe that everyone is working together as a team as they need to believe in a strong structure. Dr. Smith talked of personal visits to classrooms where students can see their interest in their classroom and teacher support. Dr. Smith also talked about the importance of class size and supervision, the need for additional personnel to

assist for safety. Dr. Smith explained that having conversations with teachers helps them feel supported and allows to be directly informed of their class needs. Stopping to speak and engage with custodians create open dialogue for the needs and conditions of the buildings. Dr. Smith reiterated that open communication and conversation is key to create stability.

Mr. Cruz asked Dr. Smith how she supported student voice in the Brockton Public Schools, asked if the Brockton Public School District has a student representative on the School Committee, and how to support student voice and give students more influence and involvement in the decision-making process. Dr. Smith responded that the Brockton School Committee does have a student representative. They have student council, meet with principals, and have had students participate in leadership projects.

In response to Mr. Fleming's question regarding a district communication plan for School Committee and community, Dr. Smith talked of staying actively engaged in the use of social media, the use of text messaging, meetings, use of different languages, personal discussions with parents, and established creating entities funds that support students and the homeless. Dr. Smith emphasized the importance of staying actively engaged, which allows members of the community, business sector, and workforce investment (and different entities) to know who the Superintendent is and that the person is approachable. Dr. Smith said that every opportunity she gets as a Superintendent is being a part of the community and making sure to develop those relationships.

In response to Ms. Campbell's questions, Dr. Smith spoke about community forums and how she worked to have authentic engagement with the community. Dr. Smith explained they used connected messages in all languages, reached out to strong partners and encouraged others to bring community members, and had teachers and principals more closely engage with parents and address needs accordingly.

Ms. Campbell asked Dr. Smith how she planned to observe and ensure stable facilitation while advancing important initiatives within the district. Dr. Smith responded that she would meet with the principals, administrative team, and central office (within the first few months) to clarify responsibilities, functions, and protocols in place. Dr. Smith continued she would go out and meet with groups that include teachers, administrators, principals and her leadership team and clearly define goals. Dr. Smith said she would also have to meet with the School Committee to be informed of their strategic plan and initiatives to help work together to advance them and shared a personal experience as an example.

Ms. Nuncio said that equity and access is a key goal in the school system, explained that Salem is in the process of trying to roll out dual-language instruction in a very hearty substantive way, and asked Dr. Smith how, if given that role, would she intend to support the momentum and keep it going. Dr. Smith answered that she had worked on a district project before where they looked at a global studies goal of working with the School Committee, the union, and management/Superintendent and developing strong relationships. Dr. Smith shared further details of its positive outcome and success. Ms. Nuncio also asked Dr. Smith about her racial lens whether she felt she had a good racial lens, as language and race are intertwined in Salem. Dr. Smith answered that it is important to ensure everything is done in a manner that is respectful of the student, respectful of the culture, while meeting their educational needs.

In response to Mayor Driscoll's question, Dr. Smith talked about building effective constructive internal systems and structures and described what they have done at their district. Every month, principals from each school would spend a full day working with their chief academic officer, sharing work with each other; they would come together and share best practices of their schools. Principals have an opportunity to see what their colleagues are doing and what is working. They talk about structures that work at a particular school. Dr. Smith talked about the importance of reviewing the number of paraprofessionals teaching structure, and looking at ways to support instruction in the district and building strong professional learning communities among principals. Dr. Smith

mentioned the effectiveness of scheduling discussions on restructuring and instructional support with all departments included such as music department, physical ed, special education teachers, etc. Collaboration and discussions build a strong district of support as they all come together - ensuring that everyone is part of that structure.

In response to Mr. Cruz's request, Dr. Smith talked of improvement in family engagement through a reorganization of the schools' website in Brockton, MA. Dr. Smith commented that it is a consistent and ongoing improvement. Dr. Smith talked about her experience as a mentor for new leaders and some of the retention strategies she implemented in her practices as Superintendent of Brockton Public Schools.

Discussion

Mayor Driscoll informed everyone on the results of the online survey. Ms. Manning expressed that Dr. Smith seems to have the experience they need in urban education, the necessary background skills, and understanding of roles.

Ms. Manning motioned to appoint Dr. Smith as Interim Superintendent for the upcoming school year. Members would work on a contract with the expectation of a final vote at the next regular School Committee meeting. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The motion carried with a unanimous vote of seven (7).

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting this evening, Mr. Fleming motioned to rise and report. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:44pm.

An informal *Meet and Greet* with Ms. Kathleen Smith was held in the IMC Classroom upon the conclusion of the Committee of the Whole meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary
Salem School Committee