

PRESS RELEASE

Masconomet Regional School District School Committee  
20 Endicott Road, Boxford, MA 01921  
Superintendent Search Committee

**Update to community regarding Masconomet Superintendent Search**

January 11, 2019

Contact: Bill Hodges, whodges@masconomet.org

Following the September 17, 2018 announcement of District Superintendent, Dr. Kevin Lyon's retirement, effective June 20, 2019, the Masconomet School Committee embarked on a search process for his replacement.

**CURRENT UPDATE as of January 11, 2019**

A rigorous search process conducted from September through December did not result in selection of a new superintendent. Under the advisement of our search consultants from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), candidates who demonstrated a refined set of prioritized criteria\* were subsequently brought forward for informal conversations with our Chair and some search committee members. This resulted in two candidates that these members felt warrant further review by the community and School Committee. At the Wednesday, January 9, 2019 school committee meeting, the decision was made to proceed with a public assessment and interview process with these candidates.

We anticipated permission to publicly announce these candidates' names to the full School Committee and community within a few days. We received this from one candidate within hours and began to make arrangements for the site visits to their district and to Masconomet. As this announcement was going to press, on Friday, January 11, 2019, we learned that the other candidate opted not to move forward; they decided they could not leave their current district at this time.

Based on this, we can now announce that Dr. Michael Harvey is the candidate still being considered. In a separate press release, his candidate profile will be posted and we will begin the public assessment process. We will also be posting dates and times for the staff and community to meet with this candidate very soon. We hope you will attend and provide your valuable feedback!

Details on how we arrived at this point are outlined under "BACKGROUND" below.

*\*The task of identifying the best candidate for the position of District Superintendent at Masconomet is one of the most important duties the School Committee undertakes. As representatives of the community, it is very important that we take into account community and stakeholder feedback. We have done so throughout our rigorous search process, and feel confident that the qualities we have prioritized directly reflect the written and verbal input from surveys, focus groups, screening committee members, and site-visit participants, which included parents, teachers, staff, administrators, police, community-organization leaders, and other community members.*

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***From September through December, the following took place:***

- The school committee hired consultants from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to assist in the search process.
- A Superintendent Search Committee was created that included one school committee member from each of the three district towns, Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield.
- A community/stakeholder survey and community/stakeholder forums were conducted to identify the criteria to be sought in potential candidates.
- A successful candidate profile and informational packet was created by the search committee, and subsequently posted and distributed to recruit appropriate applicants.
- A Screening Committee was formed to represent the community/stakeholders, based on letters of interest collected over several weeks' time, that included three teachers, three parents (one from each town), three community members (one from each town), Boxford police chief (also a school-resource officer), and three Masco School Committee members (one from each town).
- The position was posted and 19 applications were submitted to our MASC consultants. The full Screening Committee reviewed these applications, invited five of these candidates for a first interview, done in executive session to preserve confidentiality for candidates at this phase.
- The Screening Committee selected two finalists, at which point the screening committee was disbanded, and the finalists were publicly announced.
- The School Committee then conducted reference checks, visited the current home-district of each candidate, hosted each finalist at Masco for a tour and community presentation, reviewed verbal and written feedback from faculty, staff, community members, parents and students, and conducted public interviews with each candidate.
- Based on all that was learned throughout this process, neither finalist candidate received sufficient votes for election at the School Committee meeting on Dec. 19, 2018.

### ***December to January:***

- Options for next steps were reviewed at that point with the advisement of our MASC consultants, and the School Committee opted for the Chair and a small delegation of school committee members to speak informally with several possible candidates that our consultant would bring forward, between Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> and Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>. Our consultants advised that this is a common search practice in situations like this.
- On Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a report was made to the School Committee that the informal discussions produced two candidates that warrant further community and School Committee discussion. This is based on a refined set of qualifying criteria that reflect the priorities of the stakeholders and community that had provided feedback during the search process to date.
- At this Jan 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the committee weighed the choice of either re-opening a new search (and essentially starting from scratch), or bringing these two candidates in for a fully public vetting and interview process.

- The school committee decided to accept the search committee's recommendation and to move forward with assessing these two candidates. Some of the key factors in this decision made on January 9<sup>th</sup>, are:
  - We have learned from our MASC consultant that a new search is very unlikely to produce any more new candidates at this time that meet the criteria that we seek.
  - We are mindful that very soon our budget and capital planning processes will be in full swing, so an entirely new search would likely get bumped to mid-spring, which is not ideal timing for a new hire for this role, and is much less likely to produce a better candidate pool.
  - The search committee members assured the school committee that both of the prospects brought forward by our consultants are strong candidates, and have full confidence that our community stakeholders' priorities are reflected in this assessment.
- We quickly received the permission of one candidate to proceed with public announcement of their candidacy, but on the morning of January 11, 2019, to our great disappointment, the other candidate withdrew based on the needs of their home district.
- At that time, we once again sought advice from our MASC consultant, and were advised that since the process of scheduling events for evaluation is already underway with Dr. Harvey (such as site visits and community forums), it is prudent to proceed with the public assessment process for him, as had been previously decided.

Again, we will soon be posting dates and times for the staff and community to meet with the candidate in the coming weeks, and community feedback will be welcomed at that time.