

## **BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**February 7, 2023**

**Meeting location:**

**Town Hall- Board of Selectmen Meeting Room**

### **1. Call to Order**

At 5:40 PM, Mr. Morrison called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Scoville, Mr. Brosgol, Mr. Morrison, Ms. Guay and Ms. Mehta-Green and Hanscom Representative Sarah McGinley

### **2. Public Comment**

No comments

### **3. Vote to change back to hybrid meeting format starting on February 14, 2023**

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion: **The School Committee votes to return to a hybrid meeting format beginning on February 14, 2023.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Mehta-Green**

**MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0**

Ms. Guay	Yes
Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms.Mehta-Green	Yes

### **4. Superintendent Candidate-Finalist Interviews with: Dr. Matthew Janger (candidate #1) and Dr. June Saba-Maguire (candidate #2)**

- Each candidate was given 90 minutes to answer questions presented by School Committee members
- Each candidate introduced themselves to School Committee Members
- School Committee Members introduced themselves to each of the candidates

**Dr. Matthew Janger, Candidate # 1, Interview questions and responses**

**Dr. June Saba-Maguire, Candidate #2, Interview questions and responses**

1. Why Bedford? Please tell us about the trajectory of your career and how Bedford fits

into your vocation now? (Brad)

**Candidate #1 response:** Strong community, people move here to be part of a community. Likes kids and teachers likes strong educational community. Has been in Arlington Public Schools for ten years. Started career as a reading teacher, then became dean at private school in Maine then returned to school to gain more education.

**Candidate #2 response:** Well supported student body. 29 years in Brockton Public School. Career educator, good fit professionally. Want a particular community to work for and with. Community took the time to think about what kind of leader they were looking for. District planning is a strong suit. Was moved by student that said Bedford is small but mighty today.

2. Can you give us some examples of how you have worked with parents (and students) to build support for the public schools in your previous positions? (Sheila)

**Candidate #1 response:** Building project-future building project took time, had to have many conversations about what was needed and build up to the need over time. It took seven years for the project to be completed. Input from teacher as to what they needed to teach students and build other programs. Many community forums took place and input from students was also gathered.

**Candidate #2 response:** As an elementary school Principal worked at a low performing school. Had to address what was needed to change the outcome and plan to ensure students got what they needed.

3. What steps would you take as Superintendent to best support our Hanscom and METCO students? What do you believe is the biggest challenge facing each of these groups, and how would you address it? (Sarah M)

**Candidate #1 response:** Thoughtful communication is need with these partner families. Efforts need to be made to hold events in their communities to be able to better connect with these students and families. Plan reality of life into the curriculum for students with lots of transitions.

**Candidate #2 response:** Spoke with students from each of these communities today and learned that they felt welcomed by the school community. All students felt Bedford welcomed them and allowed them to share their voices within the school community. Consistency needs to happen so they can share their stories.

4. Discuss a large-scale change initiative you have led? How was it received by the stakeholders? What was the outcome? (Ann)

**Candidate #1 response:** Heterogeneous group wrong footed during COVID. A level or honors combined but didn't work. Could not support all students according to the teachers. Community was angry at thought of unleveling classes. Many conversations had to happen. What does honors level class really mean? Piloted a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English program of students being cot-aught 50 to 69% of students then opted to transfer to high level English. Grades had improved and another look at the data will show if this model can be expanded into different areas of study.

**Candidate #2 response:** Changed Kindergarten start date in current district. Felt students with a December 31<sup>st</sup> birthdate were too young and statistically struggled throughout their school experience.

Many students were retained and had issues once they reached middle school age. Looked at the data for details and brought the findings to school committee to make a decision. Changed date to August 31<sup>st</sup> and added preschool classes to accommodate those students that did not make the new cutoff date to enter Kindergarten. Large school decision with positive results.

5. The 2021 MCAS scores seem to have been artificially high, while the 2022 scores showed the actual impact of the pandemic on learning. The state has recently released its vision of how it expects scores and schools to recover. What do you think of DESE's new recommendations? (Dan)

**Candidate #1 response:** Cannot rush learning. Kids cognitively develop differently. Cannot be overly focused on MCAS scores. As they are a method of growth but not that they are not being taught correctly.

**Candidate #2 response:** MTSS pre COVID still in effect. Some schools need more support than others in a district. Central office staff involved to establish "go to person" for support for staff that need it. Responsive to school leaders- honest dialogue with DESE about what is working or not in the district. Blue prints do not work well for all students. Students need different things to ensure all their needs are being met. State does not need to tell us what we need to do that is in the best interest of the students.

6. One of the challenges Bedford is facing is giving equal thought, attention, and action to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Social Emotional Learning; and Academic Excellence. How can we create a rigorous academic environment and also support these other priorities? Give us an example of how you have put this into action. (Sarah S)

**Candidate #1 response:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not separate everything must work together. Curriculum needs to be inclusive to help students see themselves. SEL needs to be embedded into curriculum or there will be no success.

**Candidate #2 response:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Social Emotional Learning; and Academic Excellence all goes together. Strong social emotional learning is key. Had to fight to change inequities in Brockton.

7. As Superintendent, what would be your top priorities relating to academic opportunities and enhanced rigor in the district? (Sarah M)

**Candidate #1 response:** Connect students to facts and challenge them in a deeper sense. Students need to bring their own history to class and share.

**Candidate #2 response:** Work with leaders and teachers about what is missing. This community is committed to advance academic rigors. Resources need to be in place – guaranteed curriculum equity of access. What does data show-must adapt to ensure students get all the need?

8. Labor issues across the Commonwealth between teachers' unions and municipalities are becoming more commonplace. How would you work to ensure that our next negotiations are successful? (Dan)

**Candidate #1 response:** Transparency, trust, professionalism. Challenge in contracts- if we expect teachers to do exactly what is in the contract we will be disappointed. Teachers need to have a good feel for using their own time. Use money effectively and everyone needs to be on the same page.

**Candidate #2 response:** Work closely with teacher union. Great work done during COVID. Strong working relationship with teachers. Interest based bargaining, impact bargaining during COVID time attention changed constantly. Was BEA rep when started teaching.

9. Teaching post pandemic has been challenging and burnout is high. What are specific ways that you would support the teachers on a day-to-day basis? (Sarah S)

**Candidate #1 response:** Support teacher's professionalism. We cannot do everything well. We take on too many things. We need to focus of what is important. Do things in a systematic way. Stop people from responding to everything.

**Candidate #2 response:** Burnout is high. Met with teacher's today- they need present visible leadership, need to feel heard on a consistent basis as well as have fun. Weekly recognition of staff and students.

10. Please give us an example of a time when you advocated on behalf of an educator or colleague who received criticism from the community. (Brad)

**Candidate #1 response:** This happens all the times. Set expectations prior to these issues happening. Go to person you have issue with. If problem is in the classroom fix, it in the classroom do not go to principal. Student to teacher issue. A student should go with parent or principal to speak with teacher. Teachers want to help students and are willing to do what they can. In these meeting expect to disagree, follow chain of command.

**Candidate #2 response:** Advocate. Teacher comments I heard today- "we want a Superintendent that has our backs". Teachers and students need to know you support them. Relationships count.

11. Please describe a situation in which data revealed failure of a major initiative in which you were involved. How did you know? What did you do in response? (Ann)

**Candidate #1 response:** Make little mistakes not big mistakes

**Candidate #2 response:** MCAS testing scores came in and a dip was had during 1<sup>st</sup> year of implementation of new curriculum. Knew it would be temporary and things eventually improved. Started a new reading curriculum based on data progress happened before MCAS. Looked for other resources to support reading progress.

12. Special Education is a particular challenge because of the complexity of rules, service needs, and student and parent concerns. When you assess the effectiveness of your special education programs, what are some of the criteria you use? Tell us about a problem or challenge you have addressed involving special education and how you worked this out. (Sheila)

**Candidate #1 response:** Criteria assessments is a necessary tool to meet goals. Data is driven by these assessments. Strong tier 1 instruction, look across IEPs to find all needs not being met by students. Not all students fall into every category. Need to reevaluate placement for best supports.

**Candidate #2 response:** Examine number of students not taking MCAS. Had to go back to IEP and look at why things are being done at IEP meetings. PreK students need and are legally entitled to receive services. Many students placed in sub-separate groups. Change mind set for less constructed classrooms. Look at what is really happening in classrooms.

13. What steps have you taken to decrease achievement gaps during your experience, and what results did they yield? (Sheila)

**Candidate #1 response:** I have had success at closing achievement gaps. Management by spreadsheet. Speak specifics about students not making progress.

**Candidate #2 response:** Prepare students for assessments; teachers need to teach, lowest to highest in district in 3 years' time in math. Had to make some needed changes.

14. Challenges in literacy instruction face school districts everywhere, including Bedford. Our district is gathering data on the best approach to teaching literacy moving forward. What are your thoughts on the teaching of reading, specifically phonics, how would you expand writing opportunities for Bedford students, and how would you evaluate and institute change if a shift in approach was in the best interest of Bedford students? (Sarah M)

**Candidate #1 response:** Look at reading approach make small changes to target right approach to reading. Systemic, coaching, teaching reading is now complicated but interesting to watch.

**Candidate #2 response:** Reading wars alive and well all over. Do research, listened to podcasts I believe in the science of reading. Students are at different places at different times. Phonics has to be part of instruction on a daily basis. Need to support all students. Writing has to be part of reading instruction- they go together. Students need to write daily.

15. Oftentimes the arts and athletics is the only thing that brings students to school. How do you prioritize extracurricular programming while simultaneously prioritizing academic programming? (Sarah S)

**Candidate #1 response:** Some schools you can tell right away if the focus is on sports or arts. Resources are needed for all extra curriculum. Students bring enthusiasm. Choice-self-expression need to be incorporated in class and sports.

**Candidate #2 response:** Equal importance. Extra-curricular is extra-curricular and needs to be important an important part of the parent and students experience.

16. We are likely facing a decrease in our school-aged population over the coming decade. How would you plan for declining enrollment? (Dan)

**Candidate #1 response:** Projections need to be looked at carefully. Program needs, staffing and shifting of resources are needed. Do not create a fearful environment, create new programs, and utilize space differently.

**Candidate #2 response:** Has experience in this area. Made recommendations about classrooms due to budget cuts not enrollment. Hard decisions have to be made. Difficult to cut teachers due to budget and enrollment. Need to be fiscally responsible in all choices.

17. How do you manage with constrained resources? (Ann)

**Candidate #1 response:** Ask for true need, gain trust, prioritize, and choose things that do the same thing at the same time. Look over spending, plan ahead, fund things properly.

**Candidate #2 response:** Layoff Notices, budget cuts have to look at the district as a whole and be strategic and creative. Get a grant if necessary- school redesign, advocate to School Committee for needs. Speak to state reps for funds. Keep moving forward see beyond the current situation. Students, teachers need access to resources.

18. What are your strategies for fostering a positive relationship with the School Committee regarding a) making educational policy for the district; b) setting budget priorities and formal spending plans; c) engaging in collective bargaining, and d) creating a solid administrative and policy making team that supports the district's goals and objectives? (Sheila)

**Candidate #1 response:** No surprises, regular conversations, understanding, retreats, what do you need to survive, give supports and plan ahead.

**Candidate #2 response:** Positive relationship-get to know each member to hear his or her needs. Connect on a constant basis-you represent the community. Educational policy drive by law. Enact the policy School Committee sets forth in a way that benefits the school community. Have a relationship that you trust the budget is working for the students and spend money well. Policy making- relationship that is solid. Right people in the right places.

19. Why do you think we talk about Bedford as a unique community? In what ways do you feel Bedford is unique? What are some of its unique strengths... and unique challenges? (Dan)

**Candidate #1 response:** Strength- strong community, diversity. Weakness- anxiety was the students biggest complaint today, stress is at higher levels than before, management focus- skill I bring to Bedford.

**Candidate #2 response:** Bedford knows why Bedford is unique. Everyone I met today wanted to share love and joy for the community that they love. Staff and students compassion and caring was consistent throughout everyone I met. People are happy to work here; they were smiling and helping kids and each other. Dedicated to commitment, pride and character.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion: **7:15 PM adjourn meeting for a 15-minute break to allow candidate one to exit and prepare for the second candidate.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Scoville**  
**MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0**

Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms.Mehta-Green	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes

Meeting reopened at 7:35 PM and Clifford Chuang's interview began. School Committee members read interview questions, and the candidate gave his responses.

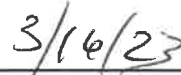
**Adjournment**

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion: **9:10 PM to adjourn the meeting and not to reopen to the public.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Mehta-Green**  
**MOTION APPROVED 5-0-0**

Ms. Scoville	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Morrison	Yes
Ms.Mehta-Green	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes

  
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School Committee Secretary

  
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Date

