

SUBJECT: The meeting to conduct interviews of Exeter Township School Board Candidates on Thursday, January 31, 2019 commenced at 6:00 p.m. by Dr. Hemberger at the Administration Building. The following members were present: Hunter Ahrens, James Brady, Jr., Jerry Geleff, Michael Jupina, Jr., and Michele Stratton. Others attending were: Dr. Robert Phillips – Superintendent, Dr. Patrick Winters – Assistant Superintendent, and Anne Guydish – Board Secretary/Director of Finance.

Dr. Ann Hearing

Opening remarks: Dr. Hearing indicated she is excited for the opportunity to again serve on the school board. During the time she served on the school board she put herself into it 100% and she looking forward to continue her service to the school board.

Why are you interested in serving on the School Board? It is important to her to be part of her son's education in any way she can. Dr. Hearing added she has the time to put into being a school board member.

What do you perceive to be the responsibilities of the School Board? Support the Superintendent in running the school properly.

What can the district do to improve the overall academic achievement of our students, while significantly closing the achievement gap, especially with our students with special needs and our academically disadvantaged students? It is important to evaluate what the school district and students are doing, staying up to date, and making any changes that are needed.

What are the strengths and challenges of our school district? The challenges of the school district are that everyone has an opinion on how the school district should be run but not knowing how it is supposed to be run. The strengths of the school district are the amazing staff. The community has a lot of pride in the school district.

What do you feel is the number one challenge facing Exeter Township School District?

The budget is a challenge because of the deficit in 18.19 and possibly 19.20 and communicating to the public that there may need to be a tax increase. The budget is challenging because you want to make everybody happy. Students should have the proper education and sports and clubs.

What qualities, skills and experience would you bring to the Board? Dr. Hearing served on the board for 2 years, went through school board training, served on committees, and even after leaving the school board she continued to attend meetings. Dr. Hearing is also very active in the school district with her son being in the Senior High School. Dr. Hearing participates in a lot of school activities and has a realistic view of what is going on.

Why do you think it has been so difficult for legislators to come to an agreement on changes to the public school employee's retirement system, and on property tax reform? Do you think reform in these areas is important? Dr. Hearing agreed that reform needs to take place. Dr. Hearing commented that change is difficult especially since things have been the same for so long. With what is going on with the budget change needs to happen especially with property tax reform. People in the community believe there needs to be a change.

What do you believe would be your biggest challenges as a Board member? Understanding the school district budget is Dr. Hearing's biggest challenge. If she is going to represent the school board this is what the community wants to hear about. To ensure that students get the best education the budget needs to work.

What is a priority concern you may have regarding the District that has not been raised? Dr. Hearing commented on the bus barn, budget, and taxes. Parents are talking about getting an afterschool bus for the after school activities for students.

Dr. Hearing indicated if she is given the opportunity to be on the school board she will be here 100%.

Dr. Hemberger indicated notification will take place tomorrow morning. This position is just until December and will be a two year term in the election. Dr. Hearing indicated she is running no matter what.

There was discussion on how Dr. McClendon and Mrs. Pieja should participate if they show up late to the interviews. This is a committee meeting and the vote will take place on February 12, 2019 and they can vote at that meeting.

Jonathan Scaccia

Opening remarks: Dr. Scaccia discussed the four stakeholder groups that the school board is accountable to. The first group is students who are the output and the mission statement. The board ensures they will become productive and responsible citizens. The second group are the teachers and the school board should support, encourage, and empower them to use their expertise. The third group are the parents who directly entrust the board to provide activities to shape the students. The board needs to make sure they align with parent expectations. The fourth group is the community at large and the board needs to create value for them and make sure the outputs of education are visible.

Why are you interested in serving on the School Board? Dr. Scaccia commented on his background. Dr. Scaccia wants to make things better and help to provide input to policies and create value for the four stakeholder groups.

What do you perceive to be the responsibilities of the School Board? Dr. Scaccia commented on finding the sweet spot between those four overlapping circles. There are tough decisions that have to be made as there are competing needs but the goal would be win, win, win, win for the four groups.

What can the district do to improve the overall academic achievement of our students, while significantly closing the achievement gap, especially with our students with special needs and our academically disadvantaged students? Dr. Scaccia there is a tough balance but as much as possible provide individualized education. Closing the gap is best achieved by making sure there is equitable distribution of resources and services to address the inequity in achievement gaps.

What are the strengths and challenges of our school district? Dr. Scaccia said the challenges include transportation turnover, and the bus facility issues. There is discrepancy among the board about what the tax rate should be. The school board needs to find a way to communicate to the community the value of the taxes they pay. Dr. Scaccia commented on implications of increasing population. Dr. Scaccia indicated the strengths include being a wealthy county, the graduation rate is good, and the

community is somewhat close knit. There is a chance to capitalize on the way students can interact in a smaller community.

What do you feel is the number one challenge facing Exeter Township School District? Population growth would be the top challenge because it is unavoidable. This is an achievable and manageable issue to solve. Dr. Scaccia commented on the strategies to reach the goals. Dr. Scaccia added that he has a good background with skills in thinking strategically.

What qualities, skills and experience would you bring to the Board? Dr. Scaccia said he is a community psychologist and is pretty eclectic. Dr. Scaccia commented on the type of work he does and that he has the ability to think systemically and at multiple levels. Dr. Scaccia is very keen on implementation. Dr. Scaccia would help the board think through the critical issues.

Why do you think it has been so difficult for legislators to come to an agreement on changes to the public school employee's retirement system, and on property tax reform? Do you think reform in these areas is important? Dr. Scaccia said there is a fundamental value and ideology divide that has been exacerbated over the last fifteen years. The ideological divide prevents a lot of consensus building. Dr. Scaccia said that local governance appeals to him because you work from the bottom up. The board has to determine what makes sense for Exeter.

What do you believe would be your biggest challenges as a Board member? Dr. Scaccia commented on it being a short term position and figuring out the dynamics of the school board. He added that he would have to do his homework to get involved.

What is a priority concern you may have regarding the District that has not been raised? School safety is a concern to the students. Dr. Scaccia said he wasn't sure how much the student voice filters to leadership. Students are our customers and stakeholders. The school board needs ground level input from students.

Dr. Scaccia was asked if he would run for a school board position in the upcoming election. Dr. Scaccia said he needs to see he adds value and if it makes sense.

Dr. Scaccia as the board what the most pressing needs for the four groups of stakeholders. Mr. Brady shared his opinion on the needs of the four groups of stakeholders.

Dr. Scaccia asked about the goals of the school board. Dr. Hemberger commented on employee agreements or contracts that need to be negotiated, budget challenges, the impact of special education student needs, a request for proposal for transportation services.

Dr. Scaccia asked what the board wanted to hear from him but he didn't say. Mr. Ahrens commented on the interpersonal relationship among board members. Mr. Jupina commented on Dr. Scaccia seeing this as community service.

John Fidler

Opening remarks: Mr. Fidler said this is a logical next step as he as always enjoyed working with students. Mr. Fidler compared the board of a school to the board of a corporation. From the eyes of a taxpayer what the school board does is for kids K-12 and that is why he wants to get involved.

Why are you interested in serving on the School Board? Mr. Fidler commented that some people are blessed with certain gifts and it is their responsibility to share the gifts with other people. Mr. Fidler has 43 years of experience in work and volunteering and wants to give back. Mr. Fidler is retired and he has the extra time to give more at a different level.

What do you perceive to be the responsibilities of the School Board? The board is responsible for governing what goes on in the school district. The board has oversight and is responsible and accountable for what goes on in the district. The board is the umbrella under which the school district operates.

What can the district do to improve the overall academic achievement of our students, while significantly closing the achievement gap, especially with our students with special needs and our academically disadvantaged students? Mr. Fidler is still getting familiar with what the district is doing. The district should continue to do what is right for students and look for opportunities to do things better. Mr. Fidler commented on his corporate world experience and that corporations would look for problems and look for vulnerabilities in order to address them. It is important to be more collegial with everyone. The school board is here for everyone. If the board is doing their job they will be aware of the problems. The school board member should know the pulse of the community. Those students who do need extra help really do need extra help. No student should be marginalized.

What are the strengths and challenges of our school district? Mr. Fidler said that one of his first tasks as a board member is to learn the strengths and challenges of the school district. Mr. Fidler suggested that maybe the district should look for opportunities to pick up the phone and publicize positive stories. If you are already doing that, keep doing it, but look for opportunities to do it more.

What do you feel is the number one challenge facing Exeter Township School District?

Mr. Jupina deferred to Mr. Ahrens to ask the next question based on his response to the previous question.

What qualities, skills and experience would you bring to the Board? Mr. Fidler said that everything he has done in his career touches on what the school board does. Mr. Fidler indicated that you have to ask the questions; those that give a deer in the headlights look. Mr. Fidler commented on his work experiences and the importance of teamwork and collegiality. Mr. Fidler's life-long goal is working with kids. Mr. Fidler was a CASA (court appointed special advocates) volunteer.

Why do you think it has been so difficult for legislators to come to an agreement on changes to the public school employee's retirement system, and on property tax reform? Do you think reform in these areas is important? Mr. Fidler said that very few politicians have the courage to take on tough issues. In some senses getting elected takes precedence over addressing the tough issues. There is a lack of commitment and courage to take on the tough issues.

What do you believe would be your biggest challenges as a Board member? The biggest challenge is getting up to speed as a member of the school board. The bus shelter seems to be an issue. Mr. Fidler will have to become familiar as soon as possible with the issues.

What is a priority concern you may have regarding the District that has not been raised? Mr. Fidler commented on the math scores in the last series of tests. Mr. Fidler encouraged the board to figure out

the role of the board in getting the scores up. The district needs to find out where the problems and vulnerabilities are. Comparison and analysis are valuable tools. Look at what other school districts are doing that have higher scores. Analyze if the students are engaged.

Mr. Fidler said that one of his early questions, if he is appointed, is how you would learn about being a school board member. Dr. Hemberger commented on mandatory training that is offered by PSBA.

Craig Nesbitt

Opening remarks:

Mr. Nesbitt has lived in the community for 15 to 16 years. Mr. Nesbitt was in the Marine Corp. He worked for General Electric and Aramark. His position with Aramark has brought him to eastern PA. Mr. Nesbitt's background in facilities and grounds would be valuable in his service on the school board. Mr. Nesbitt has a wealth of experience to share with the community and the students.

Why are you interested in serving on the School Board? Mr. Nesbitt likes to give back to the community. Customer service is important and this would be an extension of that.

What do you perceive to be the responsibilities of the School Board? Mr. Nesbitt sees the responsibilities as multi-faceted. Mr. Nesbitt reviewed the long-range strategic plan. Mr. Nesbitt commented on facility challenges including the bus barn. The district should be more efficient so that more tax dollars can be targeted to the students.

What can the district do to improve the overall academic achievement of our students, while significantly closing the achievement gap, especially with our students with special needs and our academically disadvantaged students? Mr. Nesbitt commented on the article in the Reading Eagle. We need to get the bang for the buck. Mr. Nesbitt indicated he would look at the information objectively and there would be a fair and equal distribution. Competition is a good thing if it is managed properly. The goal is to get everyone as close to being number one and how do you show or grade the success.

What are the strengths and challenges of our school district? From a facility standpoint the district has some old structures. Mr. Nesbitt asked if the district can do better by providing better teachers, facilities, computers, etc.? Mr. Nesbitt asked how do Exeter compare to other school districts in the county? Are there best practices that we can take from other school districts?

What do you feel is the number one challenge facing Exeter Township School District?

Mr. Nesbitt commented that security is one of the most important things to be addressed. Mr. Nesbitt commented on facility projects such as HVAC and LED. Mr. Nesbitt commented on use of buses, and the costs associated with transportation.

What qualities, skills and experience would you bring to the Board? Mr. Nesbitt said his military career and management positions provided him with skills to make sure things get accomplished. Mr. Nesbitt has experience with managing budgets in excess of \$50,000,000. These experiences could be easily translated to taking care of things in the school district.

Why do you think it has been so difficult for legislators to come to an agreement on changes to the public school employee's retirement system, and on property tax reform? Do you think reform in

these areas is important? We have backed ourselves into a system that we are pointing at each other (legislature vs school board). Mr. Nesbitt commented on the high taxes, lack of a recent countywide reassessment.

What do you believe would be your biggest challenges as a Board member?

The biggest challenge would be getting up to speed.

What is a priority concern you may have regarding the District that has not been raised?

Mr. Nesbitt indicated that the discussion this evening addressed the issues that are a priority to him.

Dr. Hemberger summarized meeting schedules and committee work.

Allison Wilson

Opening remarks:

Ms. Wilson is an Exeter graduate and is a teacher by profession. Ms. Wilson was a teacher in the Exeter School District. Ms. Wilson is currently a teacher in the Twin Valley School District teaching reading support. Ms. Wilson indicated she is dedicated to the community and does a lot of community serviced. Being on the school board is the way she can most serve the community because she knows a lot about schools and education and knows what goes into making good decisions.

Why are you interested in serving on the School Board? Ms. Wilson values education and the school board plays a pivotal role in the student's education in making sure they get a good education and gaining skills to make them successful.

What do you perceive to be the responsibilities of the School Board? The job of the school board is to set policy and make sure things are followed the way they are supposed to be followed. It is not the school board's job to be in the nitty gritty day to day work but more of the overall running of the school district in making sure everything is followed correctly.

What can the district do to improve the overall academic achievement of our students, while significantly closing the achievement gap, especially with our students with special needs and our academically disadvantaged students? The district needs to have good teachers, small class sizes, providing the support students need, do assessments carefully to know what students need, and differentiation in meeting the needs of students. It is important to understand the needs of the students.

What are the strengths and challenges of our school district? Ms. Wilson said the the district is a close knit community with people who have been here for a long time. This can be a good thing and it can be a negative. Ms. Wilson talked about assessment and the tax base. Ms. Wilson said there are a lot of dedicated people but they may not be seeing the bigger picture all of the time.

What do you feel is the number one challenge facing Exeter Township School District? Ms. Wilson indicated the biggest challenge is meeting the needs of the students while being fiscally responsibility.

Ms. Wilson said the district should build more community and business relationships to provide support to educate students for the workforce.

What qualities, skills and experience would you bring to the Board? Ms. Wilson is a people person, and a problem solver. Ms. Wilson said she thinks through things to find a better way to do something.

Why do you think it has been so difficult for legislators to come to an agreement on changes to the public school employee's retirement system, and on property tax reform? Do you think reform in these areas is important? Ms. Wilson commented on how difficult it is for politicians to get things done. The school board should talk with legislators making sure they know what the needs are in the schools.

What do you believe would be your biggest challenges as a Board member? Ms. Wilson commented on the fixed nature of the costs of the district and the mandated costs such as pension and special education. There is very little wiggle room when it comes to a budget and the board has to look at the essential things that are needed.

What is a priority concern you may have regarding the District that has not been raised? Ms. Wilson has children at the high school, Reiffton, and Owatin. Ms. Wilson commented on the issue of vaping at the high school, the PSSA scores in math at the Reiffton level and teaching the new math to her child at Reiffton.

Ms. Wilson asked what the most pressing issues are for the school board.

Dr. Hemberger summarized the challenges.

Board members selected their top three candidates and ranked them, with their first choice receiving three points, their second choice receiving two points, and their third choice receiving one point. The scores were tallied and the hierarchy was as follows:

Mr. Fidler 11; Mr. Nesbitt 9 ; Ms. Wilson 8; Dr. Hearing 5; Dr. Scaccia 4

The school board members discussed their personal rankings, responses to questions, and the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. A second vote was called for, same ranking system, with the two bottom candidates dropped from consideration. The hierarchy was as follows: Fidler 13, Wilson 11, Nesbitt 9.

Another discussion was called for by a member. The lowest scoring candidate of the three was dropped, and a different voting system employed. Mr. Geleff objected, stating that Mr. Fidler had already won two votes, and was clearly the winner. His objection was not considered. The vote became one vote for one candidate, not the ranking system employed before. The vote tally came to Ms. Wilson 4, Mr. Fidler 2.

The meeting ended at 9 pm.