

Town Meeting

2-12-15

TOWN MEETING

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Precursors - None

Announcements

- Eleanor reminded attendees about tomorrow's "Uptown Funk" dance on the third floor at lunchtime to celebrate/remember Mary's birthday on the 14th. We will send a video of it to Mary's sister, Anne.
- Eleanor also announced that the yearbook needs more photos and more volunteer photographers. This year's staff is mostly seniors and 8th graders, and they need more photos from other grades!
- Reminder about schedule changes the week of 2/23: Town Meeting will meet on Tuesday; TA will be on Thursday at 12:35 to allow students to attend the science/music presentation by Jamey Turner.

Consent Items - none

Motions

- Casey made a motion to form a librarian hiring committee. She explained that the position had been vacant throughout the year (but in good hands), and that they wanted to get an early start on finding a strong candidate to start next year. She said they were hoping to use lead time on the committee to think about what we most want in a new librarian before conducting interviews. Liz asked if starting the hiring process so early would disadvantage potential candidates from other Arlington schools, and Casey answered that it would in fact be advantageous to all candidates because it would allow them to make decisions before commitment time in June. **Motion passed.** Casey will hang a sign-up sheet outside the main office.

Discussions - none

Special Agenda Item: Frank then introduced School Superintendent Patrick Murphy, who had come to introduce and explain the process to be followed to select a new H-B Woodlawn principal.

- Dr. Murphy began by having everyone crowd around Frank for a photo he planned to tweet later that afternoon.
- He then began his presentation by thanking Frank for all he has done both for Arlington Public Schools and for HB, calling him a "good shepherd." He also thanked him for all he had done to help him, personally, come to understand H-B Woodlawn. He said that he would begin to explain the process already in progress and then would turn the meeting over to Dr. Betty Hobbs, Assistant Superintendent for Human Relations, to fill in the details and answer questions.
- Dr. Murphy put up a timeline detailing the selection process that started on Feb. 12, the day Frank officially announced his retirement to the HB community. He joked that he, himself, had tried to avoid meeting with Frank and thus avoid accepting his retirement but added that he had made it clear to Frank that the door was always open for him to return to service with APS in other capacities. He then explained upcoming dates on the timeline: on Wed., Feb 18 he will meet with the HB PAC, and the position will be advertised nationally from approximately Feb 17 through March 13. During the week of March 23, information about HB and the position will be posted with a link from HB's homepage. This synopsis will describe the strengths and challenges of the HB program and will outline some of the attributes desired in a new principal.
- Dr. Murphy went on to explain that usually a position like this one brings in about 30 - 40 applicants, although it might be a bit higher given the national renown of HB. An initial review of applications often narrows the field by about half, weeding out people who don't have minimum qualifications. After that Dr. Hobbs and her staff will do a paper review, checking resumés, credentials, recommendations, etc., and this process will probably narrow the pool down to 6 - 8 candidates.
- On or about March 15, the superintendent and his staff will conduct initial "first round" interviews. The most successful candidates following these interviews (3 - 4) should all be fully eligible to assume the position and have all necessary "foundational skills."
- These final 3 - 4 candidates will then be interviewed by the HB principal committee, on or about April 9, and the person chosen by the committee will then have a final, third round interview with Dr. Murphy. If everything looks good, he will come to HB on a Thursday afternoon (4/23) and introduce the successful candidate to the school before introducing him or her to the Arlington community at the school board meeting that evening.

- Huck (9th) asked how much input students would have in the process outlined, and Dr. Murphy chose to turn the discussion over at that point to Dr. Hobbs.
- Dr. Betty Hobbs began by saying that she has worked on hiring administrators for HB in the past and has always enjoyed working with students, affirming that students certainly will have a role in the selection process. She said the second round interviews conducted at HB will have students, faculty, and non-instructional staff representation on the committee. She then gave the exact proposed make-up: herself, Cintia Johnson, (Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services: the “principals’ principal,”) 2 APS administrators (selected by Dr. Murphy or Dr. Hobbs), 2 HB teachers (selected by HB staff), 2 HB parents (selected by PAC), 2 students (selected by TM), and one APS supervisor (selected by Connie Skelton - Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and Dr. Hobbs). She said that everyone serving on that committee had to understand that confidentiality was of utmost importance. No information could be shared, including the names of the candidates.
- Helena (11th) asked if there could be more students on the committee, saying that two was not really representative of how we work.
- Dr. Hobbs answered that she will bring that idea back to the superintendent’s office and they will consider it.
- Eliza (11th) asked if students could attend the PAC meeting when Dr. Murphy speaks and wondered how students could better get their feelings heard.
- Dr. Hobbs assured her that students’ views are very important and said that a survey will be posted soon via a link on the HB website. It will ask about HB’s greatest strengths and challenges and what people consider the most important qualities in a principal. She said that if people write things like, “We want a principal just like Frank,” they will take that into consideration.
- Frank then answered Eliza’s question, and said that yes, students can certainly attend PAC meetings.
- Bennett (12th) said that he, too, thought there should be more students on the committee because they are the most qualified to know exactly what HB needs. He also thought students should be involved earlier in the process.
- Dr. Hobbs explained that the early screening processes needed to be done by the superintendent’s office because they entailed checking information given on the applications. She said that usually hiring committees have had equal representation among students, faculty and parents, but that she would certainly consider the idea of greater student representation.
- Bill P. asked if the same process had been used to hire Frank, and Dr. Hobbs said yes.
- Brooke (8th) asked if students can suggest questions to be included in the website survey.
- Dr. Hobbs answered that they will use the same questions that have been used in the past, but she said that they can always add questions suggested by committees at various stages of the process. She said they will work hard to get the flavor of what committee members want to know.
- Mark Dickson asked how much consideration would be given to the committee’s recommendation vis-à-vis the superintendent’s choice.
- Dr. Hobbs answered that the committee will not tell Dr. Murphy whom to choose, but they will give vital feedback on each applicant. Each committee member will evaluate the candidates’ strengths and weaknesses and present their tallies.
- Amanda (12th) asked if the hiring schedule will be posted anywhere, and Dr. Hobbs said it would be up on the website in English and Spanish.
- Someone asked if seniors could serve on the committee, and Dr. Hobbs said that the committee called for “students,” so seniors could most certainly be involved.
- Rocio (9th) asked if anyone would actually pay attention to information given in survey responses.
- Dr. Hobbs answered that survey responses will most certainly be read and considered. She said that she herself had recently read 960 community comments on the proposed school calendar for next year and had reviewed and summarized them for the superintendent and the school board.
- Rocio (9th) then asked if the candidates will get to see the responses. Dr. Hobbs answered that the information will be summarized and given to final candidates in a timely manner.
- Sophie (9th) asked if the proposed April 9 date for the committee meeting could be changed since the entire high school music department will be out of town.
- Dr. Hobbs said she would look into the possibility of changing the date.
- Nana (11th) said that spots on the committee will be in highly coveted and asked how they would be

assigned.

- Frank answered that the process will be similar to that used for other hiring committees but slightly more complex. They will start, as always, with a sign-up sheet, and then he, Casey and Graham would help in the whittling process. Nana asked about teachers, and Frank said they will decide amongst themselves.
- Paul said that he disagreed with the need to have equal student/staff/parent representation. He asked that administrators present look at the auditorium and see the ratio of students to faculty present - proof that students are most invested in the process and should have a greater role in the decision making.
- Dr. Hobbs repeated that they have heard the stated concerns and will consider them and get back to Frank.
- Eleanor said she was happy to know that the community's views will be considered via the survey process, but she thought it was important to remember that we are both a middle school and a high school and that there should be sufficient representation from each.
- Maya (9th) asked if it might not be possible to have one student representative from each grade. Dr. Hobbs said she would get back to Frank.
- John (6th) said he also thought it would be good to have one student from each grade.
- Chair said that they were at the end of the speakers' list, so the meeting was turned back to Dr. Murphy, who said that it had been made very clear to him and Dr. Hobbs that HB wanted more student representation throughout the hiring process. He said they will take all ideas raised into consideration but that it was very important to remember two things: 1) Everyone invested in the candidate selection should participate in the online survey because it is a very important part of the process, and 2) at the end of the day, what he is looking for is a candidate who will be as awesome as possible. He said it will be his and the committee's responsibility to extract the very best from each candidate. He or she will have to perform at their very best before the committee because the selected candidate will have to perform at their very best from then on as the leader of HB. He said that in his experience, the best always rises to the top. They are all looking for the very best person, and he is confident that they will find him or her. He asked how many present in the auditorium had been around 11 years ago when Frank was chosen. There were a few hands raised, and Dr. Murphy said that the process had worked well then, and it would work well again.
- Bill P said that he had seen an asterisk on the presented timeline and wondered what it said about internal transfer applicants.
- Dr. Murphy answered that it referred to the possibility of a principal currently serving an APS school requesting an administrative transfer. He said it happens occasionally at the elementary level, but that it is extremely unlikely to occur for this position and that no one has expressed any such interest.
- Frank added that the asterisk was there for all advertised positions and that it had no special significance for HB.
- Maya (9th) noted that Frank has maintained a strong relationship with Stratford School and its administration and asked if that would be relevant in the choice of a new principal.
- Dr. Murphy answered that they were aware of the special relationship and would keep it in mind during the selection process.
- Brooke (8th) asked whether another principal in the district would automatically get the job if he or she requested it, and Dr. Murphy said the chances of him winning the lottery were much greater than the chances of that happening. He said that such a request would result in an abbreviated interview process, but that again, it was extremely unlikely.
- Casey (8th) asked about potential problems in the selection process, and Dr. Murphy responded that unforeseen problems were always possible, but that this was a process that has been used many times successfully and that he foresees it being successful this time. He reiterated how important it was for the HB community to participate in the survey process and to choose good representatives for the committee.
- Miranda (8th) asked if the same process would be followed for teachers or administrators within HB or APS who wanted to apply, and Dr. Murphy answered that it would.
- Eleanor thanked Dr. Murphy and Dr. Hobbs for their presentation and made a motion to adjourn. Motion passed.

Chair: Margaret Gorman

Co-Chair: Erin Lammie

Secretary: Ellie Avery

