

**Hudson School District
Hudson School Board Meeting
Approved Minutes**

Present:

Dr. Darcy Orellana, Board Chairman
Mr. Gary Gasdia, Board Vice-Chair
Ms. Diane LaMothe
Mr. Ethan Beals
Ms. Kara Roy, Vice-Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Mr. Larry Russell, Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Kim Organek, Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Rachel Borge, Director of Special Services

A. Call to Order: Dr. Orellana called the meeting to order. Mr. Russell led the pledge of allegiance. Dr. Orellana said the purpose for meeting tonight is to interview perspective candidates for the School Board member vacancy. The Board has posted this information and gave them access to what the position entailed and asked that the candidates write a brief statement to the Board. Each interview should last around ten minutes and will contain the statement and questions from each Board member.

B. Board Member Interviews:

1. Michael Campbell: Mentioned that he is a stay-at-home dad and has a child in kindergarten and he always thought the most that can get done is on a local level and now that he is in school, he would like to be a part of shaping his future. Mr. Campbell said in high school he worked at a public access station in Laconia where he would record every school board meeting, so he has a lot of background and has done some volunteering. He mentioned that at the local level is where you can affect the change you want to see so that is why he would like to be a part of the School Board.

Mr. Beals asked what is one specific thing that this district can do better? Mr. Campbell said he has been following the renovations to the high school and said he was upset about the renovations not passing in the past years as he was a former substitute teacher.

Ms. LaMothe said there are a couple of ways to look at this opportunity to serve on the School Board for less than a year. She said it's either an opportunity to do a test run or you can look at it as an opportunity to serve and make a difference for six months. She then asked Mr. Campbell what his perspective is. Mr. Campbell said he sees it as a good way to feel it out and to see what the experience is like, being a part of it rather than just watching it through an outside perspective.

Mr. Gasdia thanked Mr. Campbell for coming and appreciates his interest. Mr. Gasdia asked Mr. Campbell to think back to previous experiences and tell him a time where he's been faced with a situation that required him to make a difficult decision that may have conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you make sure you maintain your duties of your job while remaining objective? Mr. Campbell said making the decision to send his son to full-time kindergarten. They had their fingers crossed for a hybrid

model, but it was not meant to be. Mr. Campbell mentioned that seeing the remote learning in preschool, they tried to have him start learning to read but they decided to send him to full-time.

Dr. Orellana asked if Mr. Campbell was able to make the meetings and time commitment. Mr. Campbell said he is a stay-at-home dad and has a lot of free time to focus on the position. She also thanked Mr. Campbell for making time and coming to this meeting.

2. Maureen Dionne: Started off saying she lived in Hudson for the last 7 years and saw a numerous amount of opportunities to get involved in the town and thinks the ultimate reason why she would like to join the board is the School District as a whole created an incredible strategic plan last year and she would like to participate in fulfilling the vision set forth in that and thinks that the goals are incredible and provides the students with a number of opportunities for success with in the classroom and beyond graduation. Ms. Dionne said that goals and objectives change due to pandemic and among other things, she still thinks that the strategic plan is important. Ms. Dionne said professionally she is the business systems manager at the New England Carpenters benefit funds office where they oversee the benefits for the union workers in the six New England states. Ms. Dionne personally oversees all business data & analysis daily. Ms. Dionne said with her background I think it would serve the Board well in terms of reviewing the strategic plan goals from a data perspective, among many other things.

Mr. Beals said Ms. Dionne said she talked about the strategic plan and asked for an example of where the strategic plan is lacking or some areas where the Board can pivot too. Ms. Dionne said she doesn't think it's lacking but for one example would be involvement with the community members. She said that the Board can be involved at all levels.

Ms. LaMothe asked Ms. Dionne, out of all your qualifications and skills sets, what would be your top skill that would benefit serving on the Board? Ms. Dionne said her business analysis and working with the key stakeholders every day. She said the key stakeholders have different goals for different departments and a key part of her role is working with them to resource allocate and working with them to reassess goals is her number one strength.

Mr. Gasdia thanked her for coming and asked the question of thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that she has been faced with a situation that required her to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Dionne said this happens sometimes and for one example when they need to make benefit plan changes. She said sometimes it will not be the most well-received benefit plan change. She gave an example of when they are making modifications to a pension fund.

Dr. Orellana asked if Ms. Dionne can make the time commitment to the meetings and Ms. Dionne said certainly, she will be able to. Dr. Orellana thanked Ms. Dionne for her time.

3. Jacqueline Duane: Ms. Duane said she has lived in Hudson for ten years now and married her husband and has two young children. She mentions that she has nothing to say but positive things about the Hudson School District. The reason Ms. Duane is hoping to be apart of the School Board is to keep the positive momentum going and she thinks that the school board and Hudson have been able to do wonderful things and she would like to see that continue and be a part of the Board. Ms. Duane said professionally she is a teacher in Salem, NH at a public Middle School. She mentions that with her

experience as a teacher she has a unique perspective into what schools are really like because she is living in it daily.

Mr. Beals said with working in Salem and having kids in Hudson Ms. Duane has two different perspectives. He then went on to ask what are some things you have seen in Salem that the Hudson students could benefit from? Ms. Duane answered and said Salem plans and Hudson plans are very identical. She mentioned that Salem did a really great job with bringing in a lot of Salem pride and getting the community excited about renovating the schools; they made it a PR campaign and really got the town behind them. She mentioned that getting the community excited about certain events happening in the town is very important.

Ms. LaMothe asked Ms. Duane what her perspective on this temporary job is. Ms. Duane said running for school board is always something she has inspired to do, and she thinks that this would be the best time to do it.

Mr. Gasdia thanked Ms. Duane for coming out and appreciates her interest. Mr. Gasdia repeated his question of thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that she has been faced with a situation that required her to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Duane mentioned her undergraduate degree was in Biology and she thought she would be going into the science field but last minute she pivoted and decided to teach instead. She said throughout her schooling it was all about learning science by doing science and Salem had highlighted a bunch of things that really went against that theory because it was reading based and not really hands-on. Ms. Duane mentioned that it went against her personal beliefs in data on what is the best way to teach kids science. She said she worked with their instructional coaches and colleagues to incorporate some hands-on approaches.

Dr. Orellana asked in Ms. Duane if she can make the time commitment to the meetings and she said yes, she is able to and thanked Ms. Duane for her time.

4. Fabiana Fickett: Ms. Fickett said that she has been involved in education for 24 years in various positions. She fell in love early with working in the school setting and she has been a strong advocate for enhancing programming for students to help them communicate to better their educational experiences and more recently she became a board certified behavior analysis where she works with students with behavioral challenges. The team she is a part of is a leadership team and they do a lot of policy creations, as well as create behavior and educational programming for the students and following all regulations and policies set forth. Ms. Fickett said when the opportunity approached for this Board member position, she wanted to see what the commitment would be because it's something that she often looked at as something that she could do long-term. She also said she has been often on the other side of the table presenting multiple times. Ms. Fickett mentioned with her background in schools and creating policies and procedures, she could very well see herself as being a part of what the School Board is made to do.

Mr. Beals asked if Ms. Fickett has any children in the district or will be coming through the district. Ms. Fickett said she has one currently in the district and one that will be. Mr. Beals asked Ms. Fickett what is something that the district can do better currently. Ms. Fickett said she often talks freely about how great the district is with how little financial resources are available. Ms. Fickett said one of the things that she often hears from friends is the communication piece. She mentions that she understands the ins and outs of education because she's been in it for 24 years, but some parents don't understand why some decisions are made or how they are made. Ms. Fickett said as much as the Hudson School District tries to be transparent, sometimes there are small things that are not communicated as much as they could be.

Ms. LaMothe mentioned how she loved how Ms. Fickett phrased "even our littlest residents deserve our best possible school system for them to thrive and love learning". Ms. LaMothe said aside from communication with parents, what would you say is the top priority of the school to achieve that for our little residents. Ms. Fickett said providing an educational environment that is supportive. She mentioned that early on they need to feel empowered and successful and sometimes you can create those small opportunities with a staff person or building up success for them to be happy to go to school each day. She said when you build up these kids early on it builds them up for a successful career.

Mr. Gasdia thanked Ms. Fickett for coming and repeated his question of thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that she has been faced with a situation that required her to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Fickett said in her role of director of behavioral services there are often times she runs into parents who may not be happy with services. It comes down to what is safe and what is necessary for a student to be successful. Ms. Fickett said as far as her own personal beliefs, it's not about what she believes it's what's better for the student's education and to look at the bigger picture.

Dr. Orellana asked Ms. Fickett if she can make the time commitment. Ms. Fickett assured that she can. The School Board thanked Ms. Fickett for her time.

5. Joyce Goodale: mentioned she is originally from New York and joined the military where she spent 10 years in the air force. After completing her military experience, she moved up to New Hampshire where she worked for the VA where she did various jobs there such as administrative, accounting. After that she went into working in education and quality management and then to contracts. Ms. Goodale is currently working at BAE systems. Ms. Goodale has been in the community for about 23 years and has seen multiple job opportunities to become a Board Member but had two younger children and could not make the time commitment, so she did not apply. However, now that her children are older, she now has the time and could make the commitment to becoming a board member. This opportunity stood out because it was a temporary position to see if she would like to be a part of the Board.

Mr. Beals thanked Ms. Goodale for her service and mentioned that it is pretty clear that she has had some leadership roles throughout her career and would like to know the challenges that could parallel with being in careers with other professional soldiers and being at the top of the district with over 1000 students. Ms. Goodale said she knows with the students they have a group of people collaborating with each other, this is how the military works as well, information goes to the top then to the bottom. She mentions the process is a little bit different but relatively the same.

Ms. LaMothe mentioned that Ms. Goodale wants to help with decisions that impact our school's educational system. Ms. LaMothe then asked what she sees would be the primary focus of the school board. Ms. Goodale mentions that she feels it should be always moving forward because things are always changing. She mentions that Hudson has done an awesome job compared to other remote districts and that Hudson has been on top throughout this whole process. Ms. Goodale said that she could help come up with new ideas to bring to the Board.

Mr. Gasdia asked Ms. Goodale, thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that she has been faced with a situation that required her to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Goodale brought up an experience that happened when she was working at the VA and how they had a bunch of rules and regulations. Ms. Goodale said being a veteran she always wanted to go above and beyond and help her fellow veterans. She had to learn to be careful on what she did or said while working in the field to follow the regulations.

Dr. Orellana then asked if she could make the commitment to the Board. Ms. Goodale assured that she was able too. Dr. Orellana and the Board thanked her for coming.

6. Eric Horton: Mr. Horton said he has been a resident in Hudson for 13 years and has two kids in the district. Mr. Horton said he can bring some experience to the Board to bridge the interim position that exists, mostly because he spent years as a Business Administrator for a local district. He mentioned that he is familiar with the business side of the district, the budgeting, the process to go, school operations, and many other aspects that occur throughout the district. Mr. Horton said he is supportive of everything that the district is doing. Mr. Horton is also part of the recreation committee for over ten years. He mentioned this opportunity has come up and this is something that fits his schedule and that he could provide assistance to the Board with his background and experiences.

Mr. Beals mentioned that Mr. Horton had military and VA experiences and asked how he could guide the educational side of his military experiences in the board member position. Mr. Horton said education does not happen without teachers and teachers do not happen without budgeting and understanding what goes into it all. He said it's very important to meet with different departments and really get a knowledge of what is happening and how to better allocate the funds where they are needed.

Ms. LaMothe asked where Mr. Horton sees the primary focus would be in Hudson in terms of implementing change. Mr. Horton said he always saw himself to be collaborative in nature and would bring people along with him who are trying to implement change. Mr. Horton mentions that there is always resistance. He also said from a perspective of a parent in town he thinks that there has been a lot of change recently but he is more concerned about the pace and rigor of homeschooling than he is about his job right now and mentions that's what keeps him up at night and wonders if his child is falling behind right now and if students are being challenged right now. He mentions that's what everyone in the school district is dealing with right now and that he would like to be able to facilitate this conversation and make sure that they are doing the right this but also communicating with the community that we are doing what we can to get this done.

Mr. Gasdia thanked Mr. Horton for his interest and asked thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that he has been faced with a situation that required him to make a difficult decision that

conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Mr. Horton said when he first started as a business administrator, there were a lot of challenges about how the budget committees and the district were exchanging information. In certain cases, the budget committee wanted more information than what he was supposed to tell but he had to tell them he could not provide that information even though he wanted to be on their good side.

Dr. Orellana then asked if Mr. Horton can make the commitment to the Board. Mr. Horton assured that he was able too. Dr. Orellana and the Board thanked him for coming.

7. Brian McClelland: He thanked the Board for having him. He then went on to say his family moved here in 2011 and he has three children, one a senior at Alvirne High School. Mr. McClelland said he always wanted to serve in public service, but life happens, and we take different paths, has traveled around the country. Mr. McClelland said during his time he has been exposed to be a part of and lead union negotiations. He also has been responsible for the creation and adherence to significant budgets and has had the opportunity in leading a diverse amount of people both nationally and internationally. He mentions that with over 1000 students in the district, he would love to help in any way he can with his management and leadership skills he has gained over the years.

Mr. Beals mentioned that his resume was very impressive and asked how some of his experiences in leadership position, how does that translate to a school district and students in a school district. Mr. McClelland said he thinks anytime you're put in a position with leadership, you're dealing with a diverse group of people and mentioned COVID is a very challenging time and he has a lot of opinions and there are a lot of questions. Mr. McClelland said he has learned on the fly sometimes to handle these types of situations. He mentions that he has been fortunate to be able to convey the message respectfully and get it across to some people who may have not be able to agree with everything.

Ms. LaMothe asked what Mr. McClelland perspective on this temporary Board position. Mr. McClelland reiterated that he always wanted to work in public service. He saw this as an opportunity he could get into this field of work where he would serve the community he is in.

Mr. Gasdia thanked Mr. McClelland for his interest and asked thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that he has been faced with a situation that required him to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Mr. McClelland brought up a company he was working for. They were struggling financially, and they were required to eliminate some positions. One individual who was let go was a mentor and a friend of his who was battling cancer. He had hoped that they could wait so that would not be the last thing he did professionally, but he did what needed to be done and he did it personally and respected the decision.

Dr. Orellana then asked if Mr. McClelland can make the commitment to the Board. Mr. McClelland assured that he was able to. Dr. Orellana and the Board thanked him for coming.

8. Deanne Richardson: Ms. Richardson has lived in Hudson for over 30 years and has four children two of which are currently still in the district and two who have gone through the district and graduated college. She said her kids have given her exposure with the School District due to IEPs, extra-curricular,

the way we are using technology. However, the experience she brings to this role would be her customer service role due to we have people who we are working for, you want to listen to them, you want to make the changes that are needed and you want to create a future that is bright for them. Another experience she has is she was also a director of financial operations where she handled financial reporting, managing budgets, reconciliation. Ms. Richardson said her current role is in legal review where she manages a team that looks at legal documents. She mentions when she looked at the professional background, she said her jobs are pretty transferable to this Board member role. She said this role was something she always wanted to do, she volunteered in the schools, was PTO secretary, participated in interview teams, and said that this is the right time for her where she can give it a chance.

Mr. Beals mentioned how she has seen the district over a large amount of years through her children's schooling. He then asked if she could reflect on how the district changed over the years and if it is a positive or negative change and if there is anything that could be changed. Ms. Richardson said she remembers where the line was going to be drawn for Nottingham vs Hills Garrison. She mentions that she has seen a lot of changes which were all positive changes that were needed. Ms. Richardson said where the district can improve would be by telling the story of the why and why are things happening the way they are, she mentions communication and listening to everyone is very important.

Ms. LaMothe asked what Ms. Richardson what she thinks the primary focus of the schools should be at this time. Ms. Richardson said right now it's going through COVID and trying to get to what our norm is but when she thinks about before COVID happened and she would like to see the data showing who is going to college vs who is not and if they need to change the diversity of how students are learning and make sure we are meeting everyone's needs.

Mr. Gasdia asked Ms. Richardson, thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that she has been faced with a situation that required her to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Richardson said it would cause her to lose sleep, she said you know the business reason why but you still lose sleep before and after you make the decision. She said her beliefs have never been challenged but certainly emotions have been high. She mentioned that handling it with respect and making sure you had the relationship prior and that it was a business decision, nothing against the person.

Dr. Orellana then asked if Ms. Richardson can make the commitment to the Board. Ms. Ricardson assured that she was able to. Dr. Orellana and the Board thanked her for coming.

9. Gretchen Whiting: Ms. Whiting has lived in Hudson for 22 years and has two Alvirne graduates and one who is in the district currently. Ms. Whiting's professional experience is at John Hancock where she manages a team that supports platforms and applications. In Ms. Whiting's personal experience, she was asked to lead Alvirnes swim and dive team as president which she did for three years. They were successful for writing their bylaws and conflict of interest statements. She always raised funds for the team as well. Once her daughter graduated High School, she resigned from that position and shortly after she was asked to be a president of a competitive dance team. Ms. Whiting said between all her positions she has had throughout other boards she has been on; she feels as her technology, budgeting, governance, and management could help out the School Board.

Mr. Beals said she saw the Board through more of a unique lens than other candidates. He asked how you can reflect on past experiences and how is it beneficial for a candidate for this upcoming term. Ms. Richardson said not having sat on the Board through COVID, she said being able to try and hear what everyone is saying vs what people are seeing, she would like to try to get people to understand there are always two sides while not being judgmental. She mentions this is one thing that she learned herself and tries to relate to the community as well.

Ms. LaMothe said one thing that stands out on Ms. Whiting's write-up is that she collaborated with the town to bring the two boards closer and asked her to elaborate more on that. Ms. Whiting said one of the things that they did was they worked with the selectmen where both sides attended each meeting. She said she was fortunate enough to attend two of their meetings. She feels that the information that crossed over between the two boards did allow opportunities to arise and provided us with an example.

Mr. Gasdia asked thinking back to various experiences, tell them a time that he has been faced with a situation that required him to make a difficult decision that conflicted with your own personal feelings or beliefs and how do you ensure you fulfilled your duties of your job while remaining objective. Ms. Whiting said being on the technology side of industry for a financial company, one of the things that the technology individuals are trying to do is make things faster and further. Ms. Whiting said by managing a team that supplies the configuration there are certain standards she holds it too. One thing that was asked of her was to start developing on a tool that her team supports with zero experience on it. She said it was something that she did not want to do but she had to embrace the change to be able to allow them to do that.

Dr. Orellana then asked if Ms. Whiting can make the commitment to the Board. Ms. Whiting assured that she was able to. Dr. Orellana and the Board thanked her for coming.

C. Voting:

Mr. Gasdia started this off by thanking everyone for coming and mentioned that the Board had a lot of fantastic candidates here and he hopes that come March that they have a full ticket. Mr. Gasdia said they are in a very interesting situation right now with the pandemic and the Board needs to look at someone to bring on where we don't need to do much onboarding as they are hitting budget season right away, along with everything else.

Mr. Gasdia made a motion to appoint Ms. Whiting to the vacancy, second by Ms. LaMothe. Mr. Gasdia, aye, Dr. Orellana, aye, Ms. LaMothe, nay, Mr. Beals, nay. Motion is not passed 2-2.

Mr. Beals' opinion is it does give her an advantage but the March election was a decision made by the town and I think it's a bad precedent where six months later the School Board goes and places that same person who lost in the last election. Mr. Beals said one of the points he would like to see in a candidate for the board would be to have a member who has a child in the elementary school as well as they are lacking that. Ms. LaMothe said it's amazing that they have nine candidates and mentions that it is a very difficult decision. Ms. LaMothe perspective is that this is a good trial run for people who may then feel more comfortable jumping in and running for a longer term or maybe there are some cases where people can only do six months but what they can provide in those six months is tremendous. Ms. LaMothe mentioned that other people stood out to her, that people might have come forward due to this unique opportunity and she would like to give someone else a chance at this seat. Dr. Orellana mentioned that they have so much work

to be done and whoever they choose that person must be ready to get up-to-speed rather quickly. Mr. Gasdia said we need to make the decision where we can hit the ground running the best and he does believe there are nine candidates that would make a great placement on the board. However, there is a significant amount of onboarding that takes place and right now they do not have that time to do all that training.

Ms. LaMothe made a motion to nominate Fabiana Fickett for the temporary position, second by Mr. Beals. Mr. Gasdia, aye, Dr. Orellana, aye, Mr. Beals, aye, Ms. LaMothe, aye. Motion is passed 4-0.

Ms. LaMothe said she knows that Fabiana has learned a lot of what goes on in Hudson and the school districts. Her focus on the littlest residents gives a good broad view of the younger levels as well which is what the Board needs. Ms. LaMothe mentions she is also very familiar with educational programming, policies, procedures, and regulations from governing bodies. Mr. Gasdia reiterated that he does not have a bad thing to say about anyone of the candidates and everyone did a fantastic job and he echoed what Ms. LaMothe said.

Dr. Orellana congratulated Ms. Fickett and mentioned she will have to get sworn into the Board member position at the Town Hall before next meeting, which is Monday, September 28th. Dr. Orellana mentioned to the rest of the candidates to run and to stay engaged for next election. The Board thanks all the candidates who came out tonight.

D. Mr. Gasdia made a motion to enter non-public session according to RSA 91-A:3 II(c) at 8:00 pm, second by Ms. LaMothe. Mr. Gasdia, aye, Mr. Beals, aye, Ms. LaMothe, aye, Dr. Orellana, aye. Motion passes 4-0.

The School Board discussed the resignation of a SAU employee.

Ms. LaMothe made a motion to exit non-public and adjourn the meeting at 8:57 pm, second by Mr. Gasdia. Motion passes 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Gage (public)
Diana LaMothe (non-public)