

New Paltz Central School District – Racial Equity Initiative Advisory Committee: July 24, 2018

Start: 6:03 PM

End: 8:01 PM

Committee Members Present:

William Ball, Tricia Bowen, Miranda Cangieter, Arielle Chiger, Pilar Duvivier, Deborah Fialkow, Richard Heyl de Ortiz, Kristen Masson-Diedhiou, Carlos Rodriguez Murcia, Cathy Sanchez, Sophia Skiles, Paris White

Remarks

In the beginning of the meeting, Superintendent Maria Rice spoke to the committee. She thanked us for producing questions for the AP Hiring Committee, choosing parents and expressed satisfaction with the MS and HS climate survey. She asked if we would also pick two Duzine parents for a Principal hiring committee. Supt. Rice also asked the committee to propose possible interview questions and a scenario to which the interviewees could respond. She asked that the committee keep in mind that these questions/scenario be created with a primary school environment in mind. The committee then engaged in impromptu discussion with Ms. Rice about allowing parents who do not currently have students in the school and/or committee members serving on hiring committees in addition to parents. Her response was that current parents would be more invested. A committee member suggested paper/mail-based communications to alert members of the community who are not online about participating on a search.

Logistics

The committee discussed the importance of starting and ending meetings on time and established a regulation of public comment. We voted and unanimously agreed that 10 minutes at the end of every meeting would be set aside for public commentary, and that each person would have a maximum of 2 minutes to share their comments.

Scheduling of Committee Meetings during the academic year

The committee is expected to report out at the 1st BOE meeting every month. We agreed to meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month.

Approval of Minutes: Committee members, did we approve the minutes from the last meeting? [we did not - SS]

Hiring Protocols

The committee discussed the recent speedy hire of the Middle School principal in a process that bypassed regularly scheduled BOE meetings for emergency "public" meetings to hire/promote from within without a search. This prevented any community engagement in the process.

Committee reviewed the recruitment protocols that were provided by Supt. Rice. It was pointed out that district policy is to review these protocols annually

In reviewing the hiring protocols, the committee wondered what criteria were/are used to create the initial pool of applicants. An administrator is tasked with narrowing down many applications through OLAS. The committee discussed ways to make sure that applicants are being chosen for consideration

with racial equity in mind- not just in hiring teachers of color but hiring teachers and administrators with an awareness of racial equity issues.

A cover letter was shared by the current committee Chair of a person who applied for a teaching position in the district. The committee discussed the letter and questions arose regarding the administration's screening process. There was concern that an applicant who had strong credentials as mentioned in her letter (we did not see her resume) and a distinct interest in racial equity had not received a response according to the Chair.

One committee member familiar with OLAS gave context around the digital system and posited that perhaps it was because her letter was not addressed specifically to the district. It was also pointed out that perhaps the district is passing over new teachers in favor of teachers with more experience. This could limit the diversity of candidates. Questions were raised about what criteria are used to filter out candidates.

Members of the AP Hiring Committee spoke about their experience. These were two parents who were selected by the REIAC to interview the AP candidates for the Middle School.

[Questions about confidentiality of the hiring process were raised. Committee members were concerned that legal boundaries and District practices could be better aligned and/or communicated to ensure maximum transparency within legal boundaries. The parents described feeling that the choice had already been made and that they felt they were steered in the direction of one candidate. The two parents described a process in which the teachers met first and then the parents were brought in afterward. These two parents did not feel empowered or valued by the process.

Next BOE Meeting

The committee agreed that it was crucial to discuss the interview process and current recruitment process with the Board at the next BOE meeting.

Public Comment

A community member spoke about the climate survey and encouraged the district to make sure the questions were understood by the students taking the survey.

A community member spoke about her participation in the interview committee for the Lenape Principal last year. She described this as a thoughtful, inclusive process in which the community members felt heard and considered. She pointed out that when the different interview panels had different opinions on who to hire, a second committee meeting was put together with members of all the panels attending. According to this community member, the process led to a decision that all felt good about.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen Masson-Diedhiou and Paris White