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CABE

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NEWS



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NEW HAVEN REGISTER

<https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/New-Haven-BOE-in-no-rush-to-launch-search-for-new-15046743.php>

New Haven BOE in no rush to launch search for new superintendent

By Brian Zahn Updated 5:03 pm EST, Tuesday, February 11, 2020



IMAGE 1 OF 4

New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker and Interim Superintendent of Schools Iline Tracey on Feb. 10, 2020.

NEW HAVEN — After the Board of Education bought out former Superintendent of Schools Carol Birks' contract for \$175,000 in October, the board's then-President Darnell Goldson said he would wait for the results of the November mayoral election before pursuing a search for a new superintendent.

Now, with new leadership on the school board and a new mayor, the search has yet to be addressed.

"We haven't discussed it," said Yesenia Rivera, who was elected president of the

school board last month. "We would have to discuss it at a board meeting and see what the rest think."

Rivera said she's pleased with Interim Superintendent of Schools Iline Tracey's leadership over the last four months.

"I think she's doing a great job," she said. "It doesn't mean a search shouldn't be done, though."

Mayor Justin Elicker said that, with Tracey, there's "a period of stability and calm" and he thinks it's "appropriate to work with her and not move into a new search."

The search process that culminated in hiring Birks was marked by chaos, with former Mayor Toni Harp and Goldson boycotting meetings to deny the board a quorum, community members arguing that the process lacked transparency at multiple meetings and a challenge to a duel between board members on the field beside James Hillhouse High School.


"I would like to see a discussion around what we plan on doing" about a search, Goldson said Monday. He said initiating a search would be "fair" to Tracey as she seeks permanency.

Tracey said she does not feel her interim title has stripped her of any agency or latitude to make decisions.

Fran Rabinowitz, executive director of the **Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents**, was an interim superintendent in Bridgeport for three years.

"I wouldn't say it's typical, but I would say that I believe every district works in their best interest in what is going to work for them right now," she said. "They had a great deal of transition, and it seems as though Iline Tracey is bringing stability to the school district right now. She's been there for a long time, she's very competent and knows the school district."

Before Birks was hired, then-Interim Superintendent of Schools Reginald Mayo served for most of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. Mayo initially was hired for a maximum of 174 days, but received a contract extension once it became clear the district would not hire a superintendent before his initial contract expired.

 "It's not that unusual actually for a district, particularly a district that sees the need for some stability in their leadership, to use an interim," said Patrice McCarthy, deputy director for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.

"It gives the district a period of stability and it gives both the board and the (interim) superintendent an opportunity to see if this will be a successful fit on a permanent basis," McCarthy said.

McCarthy said school boards should be trusted to make the hiring decisions that are best for them.

"A national search is a lengthy and complex process, so that's always a consideration that weighs on a board," she said.

Bridgeport's school board raised eyebrows across the state earlier this year when its acting superintendent entered a closed-door 90-minute performance evaluation and left with a three-year contract and a raise — something the superintendent himself said he was not expecting to receive.

During New Haven's last search process, Mayo's charge was to keep the district afloat, without making organizational changes. As interim leader of the district, Tracey has made a number of executive hires and changes in principal positions since October. She said she had no further comment on a potential search for a permanent superintendent, saying it's in the school board's hands.

In the search that led to Birks's hire, the district paid nearly \$40,000 to a search firm. Board members have discussed that having Tracey, a longtime administrator already on the district's payroll, is a benefit financially as her assistant superintendent role is held vacant while she carries out the duties of superintendent. Birks, who left the district at the end of October, received about eight months of pay in her buyout agreement. The deal was similar to the one cut for former superintendent Garth Harries when he left the district in late 2016, about one year before Birks was hired by the board and about three before she left the district herself.

E-mail's Entanglements When Doing Board Business

"It is too easy to use e-mail to substitute for other, MORE APPROPRIATE WAYS of doing board business."

A SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR often performs board business at her own office, using her work computer and e-mail address. Her computer is subpoenaed for evidence as part of a lawsuit. Her employer suspends her without pay until the computer is returned.

In another school district, some community members believe the board may be circumventing public meeting laws in their dealing with a contentious issue by discussing the matter through e-mail. The community members demand e-mail messages related to the board's operations under the state's Sunshine Laws.

Elsewhere, a parent embroiled in a special education case has e-mailed several board members about her child's problems. Questions subsequently arise over how board members got involved and again records, including e-mails, are demanded during an investigation.

Public Scrutiny

Electronic communication has simplified people's lives and enabled greater efficiency. But as the three real scenarios illustrate, it's also opened up new challenges directly affecting board of education members and school districts. It is too easy to use e-mail to substitute for other, more appropriate ways of doing board business.

As part of our governance structure, school board members are subject to laws requiring the work of the public be done under public scrutiny. Board members routinely use e-mail for everything they do, including their board business.

For various reasons, school districts provide members of their governing boards with e-mail accounts to conduct official business. It is up to superintendents to provide access to the district e-mail accounts and encourage their appropriate use.

Because board members are part of legal processes (directly or indirectly), they may have a conflict of interest when approached by parents or staff members with concerns or requests for assistance. A board member might make a comment that is improper or leads to misinterpretation by the recipient of the e-mail,

potentially triggering a legal dispute. When the correspondence takes place through e-mail, there is a permanent record of the exchange. By law, copies of official correspondence must be retained and may be requested as evidence.

If a board member communicated through his or her personal e-mail account, that board member would be expected to make those e-mails available.

Upgraded Security

Another serious consequence of board members using their personal e-mail accounts is that they cannot take advantage of the school district's cybersecurity system.

Because school board members are considered public officials, they may be more likely to be the target of a malicious cyberattack. The commercial, over-the-counter security solutions that an individual might buy are not perfect. Normally, school district networks are more secure so using the district server will yield more protection.

Finally, district leadership should make sure board members receive and review the district's acceptable use (or responsible use) policy when first assigned an e-mail account and granted access to district resources. These ground rules cover what board business is permissible when using the e-mail account and what is not. Board members must understand the consequences of using personal accounts to perform board business (as well as doing personal business on a district-supplied account).

Superintendents would be wise to review board bylaws pertaining to communications, as well. Board members should be subject to the same rules of behavior as anyone else when they are working with a district-provided e-mail account. The same consequences should be in play if a board member violates the rules as any other member of the school community.

A good starting point is to discuss this issue with the school district's technology coordinator or technology support team before allocating or reallocating e-mail accounts to the board. Training or retraining on proper use of the system ought to follow.



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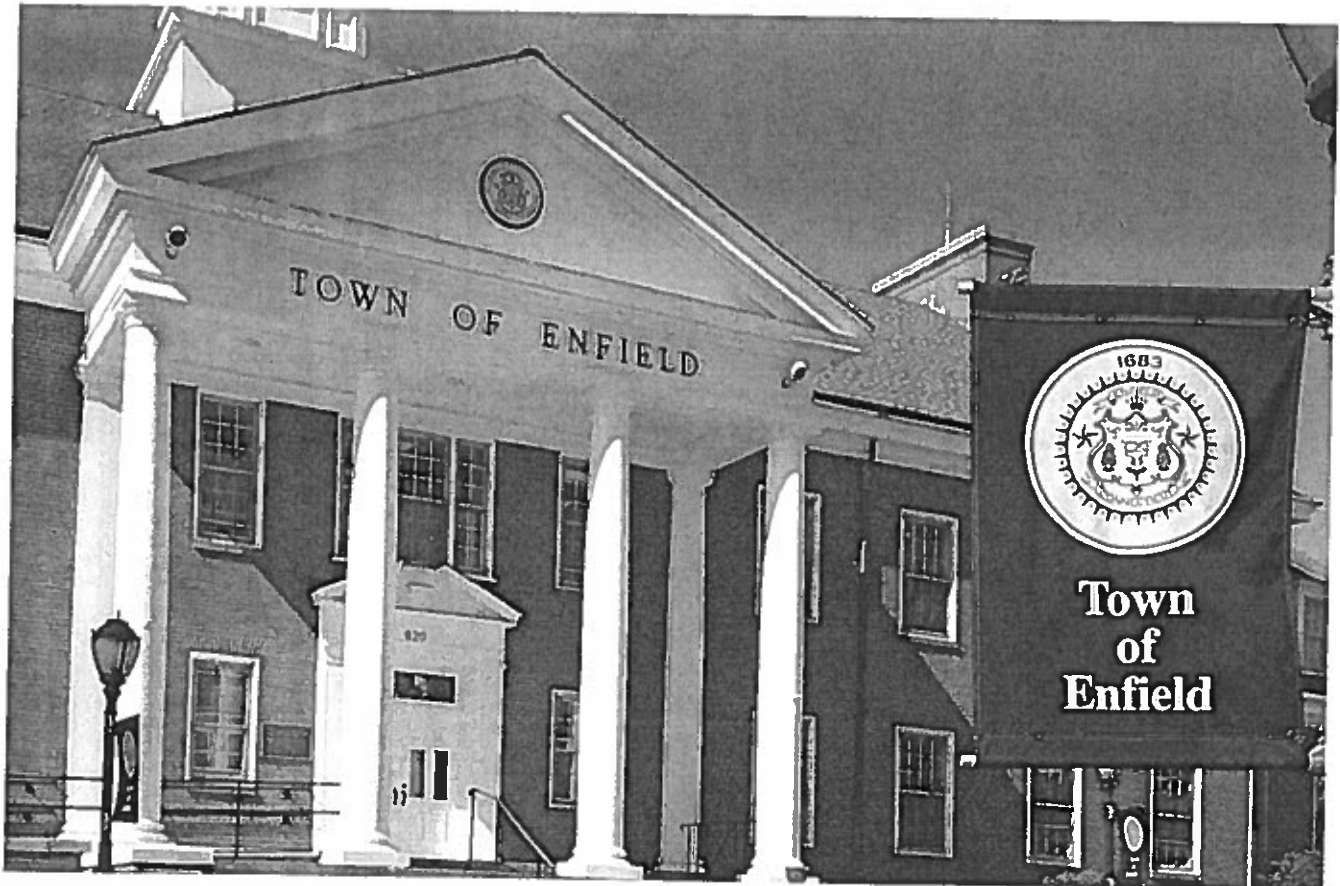


CABE in the News

https://www.journalinquirer.com/towns/enfield/enfield-school-board-considers-spurring-diversity-discussion/article_480595d2-525c-11ea-875c-37b8ade2bc90.html

Enfield school board considers spurring diversity discussion

By Erika M. Purdy
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Feb 18, 2020



MORE INFORMATION



ENFIELD – The Board of Education is looking into starting a communitywide program to promote equity and diversity and is considering using a program recently developed by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.



Ex-school board member files suit: Says she was discriminated against because of her disabilities

EXCLUSIVE: Inaction on racist posts? Mom may transfer daughter; Enfield schools chief says matter was addressed

Event gets students thinking about making things better

Enfield's teacher of the year works to empower students

During the board meeting last week, School Superintendent Christopher Drezek proposed that the board sponsor the program, using a CABE tool kit.

The board gave Drezek the go-ahead to look into the specifics of the program. But the board has yet to decide whether to authorize the initiative.

Drezek's proposal came partly in response to concerns about diversity and inclusion in the school system raised by members of the public at the board's Jan. 28 meeting. During that meeting, speakers expressed concern about how students of color are treated in the school system.

"We owe it to our kids to have an open and honest dialogue about creating a better experience for all of our children and families," Drezek said at last week's meeting.

Although each local school has initiatives on equity and diversity, the superintendent said, the school board doesn't yet sponsor such a program.

CABE helps local boards and provides professional training to board members. Drezek said the tool kit the organization

has developed is a set of recommendations on how to create a communitywide discussion on equity and diversity.

In the initiative, a committee consisting of residents, students, school staff members, and board members would plan a community conversation. A trained moderator would run the conversation, Drezek said. Although the school board would sponsor the event, responsibility for planning would be up to the committee.

Drezek said Friday that Enfield could be the first town to put the program into action.

If possible, he plans to post parts of the "tool kit" on the school board's website. But he is discussing copyright issues with the association's director before doing so.