Chair Kwiecinski planned to read this at the April 4, 2023 School Committee. The rescheduled meeting is now Monday, April 10, 2023 at 6:00 pm, fully remote. The Chair has no further comment until the meeting.

The Chair's statement:

"I would like to make a few comments before we get started this evening. The candidate for superintendent chose to go to the media to speak publicly about details from an executive session of this committee. This committee would not have shared details from the executive session, but because the candidate chose to, it is important that this committee provide some context. Please note that I will not be taking questions about this matter later. I will only address details the candidate shared publicly.

It is true that I was insulted by the familiarity with which the candidate addressed me and the committee's executive assistant in correspondence that was part of a salary negotiation. While I speak informally most of the time, if I am addressing a public official—especially in written communication, and even more so if engaged in salary negotiations—I would always use formal titles.

That email containing the candidate's counter proposal that addressed the Chair and Executive Assistant as "Ladies" was shared with the Committee. Most members believed that it was extremely unprofessional to address the Chair with a familiarity that he had not earned and believed that it was both inappropriate and unprofessional—that negotiating with people who would become your supervisors is a time to be more professional, not less. And the salutation "Ladies" raised concerns among most that the candidate might make Administrators and teachers feel uncomfortable if used in the future instead of calling them by their names or titles.

But the salutation in the correspondence was not the only concern that we had.

The candidate also wanted 30 days of vacation time and 40 sick days, instead of the 26 days of vacation and 18 sick days that the Committee believed was generous. Leave totaling 70 days—potentially 14 weeks of paid time off in his first year as superintendent-- was unacceptable for a first-year superintendent.

Additionally, the applicant made demands related to salary that the committee felt were not reasonable. Those demands, which the applicant made public, were for salary increases guaranteed in a contract that were not contingent on performance reviews or evaluations. This from a candidate who has never been a permanent superintendent, and thus has never had a performance evaluation for the position.

Finally, we had expressly told all finalists that we would be reaching out to them at some point that evening, but when we tried to reach the applicant, we were unable to. We tried every means to reach the applicant, eventually requesting a wellness check after more than an hour because some had genuine concern for his wellbeing. The committee could neither adjourn, nor reach the applicant.

This committee considers the position of Superintendent to be one of the most important positions in the city, and as such an incumbent would be expected to be available as needed 24-7, with reasonable allowances for personal matters and other obligations. Having expressly told him that we would need to speak with him, we were troubled by his lack of response and by his explanation.

The general feeling was that there were too many concerns before we had even begun negotiating the rest of the contract and alarm bells were going off. Each item that I've mentioned, by itself, would be redeemable, but taken together it was becoming clear to most members that we would not be able to come to terms or work together effectively with the applicant.

With gratitude,

Mayor Nicole LaChapelle

City of Easthampton Massachusetts