

**BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2010**

Members of the Board Human Resources Committee met on Monday, February 8, 2010, in the Dining Room, at the Education Center. Present were the following school board members: William Burkhardt, Michele Cann, Judith Dexter, Michael Faccinetto, Irene Follweiler, Loretta Leeson, and Eugene McKeon. Also in attendance were Dr. Charles Scott and Dr. William Vantine from Pennsylvania People Solutions, Inc., Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Thomas K. Washington, and Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Thomas E. Persing.

The meeting of the Board Human Resources Committee was called to order by Mrs. Irene Follweiler at 6:01 p.m.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – None

**SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE WITH CONSULTANTS** – Mrs. Follweiler invited Dr. Scott and Dr. Vantine to join Mr. Washington at the center table. She invited them tonight so they could give the board an update and status as to where they are at this point in the superintendent search and any other items they wish to share and discuss with the board.

Dr. Vantine had a quick brief report for the board this evening and some things that needed to be addressed as far as action items for the board to consider. He began where they are in the process at this point in time. He referred to the summary report that he brought to the board. He indicated it is the Superintendent Search Status Report dated February 3, which will be updated to this evening's date. The report had what they have done as far as advertisements are concern and publications in order to get the word out that there is a superintendent opening. They will then talk about some items that need to be addressed.

At this point in time, the position has been posted just about throughout Pennsylvania and across the country. It has been posted in the Education News for PSBA at the state level. It has been posted in the American Association of School Administrators, which is really the national superintendents group. There were two hard copy issues one in January and the other one will be in February in addition to the issues of Education Week as well. New Jersey and New York Associations have also placed it on their web sites. It was also sent to 50 key university placement offices. In addition to that 650 brochures have been mailed to every Intermediate Unit in the Commonwealth for distribution to Pennsylvania school administrators in each IU service area. Brochures were also sent to key school administration organizations in Pennsylvania, urban educational administration program personnel at Harvard and Lehigh University as well as to the University Council for Educational Administration. He spoke to the director of the Harvard program, and he was given names and leads on interested people that they will try to talk to. The position has also been advertised on PennLink across the state. The consultants have contacted people they know and have requested people to apply who they believe have the skills needed to do a good job. The position will be posted until March 9.

Dr. Vantine stated that as of today, they have had 20 requests for applications, which is very good at this point in time. It is early yet, and their history usually shows that they get an onslaught in the last couple of weeks. He also indicated they have received a good response to the posting at this point and time which makes him feel real good about it. In addition, they will be posting additional ads during the month of February with some of the agencies he just mentioned.

Dr. Vantine also informed the board that there would be postings of additional ads during the month of February with some of the agencies he just mentioned which is probably the most important part of this job search and the other most important one is the AASA, the scheduling and dissemination of

information to the districts that has already gone out. He also commented that they have already posted the position here at BASD, which is very important to do. As of March 9, the search will close. They have had lots of telephone calls and inquiries. They have talked to a lot of people, so things are moving along very well at this point in time.

Dr. Vantine stated they would be doing the interview process during March and April. They will be presenting to the board some of these items they need to talk about. This information coupled with the board's knowledge of the district's needs will be used to generate some interview questions. This is where they are at this point in time with advertising, getting the information out, and talking to people about the position.

Mrs. Cann wanted to know what made it a national search. Would it be the AASA advertisements? Dr. Vantine replied that it made it a national search by sending it to AASA, Education Week, which is a national magazine, sending it out to 50 colleges and universities across the country, and every major university that has a superintendent training program received all the information on the position. They have called a number of people they know at Harvard among other places. Harvard has an excellent urban education program. He spoke to the director and spent a lot of time talking to him about the district. Dr. Vantine indicated he has some leads for some people that the search firm thinks would be interested in this district. He also added that not only sending the information across Pennsylvania, but also doing it national is what makes it a national search.

Mrs. Follweiler had extra copies of the summary report to hand out and three for the newspapers if they wanted a copy.

Dr. Scott stated that requests for applications have come from New Jersey, Maryland, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Texas, California, Michigan, North Carolina, Florida, and Canada.

Dr. Vantine handed out a report outlining where they need to go from here. The report is titled Executive Search Service, Superintendent Search Process, Next Steps. He said as they look at where they are going in the process, if the board remembers, they put together a whole timetable for the superintendent search early. They have to go back to that timetable but are on schedule and feel very good about that. He read the first item on the report, which says superintendent applications need to be submitted by March 9, 2010, so that is when the deadline is. At that point in time, they will need not only the applications, but also all of the information that is needed to go with that application. All the necessary clearances, all the certificates, transcripts, and all of the information that is needed for every candidate to make sure they are viable candidates. That information all needs to be in by March 9, 2010.

Dr. Vantine read the next step, which is that the board needs to schedule three (3) executive sessions with them in order to be able to follow through on their schedule at this point in time. The first meeting will be designed to basically share the reports that they have developed to this point in time with the focus groups. As of tomorrow, they will have met with eleven (11) different focus groups, community groups and, both in house and external focus groups as well. Tomorrow night they will be meeting with a cross section of high schools students to get some input from them. They have had a chance to meet with some of the youngsters that are pretty much in the leadership positions in the district, and now they wanted to meet with youngsters that are basically going to school and who are at different points in their education. The search firm has met with ten (10) focus groups. Those focus groups have dealt with just about every group that has showed an interest, plus they had two (2) major meetings with community groups where anyone was invited to participate. He informed the board that they had a great turnout. They had some very wonderful input from the folks and were really pleased with that. He indicated the information will be shared with the board, and after the board has had an opportunity to go over the information, they will also be providing the board with a summary of all those statements. There would be eleven (11) total

reports. Then there will be one (1) summary report as well. They will be going over those reports with the board to discuss what was shared and what will they be doing in using that information to strengthen the search process. Basically, it is providing an education for the board. The reason it was developed was basically for the board's benefit so they have input from the community regarding the community's interest and concerns. Secondly, to use the data they have obtained from the various focus groups, the board's knowledge, their knowledge of the school district, and the needs of the district. What they will be doing then is working with the board to develop a battery of interview questions. These questions will be used during the first and second rounds of interviews that they will be having with candidates. Interviews will be held during March and April. They are getting prepared to do those interviews and develop the interview questions. The questions are going to be based a lot on what people have told them about the district, what they have told you, and what we see are the strengths and needs of the school district.

The third meeting will be in executive session that will be held after March 9. That is when all the applications are in. At that time, they will sit down with the board and go through all the candidates that have applied for the job. The board will receive an analysis of the applicants, background on them, and at that point in time the board will need to make some selections regarding who they would like to interview and who they will not. All those things will need to be done in the next three weeks.

Dr. Vantine stated the first issue is really to take a look at the feedback the board has already received from the community groups, this is item number one, and an executive session needs to be scheduled to do this. After that, they will be developing questions and providing sample type questions that could be used to go along with the input that was received from the community. The search firm will be providing the information, and the board will be making the decisions about the questions that will be used in the interview process. The search firm will be scheduling at least two major interviews and will be doing this in the next two to three weeks. There are three meetings to schedule, so the board needs to take a look at their schedules, the search firm needs to sit down with the board and develop the time to do that. They will need a substantial amount of time in each case at least 2-2 \_ hours. It is going to take a lot of time and effort, but it will pay off.

Mrs. Cann questioned if these are three meetings where the board figures out what the board is doing in the interview process and who the board is going to interview. Dr. Vantine replied absolutely. Mrs. Cann wanted to know what happens after that. Dr. Vantine informed the board after that happens, there is a whole schedule they have already developed, they will be going through those interviews, they will be setting up the interviews for the board, they will be researching each candidate, and they will be doing all the things indicated before on the list developed back about a month and half ago. Mrs. Cann asked if the initial interviews are just with the board. She asked him to tell her everything because it has been a while. Dr. Vantine said the initial interviews would be with the board. What the search firm will be doing are some preliminary interviews, and the board will be making some selections and basically narrowing the field down. When they get further into the process, the board will be inviting people in to sit in some of these interviews. Actually have candidates come in and talk with them and get feedback from the various interest groups. That will be a little bit later on, they have done the early piece, which is including the ideas of focus groups – they have had that input now. He explained after they go through the candidates, and the board has had a chance to solidify its thinking then what we need to do is we have to open it again and provide opportunities for the members of the community to be able to meet some of the candidates that the board has had a chance to look at. Mrs. Cann asked how many candidates would it be narrowed down to for the board? Dr. Vantine replied no more than three. He added more than becomes a beauty contest rather than anything else. What the search firm is looking for is a very well thought out, very focused interview process. The job in a school district of the board of education is to hire its chief school administrator. It is one of the reasons the board is elected. That becomes the job of the board.

Mr. Burkhardt asked what kind of report will the board get about the information the search firm has gathered from the focus groups. He wanted to know what the report would look like. Dr. Vantine informed the board that it will be a two to three page written report based on the questions originally developed (the same questions that were shared with the board), the input received from each of the focus groups, the focus that the groups had in their particular group, and the interests they had. The search firm will go over the report with the board as far as what we shared. The search firm has already shared with each of the groups by sending the information back and asking them to look at it, so all the things that will be shared with the board have already been shared with the group of people that have given us the information.

Dr. Scott added it would be about a 20-22 page report. Each focus group answered the same three questions that the board did. All of their answers are on there from each focus group and will be reviewed with the board. In addition, people were invited to send materials to the search firm because we sent back to each of them results of their work. There are some corrections and some additional information that is going to be included in the report too for the board's information. In the back of the material, it will be in there for the board to review. There will also be a summary interpretation of the search firm's thinking of what was found and some suggestions made for the board.

Mr. Burkhardt's concern is that the report in some way has some kind of weigh in so that the board will know which items were issues that lots of people brought forth. I do not just want bullets of 49 different things that people said. Dr. Vantine said that is not going to happen. Dr. Scott said the board would see the three greatest issues. Dr. Vantine explained when the search firm met with each group, they were asked basically to try to identify the three things that they saw to be the most important either strengths, concerns, or needs of the district. That was the first thing. The search firm tried to identify that in a group experience so that the firm can try to get a consensus up front with each group. The firm got good response on that, and the information was put together. In addition to that after we finished the three most important items, the three top items that the board reads will be the summary of the consensus of the entire group. Then so every person's ideas would not be lost, individual bullets will follow so the board and each group would have an idea of what was brought up. For example, Loretta or whomever was one of the people in the focus groups, her idea would be in there as well as everyone's idea. Everyone's information was shared but information that was consensus building is the information that comes first, and then the firm will go through the report with the board and explain it.

Dr. Scott explained why they include those statements, "Oh so excited were." They have the three greatest and beneath that the firm have "Oh so excited were." There are a lot of tips in that "oh so excited" section that your new superintendent is going to be very happy to find out about. The board should be too. The list is going to have some items in there that you will say, "Geez I did not know that was happening or that was going on." Somebody is then assigned to dig into that and report back. He stated, "What does this mean?" It is really going to give you some good information. He also said, "I know if I were superintendent, boy there are certain things in here I could be able to get a hold of right away because I want to know what is taking place in this district."

Mrs. Follweiler asked the search firm if they could outline the reasons that it would be executive session versus a public discussion? Dr. Scott answered that they think the board should read this report first then the board can do whatever they want with it. The board can release it to the public or put it on the Internet, but the board should digest it first. It is for the board. He added that the board would want to go over it and make a decision, and at that time, how should it be released. Mrs. Follweiler said the reason she asked is because she had not thought about it until his minor discussion here that the tips that are in there also might be something that the search firm would not want a potential candidate to see prior to the interview because they could load up with answers that they know the district is looking for during the interview and perhaps it turns out to be a false hope in the end. Dr. Vantine confirmed that is exactly the

reason why the board needs to review this information first. He added again the public responsibility for hiring a superintendent is the boards. He also stated all of us that would be taxpayers, all the taxpayers from the school district are affected by that, which the board is legally responsible for hiring the chief school administrator, and so the idea is that the board or search firm has to be very well steeped in what the interest of the community is. That is why the firm is suggesting this procedure. After the board has had a chance to read it, then a determination needs to be made on what the board wants to do with it, so one step at a time and that is what is taking place.

Mrs. Leeson stated the firm met with eleven different groups, and some of the groups may be very happy to have their information made public, but some of the groups may not. She asked them if they offered the idea that there might be confidentiality in what was being discussed. Was there an assumption that they were free to say anything they wanted to say in those rooms, and that it was not going to necessarily be used in a public way. Dr. Scott said no one person is identified with any piece of information. Mrs. Leeson understood, and stated that they have also asked some of the internal groups, and these are groups who may end up working with the individual that comes on board or that may be working within the structure now. She wondered if they would be as candid if they felt that information was going to be made public. Dr. Vantine said the very point that Mrs. Leeson just made goes back to the statement we just made a moment ago. That is why the board needs to look at this and make a determination about how they wish to use it. It has been developed for the board's purpose, now the board needs to look it, and decide how it would best be applied.

Mrs. Leeson asked what dates is the board looking at. Mrs. Follweiler replied it is up to the board, but the board can certainly do the date after the report. She also indicated she would need the availability dates of the firm as well. Dr. Scott said they would all need to work together on those dates. March is going to be a very busy time for all of them. Mrs. Follweiler said she would work through the dates the firm gives her and then she will go back to the board.

Mrs. Dexter was wondering if someone could run by the solicitor the issue whether the board could have the firm get the sessions that are proposed. Also whether the board has the right to decide how they are going to disseminate the document and when. She agrees with the point that Mrs. Follweiler made and the same point the experts have advised the board about. She stated she wants to have the best interviews possible. That cannot happen if a candidate can look on the website and see what the questions are going to be and suggesting answers. She does not want to have a play acting show. She does not want to hire the best prepared or speech or that kind of thing. She would like for the interviews to be really spontaneous and for the board to be able to evaluate them without the candidate having prior information. If the firm gives the board a written document, do they have to share that? The board may need to consider whether or not they would like to not have a written document.

Mrs. Follweiler informed Mrs. Dexter on what she has done prior to scheduling any executive sessions on this subject. Since she has been put in charge of it, she has sent what the search firm has given her to Mr. Spry. It was only one item so far, but what she did with the last one was sent the proposed information and asked Mr. Spry for an opinion or she asked him at the board meeting. Mrs. Dexter asked her to ask Mr. Spry about this proposed written document under the open records law because that is something new. The board needs to know if that is their prerogative or not. Mrs. Follweiler stated verbal versus written information. Since communications are put through to the solicitor by Mrs. Leeson, Mrs. Follweiler will prepare a question for Mr. Spry and forward it to Mrs. Leeson to get it to him tomorrow or Wednesday at the latest. Mrs. Follweiler added it is a good suggestion because she did do that with the last executive session. She went to Mr. Spry and said here is the proposed information.

Dr. Vantine shared that their experience in the past has been that each of the items that were talked about here tonight had been done in executive session. Each of the school districts that they have dealt with in

the past, their solicitors have been supportive of that, so they hope that it might be the same with BASD. He said what we have is kind of a time frame to do a lot of work before the final applications come in, but thinks they are on target if they can get some dates from the board to do that. The first two dates will be discussions about the information from the focus groups and secondly begin developing questions based on the input received. He added that he thinks they will be right on target and things should go quite well.

Mrs. Follweiler said if everybody on the board is okay with it, so as to not hold up the rest of the agenda, the board can use open forum towards the end of the meeting to compile available dates, then she can send them and then the firm can pick from those dates. The board agreed. She also said it certainly sounds like we are moving along in a very positive manner. She added that Dr. Vantine mentioned they did decide to have that additional focus group tomorrow with additional students because the recommendation made to the original list was student advisory group who is one group of students, and then the principals compiled groups of students who are not normally involved in such activities so the board gets a different view point. She thinks that is wonderful and that can be added to the information prior to us getting the report. She asked if there were any other questions?

Mrs. Dexter stated that Dr. Vantine mentioned that he has a schedule of interviews, the proposed or has been set forth. She recommended that if the firm has a suggested schedule of when they will be interviewing, even though it would not be until March, this would be a good time to bring it forth because every week that goes by the board keeps adding more and more to their calendars. Dr. Vantine stated the calendar that was developed with the board originally is still in operation, and they are right on target as far as the calendar is concerned. Mrs. Dexter did not know if the firm already thought of a date, for example, March 16 this is when this will happen. Dr. Vantine said no, that needs to be done with the board. Mrs. Dexter asked if they planned on coming to those interviews. Dr. Vantine confirmed they plan to be very much involved. Mrs. Dexter asked if they have dates that the firm cannot work around maybe they could share those dates with the board too because the board does best if they can schedule ahead. Mrs. Follweiler said it is an excellent suggestion because what Dr. Vantine is referring to is the broad calendar months. She asked the firm if they can put forth to the board the dates that they know are going to be crossed off. She informed them that obviously Monday evenings the board has scheduled board meetings and are not interview dates. She personally does not think the board can bank on nine people being available every single date, but they will certainly try to get as many possible board members. If the firm can put through what dates they are going to target, then the board can start looking at their calendars. Dr. Vantine said they would all work together to get a calendar that works.

**BOARD POLICY 006 – MEETINGS – FOURTH READING** – Mr. Washington stated this policy has a few corrections or additions. First one is on page five. He focused the board's attention to the bold letters. The language talks about the Regular Board Meeting containing a pre and post courtesy of the floor. The first courtesy of the floor will pertain to matters of the Regular Board Meeting agenda, and the second courtesy of the floor will deal with matters pertaining to school business. He directed them to page eleven in which this related to committee meetings, and it basically stated that committee meetings will contain a pre and post courtesy of the floor for ten minutes each pertaining to agenda items and matters that come before that committee.

Mrs. Dexter just wanted to say that she will be voting no on these changes and wanted to tell the board why. She will say it at the board meeting too, but she sees both of the proposed changes as adding one more obstacle between the board and the public. She realizes that the board has had a couple of incidents when it seemed as if many people come before the board and really even courtesy of the floor seemed to take over the time that was set for the agenda, but she thinks that is a smaller risk then adding one more layer of bureaucracy because many people in the communities have no idea what committee a certain topic might belong to or what night to come. She does know that lately the meetings have been over at a normal time. She stated she just does not want to see any more obstacles, when she just heard someone

coming to the podium and say how can we reach you anymore. She said the board places other obstacles in the way, and she is not for it.

Mrs. Leeson is going to oppose to the opposite view point that Mrs. Dexter just made. She said this actually makes her think that the board is more accessible because many people do come to the public for specific things on the agenda, and there have been people who have had to wait very, very long in order to hear what they would like to hear on the agenda because of items she would say did not pertain to the topics of the evening. She also feels, she guesses she is more optimistic than Mrs. Dexter, that the board will continue to have meetings at reasonable lengths and one of the problems has been that the board had at times a large courtesy of the floor that did not necessarily pertain to the agenda. She thinks if the board does it this way, the board will be able to conclude the meeting (the conclusion is not until after the courtesy of the floor), but finish the agenda items so that people will have the courtesy of the floor at a reasonable hour and still be able to share any thoughts that they have with the board. She is in support of these revisions and thinks it will make it easier for people to find where the appropriate time and place might be, when to attend a meeting and be able to hear, and perhaps express what they would like to express.

Mrs. Cann wanted to know if they would be able separate the two for voting purposes. She asked because she is okay with the first one since Regular Board Meetings are the decision-making meetings. She thinks it is important that the people who need to speak about something the board is actually voting on that night get the focus at the beginning of the meeting so they could be heard. If it is about something separate, it can wait until the end. She thinks committee meetings are information gathering meetings in general and is okay if somebody wants to talk about something that is not committee related. She does not care what people want to talk about at the committee meetings. She is fine with that. She wanted to know if it could be separated. As far as what she likes, she is okay with one but not the other. Mrs. Follweiler suggested taking a consensus to see if anyone else agrees with Mrs. Cann, at which point it would be changed, and moved to fifth reading on the agenda item. Mrs. Leeson said she thinks it can still be moved the agenda, and what Mrs. Cann is asking is to split the question.

Mrs. Follweiler polled the board:

EM: Split

IF: Split

LL: Together

WB: I guess the only fair way to do it is to split it, so that you can see how people feel when you reach the topic. My initial reaction is why are we doing this at all. If it was, as Mrs. Dexter noted, because of some relatively infrequent need, I do not like to legislate stuff that does not to be legislated. I said that once before it is not one of the things that we do, so I do not know that we need it at all. You said that we had not needed it in the last few months, and I have always counted on the chair of the committee or the president of the board to interpret the courtesy of the floor time any ways.

LL: No interpretation if it is not fair.

MC: Split. Our regular Board Meetings are a very official event that we need to get people heard before we vote on items. I think that is a very important thing, and the time before we vote has to be wisely used. Committee meetings I think should be more open.

MF: I do not know. I am torn because I totally will not impose limits on what people can talk about, but then I do not want to sit here for three hours when a rumor is spreading and the board is getting hammered on something that is not even coming up that night or we do not have any control over it, so for that aspect I like it, but if you want to split it between the two, that sounds to be the majority at this point, then that is fine with me.

JD: I think we can do it one of two ways. One is with the whole thing, and then we can do a motion to divide the question at the meeting when we vote. It could also be listed in two different ways or three suggested ways. You can list it separately on the agenda. I would prefer to list it separately on the agenda

so that we do not have to go through the whole business of dividing a question at the Regular Board Meeting. I think that just confuses people: what are they doing, why are they doing it, etc. I would like to see it listed two ways, and then we all vote.

Mr. Washington asked for clarity for the agenda. It would read Policy 006 page 5 Regular Board Meetings then Policy 006 page 11 Committee Meetings. Mrs. Follweiler said that sounds wonderful.

Mr. Burkhardt stated there is a sense of the board that they are not going to approve one; then take it out. Mrs. Follweiler said that goes back to her first thought of taking a consensus of that, but there are two board members missing and Mr. Faccinetto has not decided, so she thinks the board probably does not really have a full decision. The board still has to vote on the policy one way or the other, but she has to agree with Mrs. Cann that at the Regular Board Meeting, it is essential that the board gets the input on the agenda items. All too often a rumor has taken over courtesy of the floor, and people who perhaps would have gotten up to speak on an agenda item may choose not to because of the length of time that has been taken up with the rumor.

Mrs. Leeson does not want to say that she has seen the same thing during committee meetings and in fact the committee meetings have lasted until 11:00 p.m. The committee meetings have two working meetings, and the agendas are full. She wanted to say again that she would like to hear anything that the public has to say, but there have been rumors, the room has been full with people, the board was not even going to consider it, and then the board has to wait to get to agenda items that people are waiting to hear about until 10:00-11:00 o'clock at night. There have been young children here until late at night because often times courtesy of the floor was not pertinent necessarily to the committee, and she does believe the board needs to have opportunities for the public to share their thoughts with the board, but also remember that courtesy of the floor is one way to share thoughts. There are many other ways of sharing thoughts with the board, and the board gets many emails and letters. There are other ways to communicate with the board, so she feels that the board talks about the formal meeting and the need to get through the agenda, but there is a real need to get through the agenda during committee meetings as well and to allow for participants – the board has more participants often at the committee meetings than they do at the Regular Board Meetings.

Mrs. Follweiler stated to Mr. Washington that the consensus is to separate it as two line items and put it on the agenda for the official vote on February 22, 2010.

#### **AGENDA ITEMS FOR FEBRUARY 22, 2010, REGULAR BOARD MEETING:**

**BOARD POLICY 006 – MEETINGS – FIFTH READING** – The fifth and final reading will be placed on February 22, 2010, Regular Board Meeting Agenda.

**2010-2011 SCHOOL CALENDAR** – Mr. Washington said to the board that they should have the calendar attached with the recommendation. This is the proposed calendar for 2010-2011. It has been reviewed by a number of folks including the BEA and administration. There were talks at parent groups about the calendar as well. It is the typical calendar with the report cards and the parent teacher conferences. One of the things the board will notice is that it has changed just a little bit. Typically it would have two inservice days at the beginning of the year. After the request of the principals and the Act 48 Committee, part of that is built in with the Race To The Top as well. If BASD becomes a successful district, a day would have to be dedicated as part of a data review that is a part of the Race To The Top initiative, so the board will see that there are two days there. The new teacher inservice day was cut from two down to one based on the information given by the C&I Department.

Mrs. Leeson had a couple of questions. She said for a couple of years now, she has heard from the high schools particularly due to the block scheduling that the second block always gets hit with shorter days because of all the testing that takes place. Mr. Burkhardt commented it was the second half of the year. Mrs. Leeson said yes the second half of the year always gets hit so much harder with so many lost days. She wanted to know if it was adjusted this year. Mr. Washington directed the question to Joanne Durante who was in attendance. He confirmed with her as he stated that it was taken into consideration because Mrs. Durante talked a lot about that when they put the dates in here. He assumes that Mrs. Durante worked with the C&I Department and at the squares (high school administrative meetings) to address the issues. They did have detailed conversations about that in their squares to address that issue. Mrs. Durante said it is not perfect. She added they wanted to stay the same across the board. Dr. Barilla who was also in attendance commented that the middle chart was developed by Marie Bachman and Frank Arbushites in the IT department.

Mrs. Leeson said one of her questions is should an adjustment be made with the high schools since they are not necessarily on exactly the same schedule as everyone else because of the block scheduling. There are two distinctive sets of schedules and so when there is an impact on one half of the year more than the other half of the year, it affects the number of days of instruction for one class and not the other. Dr. Barilla thinks that was one issue Mrs. Durante had asked Mrs. Katona prior to Mrs. Katona leaving. The concern when IT looked at it and checked with Child Accounting is by changing the date either way, it is going to be one semester or the other. If the first semester is moved forward towards February, then the second semester is going to be short, so the only thing that depends or the hope for is that there are snow days, which is really the thing that would impact either side. Mrs. Leeson thinks the district should consider, for example all the PSSA testing dates as instruction days and so there is on one side of the calendar, let us say there are 180 days on one side of the calendar and on the other side there are missing 5-7 days of testing. There are 75 days then there are snow days. The district ends up with a significantly shorter period of instruction time on the second half and in block scheduling that is a significant difference. Mrs. Durante stated that the proposal she put through would add three days to the second semester. Even though one inservice day was moved out of the second semester giving high schools a day of education, in the end because of IT and she cannot speak for them, the high schools needed to hold the 22, 23, 23, 22 in quarter one and two making it 45 days quarter one, quarter two, quarter three, and quarter four. She affirmed that Mrs. Leeson thoughts were correct, and that the original intent she wrote up was to add three days of education to the second semester, when testing was being done. With high school in the block schedules that would have allowed high schools to either extend period one and two wherever missed could be extended. It really came down to IT. There is also an IT function there that turning on and off the report card at certain times which I think we would need to get more information about. Mrs. Leeson commented that to answer her question the calendar was basically moved one day to accommodate that. Mr. Washington said it was taken into consideration, but there is a whole lot, for example, Child Accounting, IT, the high schools, and report cards coming out. He stated it still comes out to 45 days per semester, per quarter rather, and across the board 45, 45, 45, and 45. It is correct in some of those 45 days there will be PSSA testing.

Mrs. Leeson asked why are inservice days not scheduled during testing periods, half days or whatever during testing times. She does not think half days were scheduled this time around or were they? Mr. Washington confirmed that as far as he knew there were no half days scheduled. Mrs. Leeson said a lot of times teachers are not introducing a lot of new material during that time. Mr. Washington will take it back to the C&I Department to discuss it.

Mrs. Dexter wanted to confirm that the spring break scheduled way in April coincides with Easter as it has for this one because it looks very late this spring break. She just wanted to make sure someone did check this. Mr. Washington said yes the person that goes through the calendar checks that the holidays and all that stuff are correct.

Mr. McKeon asked theoretically how many snow days are built into this? What he would like to see eventually is not to have Martin Luther King as the first knocked off date. He would not object to the Easter break. Built into the Easter break as oppose to...although he thinks if there is discussion on the Spring break, the district is off Good Friday so that kind of touches on the religious activities that are taking place, but he would like to see that the district have the four days highlighted. He would like to see consideration of maybe even the both ends of President's weekend. Just food for thought that the district definitely keeps Martin Luther King in the calendar as a holiday and figures how to get those four if the district has to use them elsewhere.

Dr. Barilla commented that they did have a draft with Act 80 days, and she thought it was vetoed by the administration. She had proposed that in there, and Dr. Persing had asked her to add them and at the administrative counsel the administrators voted them out. Dr. Persing asked me to put four half days and then administrators said no. Dr. Persing said that when he asked them about the Act 80 days, he remember it was 1/3 who did not want them, 1/3 who wanted them, 1/3 who did not care one way or the other. He thinks it was the high schools that definitely wanted the Act 80 days. The elementary did not wish to have them not all of them. The middle school he guesses was 50/50. He does not know what their feelings would be after the district has had them so it might be a different feeling.

Mrs. Dexter commented on Mr. McKeon's thoughts about Martin Luther King Day. This is the time to take that action. The board can easily reorder in what direction the board would go if snow days are over used. It can be done through this calendar. If Mr. McKeon is proposing that as a change, she supports that idea too. She said the board should maybe take a poll to see. Mr. McKeon said that would have to be discussed. Mrs. Leeson said it would not be known by January 17 if the district needs it. Mrs. Follweiler also agrees with Mr. McKeon because it is way too early in the calendar year. She would hope that they have not used the four snow days by January 17. She polled the board to see if they agree with that change Mr. Washington then would need to move those asterisks down.

Mrs. Follweiler polled the board to see if they agree with Mr. McKeon's recommendation that the first day that gets pulled back for snow days would be part of the spring break. She asked Mr. McKeon if that was his recommendation? Mr. McKeon said his thought process is they may end up having to first pull President's weekend because that would be the first opportunity of a longer weekend. Mrs. Follweiler confirmed that instead of starting with Martin Luther King Day, they would start pulling the days from President's weekend.

JD: Yes

MF: Yes

WB: Yes

LL: I do not think we are going to know by January 17 so I think it is going to be trivial.

Mrs. Follweiler asked Mr. Washington to make that adjustment prior to the Regular Board Meeting. Mr. Washington confirmed that February 18 will become the first make up day correct, and the board agreed.

Mrs. Follweiler stated that the thought process is that it is a four-day weekend, and she also understands what Mrs. Leeson's point is. If they do not have the snow days, it may end up coming from spring break, but those adjustments are made as long as the calendar is fully known to parents to make contingency plans and so on.

Mrs. Leeson had a question about the Act 80 days. Is it possible to have Act 80 days only for the high schools or only for middle schools or elementary schools? Dr. Persing replied so long as there are 180 instructional days, yes. In other words, the high schools would need 180 days. If they would go to Act 80 days, they would have to have 180 instructional days. They would not lose an instructional day with Act

80. What was being discussed before this was in fact if you have the snow days, it is okay because it would not interfere with these. He does not see a problem with that. The other thing they would need to do is to arrange transportation but he thinks that is certainly possible and if the two high school principals felt very strongly about it. He thinks it is something that should be considered.

Mrs. Leeson stated they could adopt this calendar and come back with a proposal that would be separate and different. Dr. Persing said what the board is doing right now are the most important parts for transportation, people planning, and so forth. The other thing that was learned with Act 80 days, which he was surprised they never heard of beforehand, but they did not, is that you never take the Act 80 days on the same day. That is what was done this time and that was a mistake. They were taken on a Monday, Monday, and Monday. That should not have been done that way. What should have been done was like Monday, or Tuesday Wednesday, and because of specialists. He did not have an idea why they did not think about that, but it was not done at the time.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if there was a deadline. It sounds to her like there is some reconfiguration that might need to be done and questions to be answered. Mr. Washington said no what Mrs. Leeson is proposing is something that can be done outside of this. They can still come back and say to the high schools they are going to have a day or two of Act 80 days without affecting this calendar. Mrs. Follweiler asked if there was a date, for example, it is put on the agenda for February 22 and the board does not agree with it. Is there a deadline on the calendar that might be passed? Mr. Washington said he would like to have it approved so he can get it out there to everybody. He said it is done every time this year. Mrs. Follweiler said so far there was one change has to be made. Mr. Washington said that the Act 80 days could still be worked within the calendar.

Mr. Faccinetto had a question on Act 80 days and thought maybe it is too vague but is there a benefit of having these half days because there are testing days during the spring when the kids are out partial or half days and then there are other half days where the kids come in for two to three hours. He asked are they really getting anything done to weigh the benefit of what the staff is getting on the other end. Mr. Washington replied yes and in his opinion there is a benefit to the Act 80 days. The professional development that goes on certainly trickles down to benefit the children, but the staff is involved and they enjoy the days. It gives them an opportunity to collaborate and work on meeting the needs of students and goals of the building.

Dr. Persing stated one of the problems that the district had that is peculiar, at least he thinks it is peculiar to Bethlehem Area School District, are the Flexdays. Flexdays is a concept so that everybody may do whatever he or she wishes to do whenever they wish to do it virtually. The consequence of that is that the district has no dedicated days to really concentrate on curriculum and instruction that everybody is going to do this and this is what he or she is going to do. If the district did not have Flexdays, this is his personal or professional opinion, he does not know if Act 80 days would be as important for BASD as they are.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the board should review the concept and value of the Flexdays. Dr. Persing thinks anything should be subject of review if it has been done this way for the last twenty years, ten years or

whatever it is. Mrs. Leeson wanted to know about how long has the district been doing flex days, for about 5 years. Mr. Washington stated about 5-6 years. Dr. Persing's personal opinion regardless how long the district has been doing Flexdays is there is nothing that you are doing constantly that should not come up for review. It could always be reviewed. If it is invaluable, it should be modified. He thinks it is normal in any business to do this. Mrs. Leeson asked for Flexdays to be brought up for review under a Human Resources Committee Meeting perhaps down the road like March/April. Mr. Washington brought up the following: 1) There are talks about changing days. Flexdays are part of inservice days so it has to be looked at as well. 2) He wants to give an synopsis opinion to Dr. Persing, with all due respect, that

Flexdays in many cases are very valuable to people because in some cases the district does not get to offer what teachers may need and they may go some place like Patan or to an IU or some place else and get a very intense very good inservice. He agrees it can be reviewed in a sense to make sure that everybody has been flexing out and are getting those twelve hours. He does not think the board should just think that it is not a valuable twelve hours, so the teachers are putting in the inservice time at their own rate to go to something that may specifically meet their professional development needs that the district does not have here, for example, maybe somebody is working with autism and the Patan or the IUs are offering something that is going to add to their professional development that the district may not have here, so in that sense those Flexdays are very, very valuable.

Mrs. Follweiler asked Mr. Washington in a future Human Resources Committee Meeting that he give an update to the board on exactly what the rules are, is it a contract issue, and some input from those who have utilized the Flexdays as to the type of courses that they might find to take during that time frame. Mrs. Dexter specifically remembers contract issue in that the district has the right to direct certain areas of professional development. Where as before, it was really more left up to the teacher and the principal to approve. From what she understood, now with the new contract the district was going to have more input and able to limit and say what the district is looking for teachers to develop in. Mr. Washington said Act 48 when it was first put it out was a little bit looser. The state tightened up the requirements; therefore, the district had to tighten it up. The district had to look more deeply into what people were taking and Mrs. Dexter is right the district could direct if it was going towards a particular discipline. Mrs. Dexter commented on Mr. Faccinetto's question – are teachers using the time wisely when they have the half days? She has heard from students that middle and high school say yes they are, and she heard from a teacher last night at an elementary level who said she has a full days planned for the half day. It is Mrs. Dexter's impression that they are using the time and not coming in just passing time until the bell rings.

Mrs. Follweiler said they can move forward with the school calendar as is with the recommended change it can still be put it on the agenda. She asked if anybody had any objection to putting it on the agenda with the recommended change of the snow day issue. The board agreed. She directed Mr. Washington to move forward with items A and B onto the agenda.

**COURTESY OF THE FLOOR** – Steven Antalics, 736 Ridge, commented on the executive search service given to the board this evening. He noticed that most of the meetings that will be conducted from here on until a final decision appears to be executive session. He appreciates the fact that the public was given the opportunity to speak at meetings with executive search services and answered their three questions. The question he has it this: will the community at large in public meeting or session have any input from now until the final decision of the new superintendent?

Gene Johnson, 3116 Altona Road, she said they had concerns as well. She is with the group called All Faith Racial Reconciliation. They have some real concerns about the executive session. Many of them came together in the focus groups, she thinks, with some wonderful good will. It was a real good turn out as the search firm had mentioned. She just thinks the focus groups deserve some feedback at some point before the end of the search. She is also interested in what the make up of the focus groups were. As the district may know, one of their real concerns is making sure that under represented groups in the community are heard. So that is one of their big concerns and wonder about that because she was present at the meeting here on January 7, it was a very good engaged group, but she was not sure that it represented the community. Lastly, she had a handout of an editorial that the Allentown School District board president wrote in The Morning Call, which she thought is very good and just wanted to share it with the board.

Mary Lou Hatcher, 925 Prospect Avenue, just wanted to say a couple of things. She wanted to reiterate what Gene just said about considering, especially that first session not be executive, the first of the three

next meetings with the search firm not being in executive session. She thinks she was hearing some of the board's concern. They do not want candidates to have information ahead of time, and they do not want people to be able to craft their interviews in a way that sort of scoops the stuff so they have so much inside information that the district cannot get a good read on who they are. She would like to suggest that skillful interviewing could get through that. That the board can probe into people's responses by saying how have you been successful in the past, what kinds of programs have you implemented, what has been successful about that, what kind of data have you brought to show us that you have been successful with that. She really thinks the board and skillful interviewing can get pass those concerns about will they scoop us on information. In addition related to the information that was gathered in the focus groups, she believes the community has a right to know and see those full reports from those groups. Those focus groups are already public. There was no agreement about confidentiality, there was no sense that what was being said was not going to be repeated and put in print and emailed out to others. She received from her focus group a list of everybody who was at the group, all their email addresses and everything everybody said, so there already is nothing private about that. She thinks for the whole community to be in dialogue with each other and hear what the concerns of other pieces of the community are really vital so the whole community understands who they are. She thinks it is really vital that she knows as a citizen what the concerns of teachers are. What are they facing in a classroom – they are there she is not. She thinks that is really important for her as she tries to advocate for public education to know what staff needs and wants to what concerns them so she just thought it is important public information. She also wanted to comment on the second part of the discussion about the courtesy of the floor and dialogue with the board, and to her the piece that is missing here is some opportunity for dialogue because they can... I often feel like the board talks, the public say some things, there is maybe some kind of response but really not much of a chance with dialogue. The focus groups were so different than that. It was very energized; it was very two ways. Often the leaders from the search firm who were trying to get people's information were helped by other people in the group because they would say, "I am not sure you heard what he said, I think he said this." People were trying to help each other say what they meant and get heard for what they meant. She said as she was sitting back there she was thinking maybe the board will find it both invigorating educational in opening to our community to hold a couple focus groups of their own as a regular part of how the board interacts with the public on an annual kind of basis maybe with a couple of topics. The district publicizes them and say these are the topics. The board will really have a chance to some kind of engaging discussion like they had in their focus group which she thinks was really, really positive. She said last month during the Human Resources Committee Meeting, she sat through three hours of meeting time for two minutes of the courtesy of the floor to have no response to anything that she said, so there was no satisfaction and she did not know if she communicated clearly or if it made any sense.

She also brought what the Allentown School District put in the paper that Gene passed out just a moment ago and she noted that it is full of remarks about community involvement. She knows BASD has a lot of community involvement named United Way, The Dorothy Rider Pool Trust, Lehigh Valley Health Network, the community college and universities, Education 2010 Business Leadership, and so on. It is a very positive article about engagement of the school district with the entire community and how many partnerships are going on. I know a lot of that is already happening in Bethlehem and can probably follow their lead by getting better publicity like they have done. She thanked the board for their attention.

Sharon Wells Young, 730 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, also took part in one of the focus groups and was happy to be there to see how many people were in attendance, teachers, formal teachers, students, community groups, and advocacy groups. She stated it was a very positive session. She indicated they came up with a laundry list of ideas but could never get into real good depth on that laundry list of ideas. One of the ideas listed was diversity in the school and how it was a good thing but they could never talk further about that. She said it would be wonderful if they can bring some of these people back and give the attention to the people to say, "Yes we are paying attention to your comments." It could be put on the website, some

of the comments, the brainstorming, or just the laundry list. She does not think they are giving any candidate any kind of information they do not already know. Somewhere or another in our interview questions should be so in depth that the laundry list the focus group came up with should not be a problem when you talk about diversity and you ask a question about that. It should be an in depth question, and she thinks they can do that. She would love the website to be updated to show that these sessions took place and what questions were asked, and so the public thinks that these comments were taken seriously.

**OPEN FORUM** – Mrs. Leeson just wanted to make one comment on the article. She also added that it was a wonderful article that highlights many of the positive things happening in the sister community, which she gives Allentown School District credit for these positive and wonderful things happening.

She reflected on many of the same things that are happening in Bethlehem as well. She stated that BASD is partnered with St. Luke's Hospital, the health vans providing dental, vision, and health care for the students, with Lehigh in many different programs and specifically they work very closely with Broughal Middle School. She added that BASD is connected with United Way, Northampton County Community College, and Banana Factory. She knows she missed too many and probably should not have even started to try and list them. She also added that Just Born is a wonderful partner here in our community, and so are of the colleges, Moravian College as well. She emphasized that BASD has very deep-rooted partnerships with many of these people, agencies, and educational facilities in our community. She expressed how the board is very proud of the liaisons that BASD has with those community groups as well.

Mrs. Follweiler wanted to add her personal comments on some of the items that were brought up at courtesy of the floor. She started with the first item of the laundry list as it was said or the comments from the focus groups: 1) She stressed to keep in mind that the board has not seen those comments, so it is only discussion at this point in time for the board to determine whether it is appropriate for posting to the website because the board has not had an opportunity to see any of that input, so as Dr. Vantine pointed out during his update, the board has to read that report first before determining anything. As far as the executive session material, as she said before, she will intend to review that with the district solicitor and determine legally what the position is on whether it should or should not be shared with the public. She believes that this board very much wants to share with the public everything that is possible and along with the letter of the law, and on the same focus the board does not want to share information with the public that would in any way infringe on someone's private rights. As far as information that was given out in the focus groups, she knows that she put in the press release in the publication that the focus groups would be held between the search firm and the people that were in the group and that no one from the district or the board would be given names and statements related to, so she knows that she inferred an amount of confidentiality with the search firm on comments that were made within that. She will also be happy to share that with the solicitor and have a legal answer to that question. 2) She referred to the point that someone brought up regarding further input from the community in future sessions. She believes what Dr. Vantine and Dr. Scott shared with us tonight are the next three critical steps on meetings that the board must have. Dr. Vantine did comment that his recommendation would be that when the board gets to the final candidates that the board has the opportunity to have more people involved in those final interviews, and the board needs to discuss that further as to what that involvement level would be once that time comes. She does not feel that the community involvement at the focus group level was the end of any community information coming to the board. In regards to the suggestion of the focus group type dialogue, she knows the district has had the town hall meeting discussions before, and the board has discussed that it is a fantastic idea to do perhaps on a regular basis twice a year or something along those lines. The board has had that discussion, but it is unfortunate because their calendars, as everyone all well knows, get very full. She does agree personally that it is a very important focus of the board to get that type of input on general topics.

She asked Mrs. Leeson if she could recommend that the board start looking in the months down the road to schedule a town hall meeting. She understands their calendars are very full, but she likes the idea of the town hall type of meeting on sharing with the public what is going on in the district. She likes that idea personally.

Mrs. Leeson added very quickly that the public sessions were announced to everyone, but some of the internal groups may not have the same feeling of sharing all of their thoughts. They may have felt that they had some level of confidentiality in order to be candid in their discussion. Mrs. Follweiler stated again that is why she said the board has not seen any of the information themselves so they really do not know what was discussed in depth.

Irene Follweiler adjourned the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nitza S. Yerger, Confidential Secretary to the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources