

Pending BOE Approval

**Watertown Board of Education
Special Board of Education Meeting**

Meeting Date: December 21, 2020
Meeting Time: 6:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: REMOTE MEETING

Members Present: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Mr. Brian Flaherty
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Mr. Jason Malagutti
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. John Ramos – Interim Superintendent of Schools

- A. Convene Regular Meeting – 6:30 p.m.
- B. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson
- C. Discussion: Superintendent Candidate

Ms. Crotty - The Board of Education officially began its Superintendent Search with Dr. Mary Broderick of the CT Association of Boards of Education on October 6th, 2020. At that first meeting, we discussed search guidelines, the vacancy posting, and how we would develop the leadership profile. The Board of Education sought the insight of its school and community through a survey, interviews, and nine opportunities for stakeholders to take part in Zoom focus groups with our search consultant from October 13th through October 20th. In addition, twenty individuals, including parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and others reached out and spoke with Dr. Broderick directly, and 228 residents and staff participated in the survey. The information yielded insights on the community’s desired qualities, skills, expertise, and characteristics they wanted in a new superintendent, and the strengths and challenges we face

in our district. The Search Committee used these results to develop its leadership profile which outlined, that collectively, our community stakeholders wanted someone who:

- Communicates and collaborates effectively in schools and community
- Builds trusting relationships with students, staff, and community
- Shares vision of excellence and innovative instruction
- Accessible, approachable, and visible in schools and community
- Keeps students' growth and wellbeing the primary focus,
- Dedicated commitment to Watertown and its vision and mission
- Decisive, confident, objective problem solver with good judgment and knowledgeable

The Watertown Board of Education took very seriously its responsibility to find the best possible candidate to lead our school and tonight, I am pleased to report that we believe we have found that person in Dr. Alison Villanueva- welcome, Dr. Villanueva, thank you for joining us this evening.

Dr. Villanueva rose to the top of the group of the excellent candidate pool, demonstrating a thorough understanding of educational excellence, communicating a collaborative, open, and relational leadership style, and relaying an impressive understanding of Watertown, our Vision of a Graduate and District Improvement plan. We believe Dr. Villanueva will help us move successfully through current pandemic challenges and help us to realize our district vision. She has a desire to be in a school district located in close proximity to her family and friends and wanted to be in a school district known for its tight knit community and hardworking administrative and faculty team.

Dr. Villanueva most recently served in a central office level position as the District K-12 Humanities Supervisor in Ridgefield, CT where she was also nominated for the AASA Women in Leadership Award by faculty. Dr. Villanueva's professional career brings a variety of educational perspectives to the Watertown community. She began her career as a Music teacher and also served as a high school Humanities teacher, then an elementary teacher and acting principal, all in the Ontario area. After moving to New York City, Dr. Villanueva worked in New York City schools as a literacy specialist and coach. For five years beginning in 2010, she became co-director of Studies in Educational Innovation at Columbia University Teachers College, a world-renowned center dedicated to building K-12/ University partnerships with educational systems around the globe. Dr. Villanueva began her Connecticut work as a Principal in Danbury and in Ridgefield Public Schools before taking on her current leadership role. She is also an adjunct professor in the department of Educational Leadership at Sacred Heart University, where she specializes in advanced curriculum and educational law and finance.

Becoming a member of the Watertown community is very important to Dr. Villanueva. She said, "One of the most important things I am looking forward to is collaborating with the administrative team and local town constituents to listen and learn more about the Watertown community. Understanding the local 'way' of Watertown and learning about its history will be essential as I onboard".

Dr. Villanueva received her Honors Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from York University in Toronto. She earned her first Masters Degree in Literacy Education from New York University, and then a Master of Philosophy from Columbia University. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in English Education from Teachers College, Columbia University as well.

Dr. Villanueva is devoted to getting to know the heart of Watertown and its schools, and told the Watertown Search Committee, quote: “The opportunity to lead Watertown Public Schools is not only an honor and privilege, but where I aim to become part of the community for many years to come”. Dr. Villanueva, thank you for being here with us this evening.

D. Action Item

Agenda Item: D.1
Subject: Appointment of the Superintendent

Motion Presented By: Ms. Wilk
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rosa

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that the Board appoint Dr. Alison Villanueva as the Superintendent of Watertown Public Schools, effective January 25, 2021, with a contract to be negotiated by the Chair on behalf of the Board of Education.

Discussion: **Mr. Malagutti** – Dr. Villanueva, I just want to thank you for applying and accepting the position. Good evening to you and to your beautiful family behind you. Thoroughly enjoyed the process of working with you, getting to know you, through the interviews there, and I think you bring in warm, dynamic, unique energy to the Watertown School Systems. Very excited to work along side you in the near future, and most importantly, I think you will provide a wonderful role model for our children, so thank you very much. Pleased to have you aboard.

Mr. Flaherty – Doctor, welcome. This process has been really eye opening. It has been so encouraging to see, through the search, such strong interest in Watertown/Oakville schools. In this case, a tough decision became a good thing, because we had many qualified candidates, we had a terrific discussion, we enjoyed the time we spent talking to all of our candidates, and learning about you, talking with you about some of our hopes and concerns and hopes and aspirations for the Watertown Public Schools and I just want to join in welcoming you to Watertown, say hello

to your family and just looking forward to working with you, and behalf of the people who are on the call tonight, and all of the kids, staff, and all of the fantastic people that make up our school system, welcome.

Opposed:	Ms. Rinaldi
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

Dr. Villaneuva – Thank you so much, Chairman Crotty, and the members of the Watertown Board of Education, I want to thank you so much for welcoming me into your family. I am so excited, and this is an understatement, I am so excited to become part of the Watertown community and to jump in and start working to know the administrative team, the faculty, the students and families, and the best spot to have lunch in Watertown, so again, thank you for that. I do want to introduce my family because they are a big part of me when I am not in Watertown. They are the ones who take care of me and who I spend time with the most. My oldest daughter is Alex, my middle daughter Brooke, my youngest Michael, and learning with them going through school is part of this too and of course, here is my husband in the background, who makes this all happen and he takes care of us very much so. I want to thank our AD in Watertown as well for getting us ready with our Watertown gear. We are ready to go. We can't wait to be, when things open up, in the stands for a football game, or something to cheer on our Watertown athletes and our schools. Thank you again for such a wonderful process and for welcoming me to the family.

E. Adjournment

Agenda Item:	E.1
Subject:	To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By:	Mr. Makowski
Motion Seconded By:	Ms. Eastman

Text of the Motion:	Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.
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Discussion:	None
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Opposed:	None
Abstained:	None
Vote:	Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Cathy Rinaldi
Secretary of the Board