

From: hfb4444 <hfb4444@comcast.net>
To: lelan4444 <lelan4444@aol.com>
Subject: Fwd: Request for meetings
Date: Wed, Aug 10, 2011 10:16 am

From: "Jayson Seaman" <jseaman@alumni.unh.edu>
To: jkach55@gmail.com, awright@orcsd.org, mturnbull@orcsd.org, hfb4444@comcast.net, alane@orcsd.org, kbutts@orcsd.org, joceoquinn@yahoo.com
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2011 1:17:00 PM
Subject: Re: Request for meetings

Good day ORCSD Board members:

First, I want to thank Ann Lane, Megan Turnbull, and Ann Wright for taking time to meet with me. I have enjoyed the opportunity to talk with and learn from you.

I still would be interested in meeting with other members of the Board, particularly Krista Butts as the remaining at-large member, and Jocelyn O'Quinn as the Durham representative. I will be away after tomorrow for the rest of this week, but will be checking email during that time and back around and available next week.

Thanks very much.
Jayson Seaman

On Sat, Jul 9, 2011 at 9:15 AM, Jayson Seaman <jseaman@alumni.unh.edu> wrote:

Dear Oyster River School Board Members:

I hope you are enjoying your weekend so far.

This morning, I submitted a letter to Foster's concerning recent letters and commentary, and also decided that I would follow through with the sentiment I expressed and personally try and take steps to better understanding the values, vision, and plans of Board members. So, I figured I'd pursue the method of learning from Board members that several people have recommended on the Blogs and in letters, which is to try and sit down and discuss issues with you as individuals.

Let me be upfront: I am critical of the manner with which you have gone about recent personnel decisions, and of the decisions themselves. For example, I would rather have seen you strongly manage Howard Colter for one more year instead of issuing him a \$185,000 parting gift out of surplus funds that could have gone directly to educational improvement. I am puzzled as to why you did this and I have not heard satisfactory reasons. A year is a very brief time in an organization's life. From my view, you either

lacked confidence in your ability to manage a superintendent you did not always agree with, or you perceived Colter as an obstacle to changes you want to make as quickly as possible. In my view, neither of these are sufficient reasons to buy Colter out with one year remaining on his contract, to the tune of \$185,000. This is only my opinion based on what limited facts are available and from my impression watching Board meetings. This is one item I would like to talk more about when we meet.

However, I must place limits on how critical I can be overall because I don't know enough about your values and aims to make a strong judgment. Therefore I can only speculate about what principles might underlie your recent decisions and I would benefit from learning facts rather than speculating. I would like to support you, and to get involved in productive ways, and therefore see it as important to learn more about what you believe and what your plans are. I am a strong believer that open community dialogue--especially about something so central as schooling--is crucial, and that members of a community should do everything they can to work together to establish and achieve common objectives. It saddens me to see factions erupting within the community and attacking each other personally and publicly - and, in the recent letters I responded to this morning, using poor reasoning and writing to inflame rather than inform or seek understanding. I would like to see and to help the Board take the necessary leadership to overcome these divisions. I applaud Jim Kach especially for speaking out against the negative tone that often characterizes public discussion.

I would also like to come to my own conclusions. The first step for me is to learn more about your views and goals. Ultimately I think all consequential matters need to be discussed in public view, but I am willing to start by taking the approach some of you seem to prefer, which is to meet individually. Please know that this is not a setup - people who know me would attest that I am fair, evenhanded, and thorough in my thinking. I will speak openly with you and I hope you will do the same with me. I can promise respect for your views and I hope you can promise this to me as well.

It might help to know a bit about me. I teach at UNH in the Kinesiology and Education departments and have lived in Durham (as a 'taxpayer') for 5 years, but I am a fourth-generation New Hampshire native and have lived in the Seacoast area previously. I have two graduate degrees from UNH. I have worked as a teacher, district program manager, and State Educational Agency grant coordinator. My wife, Kim, is a counselor at the high school. We have three daughters, ages 3, 1, and 1 (yes, they are twins!). Like many people, Kim and I made a deliberate decision to live in Durham because of the quality of the school system and, while we cannot afford an unlimited tax burden, we knew that moving to Durham meant paying more for a house along with higher taxes. We accepted this when we moved here. This said, I share some of the concerns of people like Roger Speidel - but not all of them. I also have a tremendous respect for teacher professionalism and autonomy but know that strong leadership and rigorous, high-quality assessment are required for schools and districts to thrive.

Professionally, I have worked in districts where similar dynamics have erupted. Above all, what I see as detrimental to schools and communities are contentious divides (exacerbated, no doubt, by a tax structure that places a heavy local burden on individuals and families). This is why I want to get involved - not because my own personal interest is heavily at stake or my children's prospects will soon be directly impacted - but because I think all children and community members benefit from a thriving system that a majority of the community feel ownership and pride about, and where they do not feel their personal security is threatened. I have both experienced firsthand and studied school change processes and see it as my duty to try and understand different sides to issues. This is why I am following through on the recommendation to meet with you individually.

I hope to hear from individual members of the Board soon to schedule a time and location to meet that is mutually agreeable. Feel free to cc each other so you can keep tabs on who has and who has not offered to meet. Thank you.

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With Regards,

Jayson Seaman
Durham, NH

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Durham, NH