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Letter: Superintendent must answer

Thursday, May 29, 2003

Congratulations to the students of Beverly High School for showing their support for Principal Bill Foye last week. There is nothing better at a high school than having the student body behind their principal. This says magnitudes. Standing up for what you believe is correct and demonstrates that BHS is indeed fulfilling its mission. I compliment you. I am so proud of your actions.

I also applaud our city councilors for sending a letter in support of Foye to the superintendent. I believe that as an elected body in the City of Beverly, taking this action was both your right and your responsibility. To state your opinion, as an elected body, is a service to the people of this city. Thank you.

To the parents, community members, faculty, PTSO leaders, BHS school council members (all people who have worked closely with Mr. Foye over seven years), I have listened your concerns. The support for Mr. Foye as principal of Beverly High School comes from all corners of this city. As a School Committee member, let me assure you that your words and actions are not unheard.

I represent the residents of Ward 4. You have asked me why Mr. Foye's contract as principal of BHS is not being renewed. I don't know. I have serious concerns about my ability as an elected official to represent you and your interests since I don't know. All the information I have on this situation I have read in our local newspapers. I don't know the reasons the superintendent is making this major change in personnel.

Previously the superintendent has said that the high school needs to go in a different direction. I don't know what the different direction is. The high school has an academic program that has been rated superior. What do we need to do differently? This is a legitimate question.

The superintendent has publicly spoke of communication problems and morale problems at BHS. I have no information about any such issues. I have been associated with BHS since 1994 as a school council member, parent and School Committee representative. Two sons graduated in the class of 2001 and my youngest son is in the current junior class. I have witnessed first hand communication and morale problems at our high school and I have seen these problems turned around under the leadership of Mr. Foye. What are the communication and morale problems cited by the superintendent? This is a legitimate question.

In several newspaper articles regarding Mr. Foye, the superintendent has spoken of legal dealings. As a School Committee member, I certainly have the right to know about any legal problems in the school system. The

superintendent definitely has the responsibility to make such issues known to the School Committee. I have no information about legal dealings concerning this BHS administration or any other entity at Beverly High School. What are these legal dealings? This is a legitimate question.

The superintendent is making a major change in the leadership of our school system and the School Committee has no information as to whether or not this decision shows good judgment on his part. Furthermore, by not understanding the nature of the problems that the superintendent says exist, how can the School Committee ever assess if these problems have been corrected? These are serious concerns.

I have informally brought these questions to the attention of my colleagues on the School Committee. This is not an easy situation and I am not sure that the School Committee, as a body, knows how to proceed. However, as representatives of the public, we need and must demand some answers from the superintendent

Therefore, I will be formally asking that a special meeting of the School Committee be convened to discuss these questions. In addition, I will ask the School Committee to instruct the superintendent to delay the final appointment of a high school principal until the School Committee has had a chance to review his job performance in this area.

I am not disputing the authority of the superintendent to hire the high school principal. I am merely asking that this process be put on hold until the questions of this community, with respect to his decision, can be addressed intelligently.

I firmly believe that this is the role of the School Committee and if we are not willing to do this then we should disband. We can no longer ignore the community response to the superintendent's decision not to renew the contract of the high school principal. As a committee, we are responsible to comment on the superintendent's job performance and currently we have no information with which to assess this performance. The superintendent works for the School Committee. We have a responsibility to ask for answers.

Nancy Brusil

Ward 4

School Committee member

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