

School Committee outlines superintendent search

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PEABODY — Peabody's next superintendent will make at least \$20,000 more than his predecessor. Whose name will appear on those hefty checks won't be known until at least October.

The School Committee met for more than 2½ hours last night to begin the process of finding a successor to James Gaylord, who stepped down as superintendent at

the end of June. The committee set minimum qualifications for the job, established salary guidelines and determined a preliminary time line for the search.

That time line has applications for the position due in mid-August, interviews taking place in late August and early September, and final selections taking place at the start of October, if everything goes according to plan.

The committee voted 4-2 to advertise the position with a salary

between \$125,000 and \$140,000, a major increase over Gaylord's salary of \$105,000. The decision reflects the committee's near-unanimous dissatisfaction with Gaylord, and members' desire to attract, in the words of committee member Dave McGeney, "an all-star."

Committee members agreed they should offer more money to the next superintendent, but disagreed on how much more. Lou Perullo, a former Peabody superintendent, argued for a salary ranging up to \$125,000, while Suzanne Borin argued the range should start there, and that the committee should leave the upper limit open. Anne Manning summed up the position of many committee members, saying that "you get what you pay for."

"We're not trying to be in the pack," McGeney said, speaking in favor of offering a high salary. "We're trying to break out of the pack for the first time in a long time."

Mayor Mike Bonfanti, however, said that the committee must live within its means.

"We have to have the ability to pay," Bonfanti said.

The committee's dissatisfaction with Gaylord was also evident in the qualifications established last night. Committee members ex-

pressed concern with Gaylord's lack of experience with a district the size of Peabody and of lack of familiarity with Massachusetts laws and regulations.

"I'm tired of being a training ground and that's what we've been," Borin said.

But members were also wary of setting overly stringent requirements at the outset and risking being left with a small candidate pool.

"We might get someone who hits nine of our 10 points but is short on one, and maybe we're missing out on a good candidate," McGeney said. "I want to have as broad a field as possible."

The committee eventually voted to require candidates to be certified as a superintendent in Massachusetts and to have at least five years of experience in school administration, with at least three years as a superintendent or assistant superintendent in Massachusetts preferred, but not required. Candidates must also have education beyond a master's degree, with a doctorate preferred but not required, and at least five years of experience as a teacher.

The committee will begin advertising the position later this month.