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Controversial teacher lands job at Classical

By **Nicole Martinez**

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LYNN - After recently resigning as the superintendent of the North Andover Public Schools for having an affair with his secretary and giving her a 29 percent raise, Harry Harutunian has resumed his career as a long-term substitute teacher at Lynn Classical High School.

He was hired a week before the start of the school year upon the opening of the position that Superintendent Nicholas Kostan said came about at the last minute. He was just one of about 90 new teaching positions in the Lynn Public Schools this year.

Harutunian left the North Andover district in April when his affair with secretary Brenda Shea was made public. He also was recently fined \$6,000 by the state Ethics Commission for creating a job for Shea's son. The school committee bought out the last two years of his remaining contract, costing \$187,000.

His new salary is \$61,961, a pay rate which Kostan said is appropriate in accordance to the teacher's contract.

Kostan said he knew of the issues at hand, and despite his mistakes, decided to give Harutunian the job.

"We gave him an opportunity at a second chance at life," Kostan said. "Everybody has made errors at some point in time."

Kostan said he understands how giving him this chance may look bad, but it was something he knew he would have to deal with eventually.

"I have been very careful not to do anything that would appear inappropriate," he said. "This simply amounted to me trying to help somebody get back on their feet."

School committee member Donna Cappola said she has no problems with the situation.

"If he's certified in the subject, I have no problems allowing him the opportunity to work someplace," she said. "I hear the staff at Classical are impressed with his work and the students like him. Giving him the opportunity to work in his profession is sort of a fair thing to do."

John Ford, also a school committee member, said he too was on the same page as the rest.

"We had a president that committed this kind of indiscretion and he was forgiven," he said. "I don't think he should be punished forever for a mistake."

He also said the hiring of Harutunian is in line with the character of Kostan, who was just looking out for a friend in need.

"You try to help a friend, and that's something you would expect from him," he said.

School Committee Secretary Thomas Iarrobino said everyone seems to be feeling positive about the hiring of Harutunian.

"At this juncture, I have not heard any kind of complaints or negative comments with regards to Mr. Harutunian's hiring," he said. "And generally, if there is any upset within the district, at some point in time it lands on my desk."

Kostan said he is hoping not to "dwell" on the situation, and is looking to continue having Harutunian continue with his job until the teacher returns.

"There is no question that he made serious errors in judgment, and I am absolutely not condoning that," he said. "We gave him an opportunity - a second chance at life. It's not a permanent position, and we'll just have to see how it goes."


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