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South Hadley gives Sayer 2 more years on contract

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The South Hadley School Committee approved a two-year contract extension for School Superintendent Gus A. Sayer Thursday.

The two-year extension begins July 1. Sayer was hired as South Hadley's School Superintendent six years ago and earns $125,141 annually. Any salary increases under the new contract extension must still be negotiated.

"I know it was a tough decision for the School Committee because they're under a lot of pressure from various groups, but they are responsible for the town as a whole," Sayer said, of the vote of support.

"There were certainly more questions this year than in previous years," he added.

School Committee members could not be reached Friday for comment.

Sayer's contract renewal comes at a turbulent time in the School Department. Some residents and others outside of town have called for his resignation in the wake of the School Department's handling of the high-profile case involving the late Phoebe Prince, a 15-year-old high school freshman.

Prince hanged herself at her home Jan. 14, and her story exploded onto the national stage in March when Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel brought criminal charges against six students in connection with her death.

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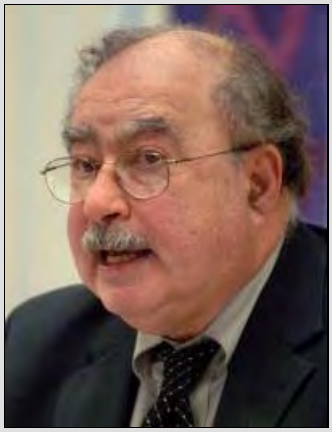

JERREY ROBERTS

South Hadley School Superintendent Gus Sayer reads a prepared statement during a school committee meeting Wednesday at South Hadley High School.

Meantime, Sayer said he still hasn't met with Scheibel to discuss inconsistencies between her team's findings and those of a high school investigation.

Earlier this year, Scheibel suggested school officials could have done more to stop the students who harassed Prince and described "the actions or inactions" of some adults of the school as "troublesome."

School administrators say that until they meet with Scheibel, they won't know what she means.

Asked why he and South Hadley High School Principal Daniel T. Smith have not been able to meet with Scheibel after weeks of requests, Sayer said he didn't have an answer.

"We're still trying to meet with her," Sayer said. "We're available."

Resident Luke T. Gelinas, who has been an outspoken critic of school administrators, said he expected as much from the School Committee in regard to their vote to extend Sayer's contract. "It's typical of the lack of care and concern for our kids," said Gelinas in a phone interview Friday. "They're only concerned about themselves, their friends and the old-boy cronyism that got us all into this mess to begin with."

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Comments

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Shame on them

Shame on South Hadley school board for keeping Sayer on. Not only is it a slap in the communities face, but to the children that are in that school system. Clearly, Mr. Sayer has not been forth coming on the issue of Bullying at the school. Bullying is not something new, and this tragedy with Ms. Prince should not have happened if the administration was doing their job, yet it did happened for a longtime on his watch. The school board acted irresponsibly, and is keeping the very person who is ultimately responsible for the safety of the children on. Keeping him on is a liability, but mostly it will not allow the school to move forward and heal from this horrible tragedy and the stigma that is now associated with the school.
If Sayer had any morals, ethics, and put the children first, he would have stepped down, taking responsibility for his inadaquacies as a leader that lead to this tragedy. If the school board had the childrens' best interest at heart, they would not have kept him on.

The residents of South Hadley should be outraged!

Thankfully school of choice is an option that can be exercised.

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