

# Springfield promotes interim superintendent

*The school board votes to hire Sue Rieke-Smith as the district's permanent chief*

BY ALISHA ROEMELING  
*The Register-Guard*

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield School District has a freshly appointed permanent superintendent.

A unanimous school board voted Monday to hire Sue Rieke-Smith, who served as the district's interim superintendent for a little more than four months, to step into the more longtime role. She previously was the district's assistant superintendent.

Board Chairman Jonathan Light read a page-long statement that addressed how the board came to its decision to hire Rieke-Smith beyond the current school year.

Light said the Oregon School Boards Association conducted a survey of people who have worked closely with Rieke-Smith since her interim appointment on June 30. The survey group consisted of the district's leadership team and administrators, and representatives from employee groups.

The 12-question survey was divided into four categories: vision, communication, personnel and "other."

Light said Rieke-Smith received high marks in all categories.

"We recognize that your runway as our interim superintendent was nearly nonexistent, but you have admirably stepped into some challenging situations and managed to move the organization forward," Light told Rieke-Smith.

"In addition, you have hired talented, outstanding individuals to fill key positions on our leadership team.

"Despite your short tenure, you have demonstrated the qualities and characteristics of a strong and visionary leader, and are well-positioned to move our district forward," Light added in his statement, which was signed by all five board members.

Rieke-Smith succeeds Hertica Martin, who announced in April her in-

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tentions to resign in June. Martin's resignation followed an employee survey that found the majority of the 389 surveyed disapproved of her performance. Many described her as a poor communicator who rarely was seen in school buildings.

Rieke-Smith is earning \$137,500 this school year — the same amount that Martin was paid last year. Rieke-Smith's salary figure doesn't include expense stipends, health care benefits and 6 percent contribution to the Public Employees Retirement System that the district will provide her.

A new salary for the 2016-17 school year will be negotiated later between Rieke-Smith and the board.

Previously, some board members had said that this school year could serve as Rieke-Smith's "on-the-job interview" for the permanent superintendency. Monday's decision means the board will abandon a national search for candidates.

Following the board's unanimous vote, Rieke-Smith smiled brightly and thanked members for their sentiments.

"Thank you for the confidence moving forward," she said. "I'm really looking forward to the next adventure with all of you."

Light said the board next year will engage in a broader "climate survey" to assess others' sentiments about the district's future direction.

Before coming to Springfield, Rieke-Smith spent 14 years in the Sa-

lem-Keizer School District as a middle school teacher, principal and administrator.

Also on Monday, the board approved a resolution that will authorize chief operating officer Brett Yancey to move forward with the process of financing a new administrative building.

Yancey asked the board to approve up to \$4 million at a 5 percent interest rate. The district has not yet decided on a bank through which it hopes to take out a low-interest, 15-year loan, but will be working on that decision this week.

In October, the board voted to spend \$2.4 million to purchase a downtown building at 640 A Street. The 30,000-square-foot building, which was constructed in 1973, is

owned by the Lane Council of Governments and is rented to the state Department of Transportation.

Yancey said the remaining \$1.6 million will be needed for a new heating and air conditioning system and new carpets in the A Street building, as well as some seismic renovations and the purchase of more property for staff parking.

The school district's search for a new administrative center began in earnest after a report published in June found the current building, at 525 Mill St., to be at high risk of collapse in the event of a strong earthquake.

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*Follow Alisha on Twitter @alisharoemeling. Email [alisha.roemeling@registerguard.com](mailto:alisha.roemeling@registerguard.com).*