

LOCAL NEWS

After Massachusetts superintendent candidate wrote 'ladies' in email, the School Committee rescinded its offer

Vito Perrone, the interim superintendent of West Springfield Public Schools, no longer has an offer to become the superintendent in Easthampton. (LinkedIn photo)

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By **RICK SOBEY** | rick.sobey@bostonherald.com | Boston Herald
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A “microaggression” was big enough to cost one superintendent candidate his dream job, he says.

Vito Perrone said he’s “shocked” and “devastated” after the Easthampton School Committee pulled back its offer for him to lead the district because he used the term “ladies” in an email to the committee chair.



Perrone said he was all excited to become the superintendent of Easthampton Public Schools, but the rug was pulled out from under him after his email to School Committee Chairperson Cynthia Kwiecinski and the School Committee assistant.

Perrone, the interim superintendent of West Springfield Public Schools, had addressed the pair as “ladies” in the email that was going over three negotiation points after the School Committee had offered him the superintendent job.

Following that email, Perrone was invited to an executive session held over Zoom. After the School Committee met alone for about 45 minutes, Kwiecinski informed Perrone that the committee had voted to rescind the superintendent offer.

“I was shocked,” Perrone, 58, said on Monday. “I basically said, ‘What?’”

He said he was told in the private meeting, “‘Because the email you sent was addressed to ladies and that was a microaggression, and it was disrespectful and unacceptable... As an educational leader, you should know that was a microaggression. You can’t lead us in the direction we want to go in this district.’”

This was first reported by the Daily Hampshire Gazette, and the story has since been picked up by national publications.

Growing up in the 1960s and 70s, Perrone said the terms “ladies” and “gentlemen” were respectful, and it’s why he used “ladies” in the email.

During the private meeting, Perrone said he responded, “‘If I offended you, I apologize. It wasn’t my intent.’”

He was then asked to leave the executive session.

“I was devastated,” Perrone told the Herald. “I was very excited about the prospect of coming back to Easthampton where I was a principal before, and to have it taken away like that is pretty devastating.”

He said he talked with a lawyer from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, who told him there was no legal recourse because he hadn’t signed anything.



The Herald on Monday reached out to Easthampton Mayor Nicole LaChapelle, who is on the School Committee, for a comment about rescinding the superintendent offer.

“The Mayor is awaiting legal clarification around Executive Session privilege before commenting and the City cannot comment on personnel matters,” responded Lindsay Mailler, executive assistant in the Mayor’s Office.

The Herald also reached out to the School Committee chairperson, Kwiecinski. She did not immediately respond to comment.

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