

# Interim school chief at Grand Island schools held Lackawanna post

By Laura E. Winchester, Buffalo News

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The retired superintendent of the Lackawanna School District will fill that position for the Grand Island district on an interim basis. Paul Hashem's appointment was approved Monday night by the Grand Island Board of Education, just minutes before board President David Goris, in a surprise move, announced his resignation. He had been re-elected to another three-year term last May. Goris, who works at Lactalis American Group, parent company of Sorrento Cheese, [cited work](#) and "personal and professional considerations" in resigning, effective at the end of Monday.

Hashem, who retired as Lackawanna superintendent in 2008, replaces Robert Christmann, who had been serving on an interim basis since announcing his retirement in October. A graduate of Canisius [College and](#) the University at Buffalo, Hashem, 66, had been with the Lackawanna district since 1968. He moved into the top post in 2001. Hashem was also interim superintendent of the Springville-Griffith Institute from January to July 2011.

Christmann, who is now executive director of the Western New York Educational Services Council, had been Grand Island superintendent for six years. Hashem is a former member of the council's board of directors.

Under terms of a contract approved by the board in October, Christmann was serving on a part-time basis until a new superintendent was on board, probably July 1, the [start](#) of the 2013-14 school year. Christmann's last day is Thursday, marking the culmination of a 45-year career in education, including 22 as a superintendent.

In a 4-3 vote Dec. 10, the board ended the contract. Goris voted not to terminate Christmann's contract. He was joined by Joan Droit and Glenn Bobeck. Donna Tomkins moved the vote to end the contract and was joined by Tak Nobumoto, Paul Krull and Emily Ciraolo.

Monday, Tomkins moved the resolution to appoint Hashem. Bobeck abstained from the vote, and Droit was absent. Hashem will serve full time, and he starts Friday.

Christmann, whose wife, Karen, a retired teacher, was at the meeting, offered his "final thoughts" on his tenure. Included was praise for the board, faculty, staff, administrators, students and the Town Board. He said he was especially proud of the district being among Business First's top 10 best districts academically in Western New York and among the top 100 districts nationally, according to Newsweek and U.S. News and World Reports.

Goris said the district was better off for having had Christmann as superintendent. Bobeck said of the departing board president, "You always treated people fairly and did the right thing." The other four board members made no comment. Christmann praised Goris, who has served for 10½ years, as a "stellar board member," adding that the board president's resignation "is a major loss in leadership." The other board members made no comment and showed no reaction as Goris passed out a printed statement on his resignation, which was not on the agenda.

With a new interim superintendent and one fewer member, the board has a full slate of business during the next few months, including preparing a new budget, hiring a new superintendent, going out to bid and awarding contracts for the \$51.4 million capital project and decisions to make regarding the \$6.3 million bus transportation center approved by voters .