

Newton Schools chief stepping down to run workforce training nonprofit

Fleishman will depart Newton at end of school year for new job with JVS

By **Jon Chesto** Globe Staff, Updated April 7, 2022, 35 minutes ago



Newton superintendent David Fleishman speaks at a panel in Newton in 2015. (Photo Credit: Justin Saglio) THE BOSTON GLOBE

The head of the Newton school system, one of the largest in the state, announced on Thursday that he is stepping down at the end of the school year to take a job running Jewish Vocational Service in Boston.

David Fleishman will take over as chief executive in July at JVS, one of the biggest workforce training nonprofits in the Northeast.

Fleishman broke the news in an email to Newton parents on Thursday afternoon, in which he called being the city's schools superintendent "the privilege of a lifetime."

"While very different from a school district, the core mission of JVS aligns with my personal and professional commitment to advancing issues of economic and social justice through the lens of education, skill development, and support," Fleishman wrote.

He will be replacing longtime chief executive Jerry Rubin, who is retiring at the end of this month after a 15-year tenure in which he tripled the organization's size. JVS now has a budget of \$20 million, employs about 200 people, and helps at least 16,000 people each year, many of them adult immigrants.

Rubin also helped build the organization's reputation as a leading workforce training center. While its name reflects its origins helping displaced Jews who came to the US in the 1930s, the mission was expanded over time to help a broad range of immigrant groups, starting with the Vietnamese who settled in Dorchester in the 1970s. Nearly half of the group's current revenue comes from government funds, while most of the rest comes from donations and philanthropic grants. Just under 10 percent of its revenue comes from employers paying for services.

Joe Zeff, chairman of the JVS board, said the organization will be overseen by its existing executives and board members in the interim period between Rubin's departure and Fleishman's arrival. Zeff declined to say how much Fleishman will earn in his new job. (Rubin earned base compensation of \$252,000 in 2020, and another \$44,000 in other compensation.)

"From the beginning, we were looking for someone who could articulate a great, grand strategic vision for JVS, somebody who is passionate about our mission," Zeff said. "In coming to know David, we learned just how driven he is by his passion for learning [and] his passion for furthering the cause of social justice and equity. ... We know we can't

clone Jerry. We never set out to find a carbon copy of Jerry that we could just slot in

[but] there is massive opportunity for JVS as an organization to build on the successes we have had.”

Fleishman will be leaving a much bigger organization in Newton, where he oversees a budget of \$252 million and about 2,500 employees. He’s had the Newton job for 12 years, but is intrigued by the opportunity to start a new chapter in his career. He said he’s excited to take the reins at JVS, which runs the state’s downtown Boston MassHire career center, at a time when so many companies are having a hard time finding workers and there’s such a premium placed for retraining, to help fill all the open jobs.

“We have this tight labor market, this intense focus on job and wage quality,” Fleishman said in an interview. “To me, that is just an incredible opportunity. ... I consider it a pivotal moment for JVS, and that really excites me [and] I look at this as a wonderful opportunity to contribute in a different way.”

Fleishman is the latest in a string of superintendents of major local school districts to step down in the last year or so. Along with the pandemic, Newton has been wrestling with a \$5.2 million budget shortfall amid declining enrollment and [last month said](#) it may need to cut up to 74 positions.

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