

Spotlight on the Board

Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings

January 24th, 2008

This was a Special Board of Education meeting called to discuss the superintendent selection process. All Board members were present at roll call. Board member Wendy Rowden was available by phone.

Board Discussion

Superintendent Selection Process

Board President Tim Millar – Stated that the purpose of the Special meeting was to make sure that members agree to the process of selecting the next superintendent of schools as they move forward through the hiring process so as to minimize any conflicts.

Board member Sue Quinn – Thinks that it is very important for the Board to have some kind of discussion about the superintendent candidates and work towards some consensus. Suggests that the Board have a full discussion of each of the candidates and their pros and cons. Says every Board member brings something to the table and has a viewpoint on things that have value. Wants to hear what each member has to say.

Board member Kelly Keenan – Is interested in hearing what everyone has to say also but is more interested in the method in which the Board chooses the candidate or candidates. In the past week, Keenan researched various methods used by corporate and legislative Boards to rank candidates. Didn't find any methods similar to the way this Board did it last week.

Millar - Said that the process they used last time (last week) wasn't that far off. In the end, a candidate will need at least four votes to have a chance. Ranking is difficult. The Board has to find commonality that we all support or at least the majority.

Quinn – Thought that the straw vote taken last week (after first interviews were done) was to get a feeling of where every Board member was at – she had expected that there would be a full discussion about the pros and cons (of each candidate). Thought there may or may not be a shifting of votes after that. The majority of the Board needs to agree about each of the candidates that are moved forward (in the process). Having your favorite is wonderful but more important is someone everyone can live with.

Board member Nancy Lee Carlson – The search firm already did the ranking and interviewed many people. She didn't rank the candidates because there will be a second set of interviews. The consultants already looked at a larger pool of candidates with our criteria in mind. Thought that what the Board did last time (last week) was the methodology it had agreed upon. It made sense to her, thought what they did was fine. Doesn't see a need to revisit what we have already done considering we have paid a search firm. They already went through that selection process and brought us eight candidates. The Board interviewed them and each member made a decision as to the top three candidates.

Quinn – Concerned about two things. First, doesn't think the Board agreed upon the process ahead of time as a group. Thought the straw vote that was taken would be the beginning not the end of the process. That is why Quinn feels the Board needs to have some discussion. The discussion is relevant to down selecting (the candidate pool). Quinn may have her ideas about each candidate but says that another Board member may have seen something that she missed/didn't catch but would be very important to her had she caught it. Said that the discussion may lead to the same outcome as last week and that is fine. A deliberate process is important. The community has tasked the Board with an important job and thinks the Board owes it to be deliberate. Second, if the Board is trying to reach consensus, it may have a consensus candidate in the eight already interviewed or not. If after

discussion, we find we don't have a real solid consensus candidate, maybe we go back to BWP & Associates for more options.

Board member Wendy Rowden – Feels uncomfortable that several Board members left the meeting last week feeling concerned about the way that the process went. Agrees with Quinn, what Rowden thought was the beginning of a process to narrow the field turned into the final decision. Said it is not about not being happy with the final decision, it is feeling that the Board did not have the opportunity to have a discussion about the candidates. Then she found out some very pertinent information about one candidate that she had no idea about that some Board members did know. Thinks discussion may have brought that out and it is important when narrowing the field of candidates down. Also agrees with Carlson – narrow the field down in your own mind but not necessarily rank the candidates. Knows that the process is going to be more involved when two or three candidates are brought in for second interviews. Right now, discussion is extremely important to narrow the field. Said that there was information that was not revealed to her about a particular candidate.

Board member James Ekeberg – Has a hard time going through the process again when two candidates had 6 of 7 votes and one candidate had five votes. No one else had a majority.

Quinn – Said that since this discussion now and the deliberation that didn't happen (last week), Quinn thinks she would change her vote on what her perspective was. Doesn't really care what method is used but rather ensuring that the Board has a full discussion ahead of time. Feels very strongly about the discussion part of it.

Board member Gerald Chapman – Offered a proposal before the Board. Suggests that after the Board goes into closed session, it takes each candidate in order and allow every Board member to make a single comment about that candidate, pro or con. Continue to do that as long as members have comments to make. Then go on to the next candidate and do the same thing. At the end, as was done before, each Board member can identify those candidates that they would like to see a second time and identify those that at this point would be eliminated. If any of the candidates gets a majority as being viable for a second interview, they are brought back.

Chapman said that the Board is not looking to identify a single candidate and he is not interested in ranking candidates at this point. There is a danger in that you may get a mental set that one person may be better than the other. What we are really looking at is people we believe have the skills that can come in and be our superintendent recognizing the fact that this is a Board decision not an individual decision.

Action Item

Process to Select New Superintendent

A motion was made and unanimously approved by the Board to discuss each of the eight superintendent candidates previously interviewed by the Board. Each Board member will be allowed to make a comment on a revolving basis until all comments about each candidate have been made. The same process will be used for each candidate. Afterwards, the Board will be polled and those candidates with a majority of Board votes will be invited back for a second interview and those without will be eliminated.

Executive Session

The Board went into Executive Session at 7:25 p.m. to narrow down the superintendent candidate pool using the process voted upon.