

WORK SESSION MINUTES

Chair Zach Bessett called the work session to order at 5:35 pm, in the Board Room of the District Administration Center, 640 A Street, in Springfield and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board members present included Board Chair Zach Bessett, Vice Chair Michelle Webber, Laurie Adams, Dr. Emilio Hernandez and Naomi Raven.

District staff and community members identified included Bruce Smolnisky, Jenna McCulley, David Collins, Dustin Reese, Suzy Price, Brian Megert, Whitney McKinley, Jeff Michna, Anne Goff, Mike Eyster, Jonathan Light, Shawn Walker, Judy Bowden, and Erin Hagen.

Board members met in a work session on November 13, 2018 to continue their work on the superintendent search process with Dr. Steve Lowder from MacPherson and Jacobson.

Dr. Lowder began by giving the board an overview of the search process. He said that Phase 1 was where they would establish characteristics of the new superintendent, created a timeline for the search and determined advertising venues. He stated that in Phase II they would host input meetings with stakeholder groups identified by the board, as well as would develop and distribute application and advertising materials. Additionally, Phase II included recruiting and tracking applicants.

Dr. Lowder noted that they had already met with the district administrative team.

Laurie Adams asked if the administrative team referred to more than the Cabinet.

Superintendent Bruce Smolnisky replied they had met with all administrators with the exception of the Cabinet.

Dr. Lowder said they would place the announcement of vacancy after they discussed parameters.

Dr. Emilio Hernandez asked about the wording "if desired" on page seven, bullet-point five in the executive summary. He expressed concern that this language would prevent them from keeping the pool open to non-traditional candidates.

Dr. Lowder said they were able keep the pool open to non-traditional candidates and stated that it would depend on what the board preferred.

Dr. Hernandez said he would not like to see anyone excluded that met the criteria.

Dr. Lowder clarified that they would not leave anyone out that met the initial criteria and noted that this went a step beyond that by including people who had not had any previous education experience.

Dr. Hernandez said for him, non-traditional was a term that denoted inclusivity in relation to race and gender.

Jenna McCulley arrived at 5:43pm.

Dr. Lowder replied that in this instance, it referred to candidates with no previous education experience.

Dr. Hernandez said he would prefer to ask their legal counsel to comment on the ambiguity of the language.

Shawn Walker suggested they include an amendment or addendum to the packet that further clarified the term.

Board Chair Zach Bessett asked Dr. Lowder if he could send the board an amendment clarifying the language.

Dr. Lowder replied that they could create an amendment that clarified the term non-traditional.

Dr. Lowder stated that they would assist the board in determining interview procedures and noted that their process was to keep the names of the candidates confidential until the finalists were named. He said that in Phase III they evaluated each applicant against the selection criteria and conducted deep reference checks.

Ms. Adams asked if the board would be involved in the reference checks.

Dr. Lowder responded that the board would not be involved in reference checks. He said they would bring between five and ten highly qualified candidates to the board. At that meeting the board would be able to select their finalists for interviews.

Mr. Bessett asked if the board could be involved earlier in the process.

Dr. Lowder said they could, but surmised they would prefer to not be involved before they received the short list.

Mr. Bessett asked how many applicants were expected.

Dr. Lowder responded it was hard to say, but he expected they would get about thirty-five applicants. He said they could screen out those who were not qualified to be in the pool, and then share the candidates who met the initial qualifications with the board. He added that they could have time to review the initial list prior to the short-list presentation if they would like.

Mr. Bessett said the board had spoken about internal candidates and allowing interim candidates to interview.

Dr. Lowder said that request was on their list. He noted the next item in Phase III was to develop interview questions and stated that the board had the option to write their own interview questions, use questions his organization had developed, or a combination of both.

Mr. Bessett asked how many questions they should be prepared to ask.

Dr. Lowder responded it was largely dependent on time and suggested including questions that addressed issues the board and stakeholders had identified as important. He said that if the interview was an hour, they would probably ask ten or fifteen questions.

Dr. Lowder said that Phase IV included selecting applicants to be interviewed, interviewing, having the candidates meet with the stakeholders and the selection of the new superintendent. He suggested they allow a full day for each of the finalists to go around and view the schools, meet with community

members, and see a presentation from staff. He cautioned to ask stakeholder groups to give the board their general impressions of candidates rather than rank them, so it would not bias their own views before the interview. He added that this would provide a check and balance to ensure the board had the same impression as the community.

Dr. Hernandez asked what the process was between the first screening group and choosing the five or ten finalists.

Dr. Lowder replied that they try to make the best match based on characteristics expressed by the board and the experience of the candidate.

Dr. Hernandez said he would prefer to see the what criteria rankings were.

Mr. Bessett asked if they would be able to have that information before the interviews.

Dr. Lowder replied that they could provide it beforehand.

Dr. Lowder stated that his organization would notify applicants if they were or were not selected and conduct background checks. He said that in Phase V they would help establish performance objectives for the new superintendent. He added that they provided a two-year guarantee to conduct the search free of charge that if the person leaves the position before the two-year period ends.

Dr. Hernandez asked if they were using the previous goals for the superintendent.

Mr. Bessett said they planned to keep the same goals, but change the process of evaluation for superintendent.

Mr. Smolnisky clarified that the Cabinet had been updating the goals throughout the year and could send that information over to the board.

Ms. Raven asked if they had articulated what they would accept as evidence of progress toward the accomplishment of the superintendent's objectives.

Mr. Smolnisky said that information would also be included in what he sent the board.

Mr. Bessett said the board had a proposal for a salary.

Ms. Adams asked how much the previous superintendent was making when she left.

Mr. Smolnisky replied that this year she would have been earning about \$165,000.

Ms. Raven said she was not clear how comfortable the community would be with the salary range in the proposal.

Mr. Bessett responded that the community had given feedback that they felt the base salary of \$200,000 was a lot.

Ms. Adams said she did not want to start someone off with a bad feeling from the community.

Dr. Hernandez asked what a community this size would typically pay a superintendent.

Dr. Lowder said their situation was unique in that they had two communities of different sizes side-by-side. He stated that it was important to have a range based on qualifications and then set the salary after negotiating with the successful candidate.

Ms. Raven wondered if they would not attract great candidates if they provided a cap on the salary range.

Dr. Lowder said it was better to provide a range that they felt comfortable with. He cautioned that if they did not provide a cap to the range, they might not attract qualified candidates (who would assume the cap was much lower than it actually was).

Mr. Bessett proposed a salary range of \$170,000 to \$185,000.

Ms. Adams said she thought the proposed range was too low.

Dr. Hernandez said considering the growth they were expecting, he believed the cap should be \$200,000. He added that he wanted to pay a salary suitable for someone who desired to stay in the district.

Dr. Lowder noted that if someone came in with no experience as a superintendent, they would not be expected to pay them \$200,000. Ultimately it was the board's decision based on what they thought the community was comfortable with.

Dr. Hernandez asked what was available in the budget.

Mr. Smolnisky replied that they would build what was directed by the board into the budget. He added that it was also dependent on what funding they received from the state.

Ms. Raven asked if the salary would be in proportion to what the rest of the staff was making.

Mr. Smolnisky replied he could not answer the question because it was a collective bargaining issue.

Vice Chair Michelle Webber said she thought it was important to set a large enough range to accommodate what they thought the final candidate deserved.

Ms. Adams shared that in years past, the board wanted to increase the superintendent's salary, but the previous superintendent did not want a salary increase. She stated that she thought they should make the salary high enough to entice someone to want to be in their district.

Mr. Bessett proposed a salary range of \$175,000 to \$195,000 based upon experience and qualifications.

Dr. Lowder listed the characteristics and qualities desired in the superintendent, including:

- A visionary, ethical and inspirational leader who demonstrates honesty, empathy, trust, humor and hard work
- An outspoken leader of "Equity" who is mission-driven to ensure success for each student
- Successful track record of improving social and academic success for communities of color, diversity and poverty
- A leader who will embrace and promote the current strategic plan and will employ courageous conversations to improve and achieve its objectives
- A community leader who is dedicated to making a long-term commitment to the District, students and community
- Demonstrates superior written and verbal communication skills

- A collaborative yet decisive decision maker who holds him or herself and others to the same high expectations and accountability

Mr. Bessett stated he thought they did a good job capturing the characteristics the board was looking for.

Dr. Lowder went over notable dates in the superintendent search timeline, which included: posting the opening the week of November 12, closing applications on January 16, reference checks between January 17 and February 7, a shortlist presentation to the board on February 12 or 13, interviews the week of February 18, callbacks the following week, a board discussion on March 11, and an announcement the following day. He highlighted that these were flexible target dates.

Ms. Adams asked where opportunities were for the community to tell the board what they would like to see in a candidate.

Mr. Bessett said the community would have this opportunity the first week of December in listening sessions.

Dr. Lowder added that on the day of the interview, the candidate would meet with constituent groups and there was also a second interview team that would provide the board with feedback.

Dr. Lowder noted that the groups involved in the superintendent search listening sessions (held the first week of December), included the Cabinet, student leadership classes, building representatives from the Springfield Education Association (SEA) and the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), the Student V.O.I.C.E., a community forum, elected officials, United Front, and education partners.

Ms. Adams asked who the education partners were.

Ms. Bowden replied that they could potentially include someone from Lane Community College, superintendents from other districts, and someone from the University of Oregon Education Department.

Dr. Lowder said the board would receive a summary and consensus report from each of the groups.

Mr. Smolnisky noted there was also an online survey available.

Mr. Bessett asked about creating a list for personal invitations.

Dr. Lowder said they had the option of sending personal invitations to people to attend the community forums.

The work session was adjourned at 6:36 pm.