

**MEETING MINUTES  
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD MEETING  
November 14, 2016**

PRESENT: Board of Education: J. Schumacher, S. Marchese, Z. Ellis, C. Baker, J. Brodrick, M. Vanderwert, C. Vue

Staff: Superintendent Thein, J. Peterson, K. Wilcox-Harris, K. Her, a. Collins, J. Skelly, R. Currier, N. Cameron, J. Turner, L. Sayles-Adams

Other: T. Lonetree, E. Johns, B. Roston, P. Phillips, T. Jacobson, G. Ray, L. Brach, C. Morris

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

**II. AGENDA**

**A. Interviews of Search Firms**

**1. Firm #1 - School Exec Connect (SEC)**

School Exec Connect presented their proposal and information on their firm.

**Questions/Discussion:**

- Of you last three Superintendent searches, how many of your placed candidates have remained in their roles for three years or longer? Response: Every candidate in Minnesota has stayed three years or longer with two exceptions.
- How do you define diversity and how will your firm engage candidates from diverse communities? Response: Gender, race, ethnicity. SEC consistently has very diverse pools of applicants and selected candidates. St. Cloud, Robinsdale and Rochester most recently. Minority candidates make up about 60% of SEC pools.
- To ensure success of candidate what does your firm do with the Board to ensure success? Response: We mentor the person for the first year in partnership with the district. The Superintendent must have a strong evaluation agreement with the Board. We also periodically check in with Boards to see if anything is needed.
- The mentoring would be separate negotiated contract – Yes. Also, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators has a group on call to answer questions as needed.
- What has been the most challenging search and how was it handled? Response: Rochester. They had parted ways with their Superintendent. There was controversy in the district both for and against. There were also five new board members. SEC ran the process to find out what was going on. The biggest part of the community engagement process met with large number of very diverse groups with the result that they did not want a minority candidate. Brought in candidates, when selection was made ( a minority candidate) the community was pleased. The process re-engaged the Board with the community. At the end of the search anyone caring about the school district community felt engaged in the process of search. The community was able to have input into the process.
- We expect to get tremendous response to the search. You say you will bring five to seven candidates to the Board. Could there be a way for the Board to be made

aware of the complete line-up of people who did apply? Response: Yes that can be done. The Minnesota State Law on open meeting states anytime a majority of Board is present it is a public meeting. The candidates are guaranteed privacy until they are named as a candidate to be interviewed. Therefore SEC cannot divulge 20 names to the Board as a whole. If a Board personnel committee of 3 or fewer members is established, only the people on that committee have the right to see those names. SEC does provide a list of all of the states applicants come from, positions held and how many of them, how many completed everything in the application and who did not. One thing you need to think seriously about is the seriousness of having a candidate's name get out if they will not be interviewed – it would have serious impact on their existing position.

- SPPS has initiated a large community engagement process; what has not been defined is handoff between the representative group and the search firm, how would you work in that situation. Response: They will work on community engagement? Reply: The process has not been decided. Response: SEC would be in discussion with the Board to share experiences and backgrounds and it would end up with a very engaged process that is legal. The end result is what SPPS is looking for in a Superintendent, the eight to 10 most important things you want in the new superintendent.
- How do you go about recruiting and connecting with candidates not working in this part of the country? Response: We have consultants who have done searches across the country, they know who is being successful. We also have connections with many groups. We know a large number of superintendents who have been through other searches and who know of additional candidates. Contacts, connections, people who know - it is an art.
- SPPS has a racial equity policy – how does diversity impact a search. Response: We look at backgrounds – what they have done, how they have been successful. We would look for candidates who have shown experience in that area and assess their success in their community, their relationships and student achievement. We vet candidates and do face to face interviews that include racial equity questions. We want to know where their heart is and how they feel about equity as a whole.
- What about alternative licensure candidates? Response: We placed David Jennings so we have had experience with it. If the fit is there that will rise up, they would be picked because they match criteria.
- St. Paul has a diverse population, how would you help recruitment since we have had a minority female superintendent already. St. Paul also has a large Asian American population – how would you find Asian candidates, what have you done in the past? Response: We have put a number of candidates through the U of MN licensure program – a very diverse population for that. Contacts are the biggest thing, we know a lot of leaders in the various ethnicities who can refer candidates. We expect the pool will be diverse, competent and capable. The fact SPPS has an interim superintendent is a plus; the new person will have the greatest chance of success with this scenario.
- The pool of candidates is it reduced by superintendents placed in the last six years? Response: We do not recruit but any superintendent can ask to be part of the pool. We do ask that they let their Board know they were not recruited.

## 2. Firm #2 - McPherson & Jacobson

The firm's representative present information on their firm and their search process.

### Questions/Discussion:

- What are the challenges around SPPS's situation? Response: Every district is unique and has issues. Any large urban district faces challenges. We see this as a healing process and will involve stakeholders in that process. They will help define

what issues are facing the district, what skills, qualities and characteristics they want in a Superintendent.

- In the hiring process once get to the interview the stage, the vetting process could be a concern. Racial equity is important to the district and we need someone who understands it deeply and is able to navigate the issues. What do you do to ensure the best are not weeded out?. Response: The vetting process involves a multiracial team working with all urban districts. As we begin the vetting process we met with your community to identify issues, those are share with the candidates.
- How to you get to information that might be an embarrassment in a candidate's background? Response: We ask them to name two or three references, then we ask those references for two to three other persons, etc. We speak to these individuals and look for commonality of answers. As we meet with the Board you will have all the names of those who applied, you will create a short list of what you are looking for, we do pre-interviews and Board will then tell us who they want to interview. Candidates should be a good match to what the Board and the community said would be successful.
- How do you avoid betraying the privacy candidates should enjoy? Response: There is transparency in the process but names are confidential until individuals are selected as a finalist. Names of those not selected do not make the light of day. The process proceeds with a slate most closely meeting the criteria; it is finally the Board's search and decision. We do provide a video interview of those on the short list.
- Tell us about a school board you were able to work with well and one you could not work with as well. Response: You have to have trust the process. The Boards we click with trust the firm, where we have difficulty is with Boards who want to go their own direction but ultimately it is the Board's process.
- How do you work locally in terms of consultants, understanding the SPPS ecosystem, etc. Response: We do have Minnesota based consultants who will work with you during the process. We do work across the US. In the process you can expect about 80-85% of applications will come from this state or surrounding states. We meet people on the job, at various group events, we get names and recommendations from a wide range of contacts but in the end most applicants are regional.
- For your recent searches what was the diversity of the candidates – what worked well and how are things going for them so far? Response: Out of 53 candidates 45% were minority. This was narrowed to six of which four were minorities and two were white. There was gender mix as well.
- In your documents you state you recruit nontraditional candidates for districts with a high priority for racial equity. How do you do that? Response: We ask if a Board is interested in non-traditional candidates. We have placed non-traditional minority candidates. They usually come from a military association. You want to hire the very best candidate available. The Board must make that choice.
- Of the last three superintendent searches where you placed candidates what is the length of tenure? Response: 80% 5 years, 60% 10 years and 50% 15 years. The average is a seven to nine year tenure.
- You have a one year transition period? Response: Yes, after you have hired your superintendent the firm works with the Board and superintendent for one year. Two to three performance objectives are defined for the first year. Once that is done we follow up with Board members to find evidence of progress being made. There has to be clarity of expectations. We recommend a yearly retreat for the Board, Superintendent and their leadership team to establish important goals for the next 12 months. This allows for a regular transition to and concentration on core issues.

### 3. Firm #3 - Ray & Associates

Three representative from this firm were present for the interview. They reviewed the various reasons the SPPS Board should hire them.

Questions/Discussion:

- What is your average placement tenure? Response: Eight years overall, urban six years.
- In your RFP you describe a role in connecting with and meeting with stakeholders and engagement groups. Will working with Mitchell Hamline be an issue? Response: We are aware of the work being done. We will meet with as many groups and individuals as the Board wants us to. We feel we would complement the existing process very well. We would meet to discuss the foundation to be laid for what to do when meeting with stakeholders. Integrating and aligning will fit well with the process.
- Have you had legal Issues? Suites regarding search efforts? Response: One in Kentucky for a commissioner search. None for school districts.
- The application process – why is it difficult to complete? Response: Candidates submit a resume and complete a form from the firm. References provide us a start. Our staff follows up to ensure completion of applications. We do a video that is different from the standards wherein candidates are asked questions they must answer on the spot.
- You say you go to where the community is – how do you that? Response: We do out to the community and find places where they are willing to come to talk with our consultants. The gives an opportunity to people who will talk to the candidates. The community is more apt to come to “home turf”.
- How will you sell SPPS to the most qualified candidates? Response: One representative stated he was a product of the St. Paul community so he has the ability to understand where SPPS is coming from. The process will be transparent and inclusive. We bring resources and understanding of the district and will engage all aspects of the community to create a profile.\
- Where in the process would you begin to look for other references for candidates. Response: We ask references given for others who might have a different point of view. We then do calls and talk with them. We review internet references, etc. We do thorough background investigation on candidates.
- Recruitment – how do you balance obligation, loyalty to candidates and to the district doing the hiring? Response: The Board is the boss. We do do candidate care – we define the process for them before they apply, we ensure a fair shake and confidentiality. We are open and honest with candidates.
- How do you cultivate local talent in recruitment? Response: When we meet with stakeholder groups we ask for names of anyone they think might be interested. we make calls to those individuals about the job. We also get input on individuals the community do not want to see in the process. We have had internal and local candidates get jobs as well as national candidates.
- How many searches do you have going on now – who will be the primary contact? Response. The three individuals present will be the primaries for this search. In total there are nine or 10 in process but not all for a superintendent. No one works on more than two searches at a time.
- Describe a search that went south, why and what the conclusion was. Response: We have not had a search where we did not find a candidate. We have had one where a new board come on part way through the search; they had different priorities. In the end we felt we needed to go back and reconfirm the they were traits looking for. We did find candidates but we should have gone back to reconfirm expectations. We always want to hire the best person for the job.
- You limit consultants to two searches per staff. How many people on the team? Response: SPPS will be our priority.

- What is your percentage of minority placements? Response: That would be most urban district placements at about 80% women and minorities; 60% minorities.

B. Board Consideration of Firms

The Board listed out their third ranked preference which resulted in a close placement between Exec Connect and McPherson. They then provided their input and views on the three firms so each had an idea of where the others were coming from.

A Board member expressed concern about hiring a non-local firm possibly resulting in hiring a non-local candidate. He indicated that has been an issue with the community in the past. He felt School Exec Connect was closer to the action.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** Mr. Marchese moved the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education approve hiring Ray and Associates as consultants for the SPPS Superintendent Search process and that the Board give the Chair the authority to complete negotiations and finalize the contract in order for the search process to begin immediately. Ms. Ellis seconded the motion.

The motion passed with 6 in favor and 1 opposed (Mr. Brodrick).

C. Start Time Discussion

The Chair indicated the proposal was to move this discussion to the December meeting in order for the newly elected Board member to have input in the process.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** Ms Vanderwert moved the Committee of the Board recommend the Board of Education move the vote on School Start Time from the November Board meeting to the December Board meeting in order for the newly elected Board member to participate in the decision on Start Times. Mr. Schumacher seconded the motion.

The motion passed with one abstention (Mr. Vue).

Staff was directed to:

- Prepare a presentation on Start Times for the December 6 Committee of the Board meeting.
- Prepare language for a motion on Start Time to be presented at the COB meeting with the option to vote on it at the December 13 Board meeting
- Remove the Start Time Presentation from the November 15 Board meeting agenda..

It was stated the Board needs to be very clear about what is being voted on. Discussion was held on what would be the most appropriate venue for public comment on the issue.

The following draft proposal for a Board motion was offered for consideration:

***The SPPS Board of Education directs the Superintendent to develop a plan to change school start times, with implementation beginning in the 2018-19 school year. The objective of the change is to align school start times with the health and academic best interests of SPPS students. The restructured system will impact the entire SPPS system; therefore, robust community engagement must be conducted to inform, support, and receive feedback from the SPPS community.***

***Changes to the system must consider the following areas:***

- ***Alignment to research-based recommendations,***

- *Budget implications,*
- *Expanded childcare needs,*
- *Student safety,*
- *Strategic alignment,*
- *Opportunities for expansion of Metro Transit partnership*

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was passed adjourning the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Polsfuss  
Assistant Clerk