

BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
~~Spaulding High School Library~~ and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
April 4, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Boutin (BC) – Chair
Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC) – Vice Chair
Sonya Spaulding (BC)- Clerk
Emily Reynolds (BT)
Garrett Grant (BC)
Alice Farrell (BT)
Catherine Whalen (BT)
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Terry Reil (BT)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources

GUESTS PRESENT:

Tracy Wrend Paul Malone

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Boutin called the Thursday, April 4, 2024, Special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held via video conference due to incimate weather.

2. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Modification - Executive Session change 4.1 Contracts VSA 313 A (1) (a)

Mr. Cecchnelli made a motion to approve the agenda with 4.2 Contracts VSA 313 A (1) added to Executive Session, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding. Motion passed 6 to 1.

Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Spaulding, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Grant, Mrs. Farrell, and Mrs. Whalen - Approved the motion.
Mrs. Leclerc voted against the motion.

3. Current Business

3.1 Superintendent Search

Tracy Wrend, consultant for VSBA provided information on how the superintendent search process works This is her 1st superintendent search but she has extensive experience facilitating administrator searches for multiple types of leadership positions in Vermont. She has been a participant in superintendent searches. Extensive experience with Boards in a role of superintendent and as consultant and someone who supports Board development. She will have full access to resources from VSBA and the ability to collaborate with other search consultants working for VSBA in Vermont.

Plan is to support the board with a process that reflects our values, priorities, and leads to an agreement between us and a really great candidate. Tonight's goal, background information about superintendent searches will be provided to support making some preliminary decisions which will impact our direction going forward and impact our search timeline.

Overview of search process:

- Draft timeline, Roles and Responsibilities, and Agreement on how we work together in the search process.
- Resources: Potential posting and committee charge
- Executive Session to discuss Superintendent salary
- Approve posting, committee charge, and committee structure in that charge.
- Identify next steps for possible Board work next week.

Part I: Goal is usually to hire a superintendent by the end of February, early March. One piece of information to know as we're thinking about going into a superintendent search beginning in April and needing replacement by July 1.

Part II: There's not really a pool of retired superintendents who are willing to fill in positions. The retirement system in Vermont doesn't support candidates working as interim superintendents while receiving retirement benefits. Salaries are higher in other states.

Best time to attract a large pool of superintendents has passed. Law, policy, and regulations can all be impacted without a superintendent in place by July 1.

Part III: A document was shared titled “Board and Search Committee Protocols and Agreements”

Tracy went through each numbered item with the Board members. Preference tonight is to ask if Board members can support these norms. Committee members once chosen will be asked as well.

Motion made by Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding to accept these norms as we deal with Tracy Wrend in the process. Motion passed 6 to 1 to accept the norms as presented.

Discussion ensued about allowing the Board more time to review these and how a norm might affect a person’s voice on the committee.

Mr. Cecchinelli called the question, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding. Motion passed 5 to 2 to move forward without further discussion

Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Spaulding, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Grant, and Mrs. Farrell - Approved the motion.

Mrs. Leclerc and Mrs. Whalen voted against the motion.

Motion passed 6 to 1 to accept the norms as presented.

Mr. Cecchinelli, Mrs. Spaulding, Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Grant, Mrs. Whalen and Mrs. Farrell - Approved the motion.

Mrs. Leclerc voted against the motion.

Mrs. Wrend advised any candidate looking for a position is going to be watching these videos and they are “trying you on” as much as you are “trying them on” and exploring fit. She encourages the board to keep that in mind. Have hard conversations, have disagreements, but also demonstrate governance, practices that leaders like to work within. So we can make a difference together for our students, our schools, and our communities.

Document Titled “BUUSD Superintendent Search Timeline and Process - Spring 2024 was shared:

It’s a working document subject to constant changes with a version date under the title to help keep track of changes. It will be used to communicate with the board, committee, and perhaps community. This document is a tool to help manage the process. We want to focus on the fourth column, Tasks. This should give a sense of the work done in a 4-5 month period, emphasizing the importance of a timeline for attracting candidates and reaching a deal.

- Contact AOE to get approval/permission. That has happened and that task is complete.
- Create and approve a committee screening charge including a committee structure. Superintendent skills and attributes survey (useful way to get community voice on the attributes you want). Board appoints the screening committee members.
- Post position and recruit candidates. Work has begun with the district office to set up communications and a website landing page for the community to get information on the process. Candidates will likely go there and look as well.
- The committee: welcome and orientation meeting will occur. The committee will review the superintendent attribute survey results and consolidate that feedback. That feedback will be used to frame the process, identify screening criteria, and so on. The screening committee operates just like a board. They’ll elect a chair and a clerk, keep minutes and post those meeting minutes, and establish ground rules. The timeline will be revisited with the committee.
- We will have a committee meeting and review candidates who apply and identify the viable candidates based on our search criteria. Create an interview structure and finalize questions for candidates. Once candidates are selected we’ll do semi-finalist interviews.
- After semi-finalist interviews we conduct reference checks. Tracy will communicate with any candidates not moving on. Committee reviews findings from reference checks and will notify the board of their recommended finalists, the qualifications, and findings in reference checks. Work at that point transitions back to the full board.
- During the process above, Tracy will have been working with the full board on a final board interview process including setting dates for board interviews. Oftentimes candidates do stakeholder interviews and site visits. We get real time feedback from them and the board can use that in combination with interviews to select a finalist for the position.
- The Agency of Education needs to be asked to conduct a background check and approve the hiring of the finalist. Then the board can reach an agreement with the finalist and negotiate a contract.
- Tracy’s work with the Board will end with the identification of a finalist. Our work will continue to work with AOE to get final permission to hire, sign the contract, and move on to developing the transition process. Have practices, resources, and strategies in place for an effective working relationship.

How quickly things are agreed on or not agreed on could move the timeline and work out farther. Doesn’t mean we shouldn’t take the time we need to make good decisions if that’s what we need.

Superintendent Screening Committee Charge Spring 2024 shared:

- Charge is modeled entirely from your last committee charge and includes a spot at the bottom to insert an approval date. Tracy proceeded to read through the document.

- Committee Membership: 2 Board Members, 1 Building Administrator, 1 Central Office Member, 1 Teacher and 1 Support Staff Member for a total of 7 members. The smaller the committee the more nimble and efficient they can be. This is an area of choice. Other searches have 3 Board Members, 2 Central Office members, and 2 Teachers.
- Once this has been decided you need to select people and invite them. Appointing people is the fast way to do it. Slower process is to solicit interest and select as a board.
- To do a structure with school employees and the board appoint, the consultant would like the board to allow her to work with the HR dept to select the folks to fill those positions and appoint them based on her recommendation in consultation with HR. That allows people with the intention of potentially applying to be able to apply and ensures employees have the opportunity to be comfortable with the role they are about to serve on the committee.
- Committee members will be expected to participate in all aspects of the screening committee activities fully. If they fail to participate by missing two meetings or fail to follow the committee rules and charges, their appointment will be revoked and a new committee member will be appointed.
- The process: Screening Committee is authorized to work with the VSBA consultant to prepare, distribute, and view candidate materials using electronic resources and conduct first round applicant interviews
 - Screening committee members will be expected to review all candidates applying and complete their own assessment of each candidate.
 - Committee members will not discuss the candidates with one another or others before a full group discussion has occurred to ensure fairness and confidentiality of the candidates.
 - Committee members' individual ratings and comments will be put together by the consultant.
 - Interview candidates and choose up to 3 semi-finalists to recommend for interviews by the Board. The Board will publicly announce the list of finalist candidates once references have been completed.
 - The screening committee chair is responsible for communication with the committee and district board chair.
 - All screening committee meetings shall be advertised and open to the public. Committee will review candidate materials and discussions in executive session and comply with open meeting law requirements. The committee will keep meeting minutes and send a copy to the board clerk within 5 days following each screening committee meeting.

Three main decision points:

- Are you comfortable with language that says the committee will present up to 3, up to 3 implies that they may present 0, 1 or 2. Some boards know they want to see at least 2 candidates.
- Structure of the committee.
- How you want to select committee members - recruit and appoint or solicit interest and select as a board. Soliciting interest and having people write why they want to serve and then meeting to review. Good for community engagement but the con is it's slow, up to a month.

Mrs. Farrell made a motion to adhere to the rule of up to 3 for our candidate search to be presented to the Board, seconded by Mrs. Leclerc. Motion approved unanimously.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to accept the committee members as recommended, seconded by Mr. Grant. Motion approved unanimously.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to allow Tracy Wrend to work with HR to recommend employees to appoint in employee spots on the committee, seconded by Ms. Reynolds. Motion approved unanimously.

Draft job posting was shared. A notice of vacancy is posted on SchoolSpring currently. Tracy has drafted a job posting which could be used to replace the notice of vacancy. Follows the exact format that applicants typically expect to see in job postings. Tracy drew the description of what we are looking for in a candidate from our draft job description. The consultant read through the job posting. The hope is a job posting can be approved after the executive session tonight or at the least give a preliminary approval allowing the posting with the understanding we can revise and update if new information suggests that it's worthwhile to revisit. Correction in the document made by Mr. Boutin to "Granite Center of the World".

4. Executive Session

4.1 Contract 1 V.S.A. § 313 A (1) (a)

4.2 Personnel Contacts 1 V.S.A. § 313 A (1) (a)

Mrs. Farrell made a motion to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the superintendent's salary clearly places the Board at a substantial disadvantage if the Board risks disclosing it's negotiating strategy if discussed in public, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding. Motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Spaulding made the motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract language under VSA 313 A (1) (A), inviting the consultant and the Director of Human Resources. Seconded by Mr. Grant at 7:43 p.m., motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Farrell made a motion to exit the executive session at 8:38 p.m. Mr. Grant seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to approve and amend the job posting to indicate we are seeking an interim or permanent superintendent and that salary will be based upon experience, seconded by Mrs. Farrell. Motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Farrell made a motion to approve the Superintendent Screening Committee Charge as written, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding. Motion passed unanimously.

The consultant questioned if the Board would like to discuss who the two Board members will be tonight or decide that next week? It was suggested to decide next week since they're short one Board member.

Things for next week's Board meeting (April 10, 2024):

- Approve Board members
- Consultant may provide a slate of other committee members
- Consultant will provide a sample survey on the superintendent's skills and attributes
- Consultant will provide an updated timeline.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the personnel contracts clearly places the Board at a substantial disadvantage if the Board risks disclosing, seconded by Mr. Grant. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Grant made the motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel contracts, inviting the Director of Human Resources. Seconded by Mrs. Whalen at x:xx p.m., motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Farrell made a motion to exit the executive session at 9:02 p.m. Mr. Grant seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 to 1, Mrs. Leclerc abstained.

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to approve the administrative contracts and authorize Mr. Hennessey and Mr. Boutin to sign, Mr. Grant seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 to 1, Mrs. Leclerc abstained.

4. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Leclerc, seconded by Mr. Grant, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Gilbert