

Thursday, May 3, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE  
OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 3, 2018,  
at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m. Present were members Chair Hernan Illingworth, Sybil Allen and Jessica Martinez. Board member Joseph Sokolovic was present. Board member Maria Pereira arrived subsequently as noted.

Ms. Allen moved to approve the committee's minutes of April 25, 2018. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Ms Allen moved that the committee *"go into executive session to interview two principal candidates for the Columbus School opening."* Invited to participate were the board, the candidates and Frank Chester, chief talent officer.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

The executive session began at 6:14 p.m.

The committee reconvened in public session at 7:40 p.m.

Ms. Pereira was now present.

Ms. Martinez moved to discuss item number 5 next. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Mr. Chester said he and Dr. Johnson met with Mr. Dunn on the civil service issue and had a good conversation with him. Mr. Dunn indicated the notice will go out within the next week for civil service testing for Custodian I, with the test to take place on May 31st.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said the testing will be opened up to the public as well as current employees. Current provisional employees will have to score at least 75.

Ms. Pereira said it was disturbing that only two current custodian supervisors passed the supervisors' test. She said civil service established a curve so that everybody passed. She said that was not acceptable.

Mr. Chester said it was mentioned that four supervisors are eligible to take the supervisors' test. He said the announcement for that test will be on June 30th, with the test to occur on July 15th.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said Mr. Dunn indicated there would not be a test for typists because there were only two or three employees in the position. Ms. Pereira asked how hard it was to give a typing test.

Ms. Pereira said the board was paying for the provisional employees who were graded on a curve, despite not passing the test. Ms. Allen said the use of the curve was awful.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Dunn, the person in charge of civil service, has been there for ten years and never taken a civil service test.

Ms. Pereira asked Mr. Chester to find out who made the decision to grade the past test on a curve, Mr. Dunn or the commissioners.

Gilbert Velez was recognized. He said March 2016, was first Custodian 4 test that had been given in about ten years. He said only he and one other person passed the test with higher than 75.

Ms. Martinez asked what was the point of having the test if the passing grade was not implemented.

Mr. Illingworth said he was worried about what would happen if a huge number of custodians did not pass the test. Ms. Allen said she believed you can keep the employees until you have another test. Ms. Pereira said the list is good for two years according to the city charter and the civil service commission.

Ms. Pereira said Bridgeport has the highest unemployment rate in the state. Mr. Chester said the job requires a high school diploma and the ability to read on the 10th grade level.

Ms. Pereira said she did not understand why only a minimal amount of people apply for a job that starts at about \$39,500 with excellent benefits.

Ms. Pereira suggested the civil testing be posted on the district website. Mr. Chester said he will ask about the process for advertising.

Ms. Martinez moved to consider item 4 next. The motion was seconded by Ms. Allen and unanimously approved.

Mr. Chester said the posting of the CFO job was a start-stop process. The job was posted and the district received about nine applicants. Two candidates were selected with what the district was looking for with school-based experience. A number of applicants were business CFOs, primarily in manufacturing.

Mr. Chester said one candidate from out of state dropped out. The other candidate had prior experience with the New Haven district. The interview team consisted of the superintendent, all the assistant superintendents, and Dr. Black, a principal. He said the team decided he was not the candidate we were looking for.

Mr. Chester said the search will continue. He said there are passive or aggressive approaches to recruiting. Aggressive recruiting is searching out possible candidates by cold calling and similar techniques. He said that would be the next step taken and he will do that himself.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said Ms. Siegel had been asked for suggestions. He said he reached out to some former colleagues in other places.

Mr. Chester said the salary was purposely left off the job posting

Ms. Pereira said the state OPM director, Ben Barnes, was the district's prior CFO. He made \$130,000 to oversee the finances and facilities. She said that would not be the salary today. She said she knew the finances of the state would be in trouble when Mr. Barnes went to the state position. She added we have to have somebody who is incredibly competent due to the financial situation. Mr. Illingworth said that comes with a price tag too.

Ms. Pereira said she believed there should be a transition period and the new person should spend at least a month with Ms. Siegel. Mr. Chester said he agreed.

The next item was on the substitute services RFP.

Mr. Chester said there was a selection committee to evaluate the responses. He said some of the responses did not fit from his perspective because they were out of state or did not have a presence in Connecticut. He said Delta Group provides the district's special education paras, but doesn't have the experience for this.

Mr. Chester said he was never informed by Source 4 Teachers that they had merged and become EDU Staff. He noted they had been in the district for a while. He said he rated them lower because he didn't feel they had done much to reach out to the customer such as surveying principals.

Ms. Pereira said there was a bad experience with them regarding a substitute teacher at Harding. It turned out the teacher did not have the legal authority to work in the country.

Mr. Chester said the users in the system did not view Source 4 Teachers providing a high level of quality. He said he made it a point to sit in on an orientation session of training for employees and he was not impressed by it.

He said the choice came down to Source 4 Teachers or Kelly. He said most people are familiar with Kelly temporary services.

Mr., Chester said Kelly has a very solid corporate network and support base. He said they keep their staff during the summer, which

makes a big difference. He said he believed they had a broader based pool to pull teachers from. He said they talked about their background checks.

Mr. Chester said the selection committee include a principal, two teachers, Ms. Siegel, Ms. Maurer and a representative of HR.

Ms. Pereira noted Ms. Siegel rated Kelly higher. Mr. Chester said Ms Siegel wasn't sure how Source 4 Teachers was going to do this for \$116. Mr. Chester said both of the proposals would have resulted in savings to the district.

Ms. Pereira said she was impressed that Kelly already serves multiple districts in Connecticut of similar size.

In response to a question, Mr. Chester said he was satisfied with Kelly's answers in regard to criminal background checks. He said they agreed to the requirement that any person who came from another county would have to be in the country for at least a year. Mr. Chester said Kelly would have a full-time person in the district office like Source 4 Teachers.

Ms. Pereira said she liked that Kelly highlighted in the proposal that it does a lot to recruit bilingual substitutes. Mr. Chester said that was one of the questions he asked Kelly. He said Kelly has a broad outreach to address that issue. He said Source 4 Teachers responded to the issue by noting most of its employees were Bridgeport residents. Mr. Chester said the flip side of that is we want the best and people that are able to work with our students.

Ms. Pereira said there was a provision indicating the company may conduct any additional screening that will be mutually agreed by the company and the district with an appropriate increase in the company's fees if appropriate. Mr. Chester said he would clarify that we're not paying for background checks.

Ms. Pereira said the fill rate in the proposal excludes absence called in after 6:00 p.m. on the day before the absences. She said Kelly is committing to give a 97 percent fill rate and currently we're at 83. Mr. Chester said they would be held accountable.

Ms. Pereira said Kelly committed to reduce the mark-up by one half mark-up for the following school year and reduce the mark-up by 1.5 for all substitutes if they failed to meet the targeted fill rate. She said she wanted to make sure that was in the contract.

Ms. Pereira said if they're not meeting the fill rate, we could get money out of that.

Mr. Chester said Kelly was confident in their ability to recruit, but the proof is always in the pudding.

Ms. Pereira said the fact that the principal and the two teachers on the committee rated Kelly Services far higher than Delta or Source 4 Teachers is very meaningful for her. She said she would support the recommendation of the committee.

Mr. Illingworth said he agreed as well. He said the background checks and the face-to-face interviews were important to him. He said he knew a substitute teacher who never had a face-to-face interview. He said it's a little more money, but Kelly is willing to hold themselves accountable.

Ms. Pereira noted the contract needs to come back to the committee for approval, following the check of the contract by the law firm.

Ms. Allen moved that Mr. Illingworth report the recommendation to the full board. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

Mr. Chester thanked the committee. He said the engagement with the process is huge. He said asking the deep questions is appreciated by him because that is how we arrive at good decisions.

Mr. Illingworth said that is the reason why he likes to interview candidates because it keeps the board engaged in the process.

Ms. Allen moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Martinez and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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