

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held May 14, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. Present were Chair John Weldon, Secretary Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, Hernan Illingworth, Chris Taylor, LaMar Kennedy, and Maria Pereira.

The first agenda item was discussion and possible regarding the finalization of an RFP to solicit a superintendent search firm.

Mr. Weldon said modifications were made to the 2016 RFP and it was forwarded to Tony Pires of the business office.

There was a discussion of the timeline to be used. It was suggested to use July 17th as the date by which to review proposals, with interviews to take place between July 23 and July 26.

Mr. Illingworth said he did not believe interviewing a search firm by Skype was appropriate.

The decision on which firm to be picked would be made by August 5th, with the contract approved a few weeks later at the board meeting.

Mr. Pires o said the dates more or less coincided with the last time a superintendent search was conducted.

There was a discussion about whether there would be an overlap of the new superintendent with the interim superintendent. Mr. Weldon suggested the RFP indicate the contract with the superintendent will start on or about July 1, 2020.

Ms. Pereira noted Bridgeport is now the largest school district in Connecticut. The staff now consists of 2,700 employees. She said those figures should be incorporated into the RFP.

Ms. Pereira and Mr. Illingworth said they did not want to see the search firms ranked prior to the board examining their submissions.

Ms. Pereira questioned whether the proposals could be kept confidential. Mr. Weldon said because it is an active solicitation under evaluation it should not be public information. Mr. Pires said the information is not public until there is an award.

Mr. Weldon said he believed the interviews of the search firms would not be held in public. Mr. Pires said the board had never interviewed any vendor in public prior to selection. Mr. Weldon said the scoring sheets and other information would be available after a selection is made.

Ms. Pereira said she had received information in the past from Public Purchasing before the bids were awarded. Mr. Weldon said bids are opened in public and read aloud, which is a different story.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested it be indicated that the proposers should not contact the selection committee directly. Mr.

Weldon suggested Mr. Pires should be the designated point of contact, not the board chair, and that contact with anyone else during the selection process may be grounds for disqualification.

Mr., Taylor left the meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Weldon said quality and work plan were each rated 25 percent for scoring purposes.

Ms. Pereira asked a reference to the City of Bridgeport be eliminated.

In response to a question, Mr. Pires said the last search firm was forced to register in Connecticut in order to qualify as a registered minority business to receive MBE status. Mr. Weldon said if the firm is certified in another state as a minority business it will receive the credit.

Ms. Pereira said she wasn't sure the MBE would come into play because the board is not a federal or state contractor.

Mr. Pires said the language may be mandated by ordinance. Mr. Sokolovic advocated it be kept in the RFP. Ms. Pereira said under the ordinance if a minority business is within five percent of the lowest bid the minority business gets the contract. Mr. Weldon noted the RFP is not a bid. Ms. Pereira urged the law be followed so no one could sue over the process.

Mr. Sokolovic said if it is not required by law, he would like to include the MBE if it is permissible. Mr. Weldon suggested Mr. Pires confer with Mr. Tardy about this.

Ms. Pereira moved “to approve the RFP for the superintendent search of 2019 with the edits discussed here this evening.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

Mr. Weldon asked that Mr. Pires report by e-mail what he finds out about MBE.

There was a discussion of advertising the RFP. Mr. Pires said it goes out on Bid Sync.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action on advertisement to solicit candidates for the position of interim superintendent.

Mr. Weldon said he sent out a draft advertisement for discussion.

Ms.. Pereira suggested removing a reference to the 2019-20 year and changing the end date to finding a permanent superintendent.

Mr. Kennedy suggested the board look for an interim superintendent with an 093 certification. He said he believed an 092 for our district is not good enough.

Mr. Weldon said his concern was if it was restricted a lot of applicants wouldn't be interested in a one-year term and to add the 093 requirement would limit the number of candidates.

Mr. Illingworth suggested indicating an 093 being preferred, with no less than an 092.

Ms. Pereira suggested requiring the experience of the candidate to be in an urban school system. Mr. Sokolovic said managing 500 employees is far different than managing 2,700 employees. Mr. Illingworth and Mr. Kennedy suggested the word urban be used.

Ms. Pereira said the state statute on superintendents indicates that superintendents without an 093 may be appointed for a probationary period not to exceed one school year with the approval of the Commissioner of Education. During the probationary period, the acting superintendent must successfully complete a school leadership program.

Ms. Allen said anybody who has an 092 has leadership skills.

Mr. Kennedy said he believed the leadership program after an 092 would have to be an 093 course of study.

Ms. Pereira said this was a big issue with Supt. Vallas, who served over six months without pursuing a leadership program; an action that Judge Bellis ruled was illegal.

Ms. Pereira said five people applied the last time for interim superintendent, all of whom had 093s.

Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Pereira suggested that those holding an 092 have to be in a leadership program.

Language was suggested to use: Preferred applicants should at a minimum hold a master's degree from an accredited institution, have at least five years of experience working in an administrative capacity within an urban public school system, and hold a current 093 certification. Those candidates holding only a 092 certification may be

considered but will be required to follow the requirements set forth in C.G.S. 10-157.

Ms. Pereira noted every single principal could apply. Mr. Weldon said he was confident most people know their limitations and would not do it just to see what happens.

Ms. Pereira suggested the RFP reference candidates with cabinet-level positions. No member agreed with the suggestion.

The next paragraph was on expectations.

Mr. Weldon said Dr. Johnson's last day was June 30, but she may use vacation time before then.

Mr. Weldon said he agreed with Mr. Illingworth's suggestion that the interim superintendent not be allowed to apply for the permanent position. He said it gives the interim superintendent an unfair leg up on other candidates who may apply. Ms. Pereira said the board could see that an interim superintendent is so incompetent the board would learn not to appoint them. She said she would not oppose the provision.

Ms. Pereira noted a provision that a district applicant serving as an interim superintendent would be able to resume their prior employment when the permanent superintendent was selected. Mr. Weldon said he favored indicating the board would entertain a contract provision returning any district employee to their prior position. There was a discussion on whether to spell out that provision or leave it to the candidate to negotiate that in a contract.

Ms. Pereira said she liked the provision about lobbying. She said she had been contacted by two candidates, which she described as highly inappropriate. She said she hoped other board members were acting the same way. Mr. Illingworth said he did not answer a phone call from someone.

Ms. Pereira suggested applicants should provide a copy of their current certification.

Ms. Pereira suggested background checks be done because it was possible someone who applies could be undergoing certification revocation. Mr. Weldon suggested the superintendent's staff do the checks. He said this was preferable to having it handled by the HR department. Ms. Pereira said Mr. Weldon had a good point.

There was a discussion of whether the interviews would be held in open session. Mr. Weldon said the board was operating as a search committee and not under FOIA. He said we're trying to be open, but we need to be sensitive to the confidentiality of candidates that are just getting their foot in the door. He said the committee would look at the resumes behind closed doors and decide which ones we want to interview in public. Mr. Illingworth said the interviews never been done in public for interim superintendent.

Ms. Pereira said this was the highest paid person in the city who supervises 2,700 employees. She noted cabinet appointees by the president are interviewed in public by senators. Mr. Kennedy said he believed that was very different.

Ms. Pereira said the finalists should not want to hide from the public. Mr. Weldon and Mr. Sokolovic said they did not

have an issue either way. Mr. Illingworth said private interviews was not hiding from the public.

Ms. Allen recommended private interviews.

Mr. Illingworth said when Supt. Rabinowitz was selected as the interim superintendent Ms. Lambeck of the *Connecticut Post* knew who was being interviewed, but the interviews were private.

Mr. Sokolovic and Mr. Weldon said they agreed. Mr. Weldon noted the candidates are allowed to require the interview be held in public.

Mr. Weldon described language that indicates that finalists will be publicly announced; candidates should be prepared to be interviewed by June 5th

There was a discussion of where to publicize the position. Mr. Weldon said CAPPSS has a newsletter that goes out each week. Ms. Pereira suggested it be put on the board's website, the city's website, and the big statewide papers.

Mr. Pires noted the newspaper advertisements cost about \$800 each.

Mr. Weldon said he believed candidates for this type position would be looking in industry-specific periodicals. He said there would be a lot of word of mouth about the position as well.

Mr. Weldon suggested CAPPs, the district and city websites, and Indeed.com. He said CAGE would perhaps be another place to advertise.

Mr. Weldon said he would send the board members the revised advertisement.

Mr. Weldon suggested the board members receive all the resumes at one time as a package from the superintendent's office.

Mr. Illingworth said once upon a time a resume was hand-delivered to a board chair.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted plenty of time to research the candidates before the meeting. Mr. Weldon noted the resumes were due by May 30th.

Ms. Pereira suggested receiving resumes seven days before the interviews. Mr. Weldon said the board would meet on June 5th to select finalists. Ms. Pereira said that was not enough time. Mr. Weldon said if a huge amount of resumes are received another date could be added as well.

Mr. Sokolovic left the meeting.

Mr. Weldon suggested June 11th for interviews.

Ms. Pereira moved *"to approve the advertisement for the interim superintendent of schools, with all the edits discussed in committee, with the understanding that all board members will receive a packet with all resumes by no later than Friday, May 31st, to be discussed and vetted to finalists on Wednesday, June 5th, with interviews of the finalists being held on Tuesday, June 11th."*

Ms. Pereira suggested the advertisement be submitted to the Only in Bridgeport website

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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