

WCPSS Superintendent Search Committee
Meeting Notes
May 25, 2010, 5:30-8:30 p.m.
Wake County BOE Conference Room

Attendance: Debra Goldman, Chair, Deborah Prickett, Carolyn Morrison, Kevin Hill (not on committee), Anne McLaurin (not on committee). Absent committee member: Chris Malone. Staff Present: Mark Winters, Terri Cobb, and person to take minutes. Also 3 members of press. Audience: Just me!

Mark Winters gave a presentation on the budget process for encumbering funds from "fund balance" to pay a search firm, and the time line since it is near the end of the budget year. Bottom line, if funds are not allocated to a specific firm by June 15 (when P.O.'s are shut down), the process will have to begin over again after the beginning of the fiscal year in July, and this will cause delays. Any encumbered funds that are not used will be returned to fund balance. If more funds are needed than are encumbered, an additional item will need to be requested to release additional funds. If the committee decides to encumber more than \$100,000, it must be approved by the BOE. Debra Goldman said that any amount will be taken to the BOE for approval.

Staff recommended that a contract be "all inclusive", and include a flat fee, including travel, rather than based on billable hours. He said travel expenses have been inflated in the past by some contractors. Carolyn Morrison observed that some of the proposals list contract amount, "plus 10% admin fees".

After a general discussion of the 8 proposals submitted, the Board members present each took two proposals to review in detail, so that a spreadsheet could be developed for comparison. Items for review included contract price, extra expenses, experience with superintendent hiring, experience with large school systems, success rate of placements, "hands off" policy for contacting superintendents in future years for other jobs, process and fees if BOE decides on an internal candidate.

Carolyn Morrison asked how these proposals were obtained. DG answered that it took "hundreds of hours of phone calls", some of them are "people I know", some were recommended by Anne Majestic and some just appeared, as they had heard of Wake County's need for a new Supt. There was no publicized RFP. CM also asked if we had recruited any minority businesses to submit proposals. Answer was No. DG mentioned several times her "fear" that search firms might just advertize for candidates on "Craig's List."

Carolyn Morrison also indicated she favored NC School Boards Assn. due to less cost and we are "so poor right now". DG replied, "Is price the only thing that interests you?" CM said she thinks we should do this as cheaply as possible due to economic situation. CM also favors completing internal search before considering external search. DG says

it can't be "posted until we know what qualifications we are interested in, and the search firm will help establish that."

Firms submitting proposals included (in order of cost—highest to lowest):

1. Hydrick & Struggles--\$110,000 plus 10% indirect expenses & travel—lack experience with searches for school systems.

2. Boyden--\$85,000 plus 10% expenses-- lack experience with searches for school systems.

3. DHR--\$82,500 plus 10% admin., plus travel—mostly CEO searches, but a couple of small school districts. Carolyn Morrison commented, "We could get NC School Board Assn. to do entire search for the admin fee in this proposal!"

4. Ray & Associates--\$40,000 plus expenses—did searches for Guilford and Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Stated they already have a pool of candidates, to which DG replied that she wants someone who "doesn't know they are a candidate and are happy and doing well where they are." To which KH replied, "they will cost more."

5. Hazard, Young & Attea (suggested by Anne Majestic)--\$40,000. This company only does school searches and has done 800 searches since 2003. Have provided supt. for several large school systems: Louisville, KY; Fairfax, VA; Clark County, NV; Broward, FL; Chicago; Orange County, FL. Kevin Hill and DP like this one.

6. Educational CEO Search, Inc. \$35,000 plus travel. Have done no Supt searches in large districts.

7. NC School Boards' Assn.--\$16,000—a membership benefit (dues are \$26,000 per year) Have done WCPSS searches here. Won't conduct surveys of stakeholders. DG talked against them, they will "help with search, not DO the search".

8. Organizational Capabilities Services in Raleigh & Chicago—will do search at cost of travel expenses for candidates, because they are a local firm and are committed to Wake County. Principal listed is "Jack Smith, municipal elected official" (Cary). They have not done any school searches.

Kevin Hill quipped, "My company will do this for \$15,000 and you'll get a keeper, but that would be a conflict of interest!" CM asked if he would apply for the Supt job. "No, I have a full time job @ NCSU and we can't afford me!"

Discussion of contacting the references of the companies, and listed 7 questions to ask them:

1. How did the search go?
2. Would they hire them again?

3. How long did the supt. stay?
4. How long will the company keep “hands off” new hire?
5. Have they done Supt searches in large districts? Where?
6. Will they assist with internal search—what is cost for internal/ external searches?
7. References?
8. Who in the company would actually do the work? What is their experience?
9. Ensure that they would come for interview at their own expense—not billable.

After discussion of the prices and experience of the various companies, it was decided to invite the following for interviews (but keep the others on hold, in case they wanted to go back to them later.)

1. Hazard, Young, and Attea
2. Ray & Associates
3. NC School Boards Assn.
4. DHR

The other four were too expensive or lacked experience in searches (or both) for School Supts. However, DG wants to interview Hydrick and Struggles anyway because they sound good on the phone and are very expensive.

Committee will recommend at Tuesday BOE meeting to hire a search firm and encumber \$125,000 from fund balance to pay costs. They emphasized they hope not to spend it all.

Anne McLaurin and Kevin Hill left at this point. Committee members had lengthy discussion about setting date for interviews of search firms. Finally—meetings to interview search firms will be:

- June 1, before the COW, at 9 and 11 a.m.
- June 3, 5:30 and 7:30 p.m.
- June 7, 6:30 and 8:30 p.m.

Debra Goldman will set up meetings with each of the four firms, and will try to not leave gaps in the schedule, which will waste time for BOE members. All BOE members will be encouraged to attend these interviews.

Next committee meeting will be June 7 in evening or June 9 at 11:30 a.m.—or in one of the interview slots that is not taken. (DP can't attend during the daytime—"I want this to be on the record that I have to take vacation to attend Board meetings.)

Then, the committee extended the meeting (to double the original allotted time)

Questions were developed for the Candidate Firms, and members can send additional questions:

1. Describe the process for screening candidates? Does it include psychological testing?
2. Why should we hire you?
3. What is your success rate?
4. Average time to fill a position?
5. Who will be doing the work?
6. How will you gather data from our stakeholders?
7. Who are our stakeholders in your opinion?
8. What is your "hands off" policy?
9. Are you blocked from access to certain candidates?
10. Where will you advertise and how?
11. Explain your fees in detail. How are expenses billed?
12. What is your expertise with large school districts?
13. Do your candidates pay you a fee?

(Three other questions, they had mentioned in discussion, but did not get on this list:)

1. Will the cost of this visit be added to your fees?
2. Can we interview your successful candidates?
3. What would your criteria include for our Supt.?

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.