

CONTOOCOOK VALLEY SCHOOL BOARD

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Peterborough, New Hampshire**

**Tuesday, February 13, 2007
SAU Office**

7:00 p.m.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

MINUTES

Attendees: Mary Allen, Beverly Bacon, Ray Cote, Gail Cromwell, Butch Estey, Bart Goodeve, Christy Greene, Dan Harper, Craig Hicks, Arthur Knight, Bill McKinnon, Tom Welden, Marian Alese, Linda Potter, Jeanie West, Gib West

1. Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Tom Welden called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Minutes (Board Vote Required)

a. January 30, 2007

Not conducted.

3. Superintendent's Search

Tom Welden introduced Gary Baker from NESDEC. Gary distributed and explained an agenda. He said that he could add other items that should be discussed or take off of the agenda as needed. Also enclosed in the packet was a timeline/task list. Gary said that the dates can be altered as we move forward. In addition, information for the development of a brochure for advertising was attached. Gary said that he was unsure who in our district would be gathering the information. He said that typically it is the Superintendent's secretary. The next document relates to focus groups. The final document was a document with suggestions of how one might put a screening committee together. On the left side of the packet was information relative to the timeline for a typical search as well as communication samples for focus groups (if used). He outlined the steps. Develop the brochure/ad, distribute brochure/advertise/post vacancy on web sites, recruitment, focus group inclusion decision, publicize the vacancy, recruiting and collecting of applications, a needs assessment process, application deadline and review, interview, recommend finalists to the Board, site visits, and hire. Ten or twelve people will be selected to interview. Three or four will be recommended as finalists. A first round of interviews will take place. The second round will consist of fewer interviews. Gary said that he thinks it is important to have four finalists. One or

two typically drop out at the finalist stage. One or two may get an offer or the district the applicant currently works for may receive a better offer and stay where they are.

Lastly, we would be at the point of selecting the Superintendent. NESDEC will continue to support the candidate once hired. NESDEC does not negotiate the terms of the contract. A workshop will take place in which the School Board and Superintendent sit down with a consultant to discuss how they will work together.

Dan Harper said that typically a candidate does not like their employer to know they are looking for another position. He asked if it was different in the education field. Gary Baker said that the names are only released in the finalist stage. When they get to the finalist stage we suggest that a candidate tell their employer that they are a finalist because their name will be disclosed.

Gary said that the school department liaison needs to be decided. He said that typically but not always it is the School Board Chair. He asked who would fulfill this for ConVal. Tom Welden said that he would make sure that others were well informed so that if backup was needed others would be up to speed.

It was decided that Tom Welden would be the liaison with Craig Hicks as the back-up.

Gary also asked who would be the spokesperson. Tom Welden will be the spokesperson. Gary said that generally only procedural and timing issues are discussed.

Gary distributed a timeline (see attachment #1) He asked those present to review the timeline.

Gary said that they try to avoid using the word “deadline” because they very often receive applications after the “deadline” which are strong candidates. If they stayed firm on a deadline they would have to exclude those candidates. Applications will continue to be received up until the time screening begins.

Mary Allen said that the Boston Globe in print is very expensive and asked if the on-line Boston Globe was less expensive. Gary confirmed and said that they had a good response with the on-line service.

Gary said that if focus groups will be included we must decide how many and what the make up will be. Generally there are five or six focus groups.

NESDEC would start going through the applications on April 7 – 11th.

Between April 18th and the 25th interviews will be conducted. Four candidates is a preferable situation to be in rather than two.

An Agreement in Principle is done with candidates and then a second Agreement in Principle is done.

Craig asked about our being a little behind in the timeline. Gary said that he knows of candidates that are currently being hired for positions that might have been a candidate for ConVal. Craig asked how we might tighten up the schedule. Gary said that focus groups take a lot of time and a week might be saved by eliminating their inclusion. He added that most districts want focus groups. Craig said that we want to include the community. Gary said that one option was that we can make sure that the public has the Board members telephone numbers to provide their input.

Mary said that she is leaning toward not having focus groups because the timeline is tight. The community members will have just been through town meetings and voting and she was unsure whether people would turn out.

Christy said that we should make available an opportunity to those who do not access the computer to be able to provide input.

Mary suggested that a survey be provided at voting for community members at the ballots.

Bart said that he is not a fan of the focus groups either.

Tom asked if advertising could begin a week earlier. Gary said that he was going to shoot for March 7th. He said that we could shoot for February 28th which has a February 14th reservation date. Tom confirmed that he would like to advertise on the 28th.

Christy said that we feel the need for public input, it is just a matter of how we go about it. Gary said that we could have one public forum.

Tom distributed a copy of SurveyMonkey.com which is the survey being conducted for input about the Superintendent search. (see attachment #2) To date, 199 responses have come in.

Tom also sent around the School Board survey results (see attachment #3) in addition to a bulleted document summarizing the survey from Board members (see attachment # 4). Mary Allen agreed to fill out the forms Gary Baker had requested.

Gary said that he hears that the survey can substitute for the focus groups. He asked if this was true. Bart proposed that we have one well publicized forum to obtain community input. Ray suggested that we advertise the survey. Tom said that input will still be pulled up until the time of screening.

Gary asked when we would like to have a public forum. He suggested March 21st.

Gary said that we need a district or community seal for the brochure. Photographs can also be substituted.

Marian will check for student artwork for the brochure. Tom requested Marian to see if there was student artwork of Mt. Monadnock to help tie in the community with student class work. Color suggestions were discussed.

Joe Brennan, Peterborough, asked if NESDEC had been involved in the search for the Superintendent in either Nashua or Keene, or any other area that hasn't worked out and was necessary to place the Superintendent on Administrative leave with pay.

Gary said that he had not. He has done twelve searches will eleven still in place.

Joe Brennan asked if we were to offer a one year contract that it would be detrimental rather than a multi year contract. He bases this opinion on what he sees happening with municipalities.

Tom said that we would not discuss the contract negotiations this evening. Joe Brennan asked if it were not important. Bart said that it wasn't important tonight.

Tom said that we are not at the point of contract terms. Joe Brennan asked that the Chair let him know when we are at the point of term discussion. Tom confirmed that he would let Joe know.

Brochure color was discussed in conjunction with cost. Bart and Craig said that we should not skimp on the brochure. Gary asked who should be contacted for brochure information. Tom, Stuart and Mary are the contacts for the brochure.

Gary asked if there were any thoughts on salary discussion.

Tom distributed the 2006/2007 NHDOE salaries for Superintendents, Asst.

Superintendents and Business Administrators (see attachment #5).

Bart said that we are not an ordinary district. He did not want to shoot for the bottom of the salary pool. Craig said that we have never been at the bottom of the pay scale.

Bart said that when looking at the scales, he feels that New Hampshire is skewed. Tom asked about a range of salaries. Dan Harper said that we should not shoot for the highest

number. Gary said that when ranges are provided, a candidate will shoot for the top figure. Bart said that the New York Times state a minimum salary. Dan said that he does not want to throw off the whole salary structure.

Gary said that we can ask what a candidate is looking for. He would come back to the committee with what the candidate is looking for. How high we are willing to go is related to how enthusiastic we are toward the candidate.

It was agreed that we would advertise for \$115,000 +.

Gary said that it is often recommended that a question be put on the application where the candidate answers an essay. Several examples were cited. This allows for a good sense of how a candidate writes. Some are not willing to write an essay and therefore do not apply. Gary said that they come across candidates that are good prospects that have not written the essay for a number of reasons. We might consider requesting the essay at the final stages of the application process. It helps determine their writing abilities. Given the circumstances he thought that we might want to consider not including the essay at the beginning stage. Many agreed.

Gary provided a draft of an advertisement for review. Changes were made to the draft. Gary asked where we would like to advertise. It was agreed that the Education Week, both in print and on-line, Boston Globe on-line and New York Times on-line. In addition, the American Association of School Administrators and the NESDEC web site will be used.

Gary said that the ConVal website address will be listed in the advertisement. Christy said that we should make sure that our website is up to date. Ray Cote agreed to take care of the web.

It was agreed that the Board will be the screening committee.

Christy said that we need to make sure that the impression is not given that anything is a done deal.

Beverly Bacon said that she thought that we were going to make sure that we were going to include a Principal and staff from the SAU. Tom said that when he asked who might want to be involved, thirteen Board members said that they were interested. If we added on Principals, teachers and other staff as well as parents we would be up over twenty people. It will be extremely difficult to come up with a decision.

Bart said that the screening committee is essentially the first pass. If we made sure that other candidates could be viewed by other constituents we would not be excluding anyone. Tom said that was exact opposite of the norm. Bart said that he is unsure what a parent might see in an application that the Board would not.

Gary said that people in very visible jobs don't want it known that they are applying for positions elsewhere. We are talking about a process where the names would be confidential in round one. Once four finalists are decided upon, public interviews would take place along with site visits. Administrators and teachers would be given the opportunity to provide input. We could invite people to the public interviews including staff and students. A form could be provided for those present to detail the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. This way a round perspective is provided.

Bart said that he does not want to give the public the idea that this is their decision.

Christy said that risk exists when we give the perception that this is a closed door hire.

She said that it gives an indication of what the people that will have to work with this individual think of them.

Dan Harper agreed that administrators and teachers should be included. He was willing to give up his seat for that opportunity. He said that they should be represented.

Tom Welden said that the applications would be screened and then four candidates would come in. He asked if we would not whittle down to eight first.

Marian said that we will get input from representative groups through the survey. She said that she did not know that it was such a good idea to invite the public to the interviews. There would be a meet and greet after.

Gary said that the public could come and observe.

Bart said that in terms of the stakeholders that felt that they needed to meet candidates, this could take place in small forums. Gary said that when you get to visits, the process includes that they go to the local libraries and administrators.

Gary said that getting a summary from input might bring the awareness of a trend.

Gail said that we have a Selectman's Advisory group and we might request a special meeting to inform them of what is going on. They could dissipate information into the different towns.

Gary suggested that rather than having Dan give up his seat that Dan could ask representatives to talk to administrators.

Dan said that he felt that they should not be excluded from the process.

Tom Welden said that the Board, Administrators and Teachers would exist for the initial screening.

Mary Allen said that the initial application would be screened and some would be brought forward. At that point, she asked who will be brought forward. Tom said that it depends how far down we define it. We can see every piece of paper that comes in. We could ask NESDEC to bring it down to a level that is weeded to a finite level. It is very important that you see enough people and then narrow down for the second interview.

Gary said that there would be two rounds. The first round, six to ten would be interviewed. Three or four would be brought forward where more public participation and awareness would take place.

Bart said that we might get fifty applications. NESDEC would take it down to twenty. From there six to ten would be brought down to four. Mary asked if the composites making decisions at the twenty point, eight point and then four point would be different.

Ray said that he would like to see a ranking of candidates be determined by NESDEC but not provided until the committee puts their ranking together.

Tom said that we are going to have NESDEC screen. Whatever that number comes down to will be screened by our committee. We will have one night to go through the applications. The interviews will be done by the Board.

Tom said that in this process he does not agree with a student on the panel. The average student does not have the maturity to sit in on interviews.

The screening committee meeting will take place on April 5th.

Butch asked that all of these dates be brought together.

Kerry McDonald clarified that the Superintendent search committee is the thirteen member Board and the screening committee. She asked if the teachers would be part of the process. Tom said that they will be in the screening process and the second interview stage in some capacity. The Board is the only one that gets a final vote.

Gary said that it is important to let the public know that mechanisms are in place for them to provide and obtain input.

Gary said that sample contracts can be provided if we like. They do not get involved in negotiating. Commonly, candidates will ask for certain documents such as the last budget, any organizational chart, annual reports, mission statements, as well as a strategic or five year plan (LEAP Plan) should be provided.

Marian said that we talked about making the paper survey available but she would like to encourage the computer survey be conducted for ease of tabulation and error in keying in data.

Mary Allen said that we should encourage anyone to submit a survey either electronically or by paper form. She would be willing to help tabulate responses.

Gary asked if there was a contact person for the central office. Marian said that it would be either her or Denise McLenon.

Tom said that we have some homework to do. He added that he had a very brief non-public session to attend to.

Dan Harper motioned to go into nonpublic at 9:12 p.m. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Marschok