

ISD board ponders next step for superintendent replacement

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MANISTEE — The Manistec Intermediate School District superintendent search took a slight twist this week when the board was given an update from Mark Eckhardt of the Michigan Leadership Institute.

Eckhardt's company is expected to handle the search process for the Wexford-Missaukee and Manistec boards in finding a replacement for Scott Crosby, who is retiring at the end of the school year. Crosby presently serves four days each week at Wexford/Missaukee and one day in Manistec. Crosby has been employed by the

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MICHIGAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



Manistec ISD since 2010 when they came to an agreement for the dual superintendent position between the two districts. However, the main cost of the position obviously went to Wexford Missaukee since Crosby spent four days of his week in that location.

Eckhardt had met with MISD president Margaret Cloutier and the president of the

Wexford Missaukee ISD to discuss the situation. He reported back on that meeting and another one he had with the Wexford Missaukee ISD board.

"I met with the Wexford Missaukee board to see the issues they were looking at and it was a very good meeting for them," said Eckhardt. "They talked about the process they are going to use, and we looked

at every scenario that could possibly be looked at for them. Most of those scenarios included you.

"At the end of the night when we looked at it, the idea of dual superintendent has been around for a while and it started right here in the county with Kaleva, Norman Dickson and Bear Lake," said Eckhardt.

He said since that time there have been others that have sprung up at various locations around the state. Some have continued the process while others have gone back to a traditional single superintendent. He pointed out that others like Mason Lake and Oceana ISDs have merged their two organizations.

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Eckhardt said what they are finding in districts that still share a superintendent is some candidates are shying away from applying for those positions.

"The discussion we had at Wexford Missaukee the other night was what they talked about," said Eckhardt. "What percentage of the time is that person going to be at Wexford Missaukee and what percentage here at Manistee."

The Manistee ISD currently has a one-year contract with Crosby for his services while at Wexford-Missaukee he operates under a three-year contract. He said that and other concerns prompted the Wexford Missaukee board to take a different approach.

"They have decided to attract the most qualified people for the job and that they would like to pick the new superintendent on their own," said Eckhardt. "They would post the position as the Wexford Missaukee superintendent position."

"Now, in saying this, they are still very much in favor of the dual superintendent position and don't want to leave you in the lurch. The time frame they are looking at is until the end of the time with Scott (June) to make those decisions."

Eckhardt said he felt confident that at the end of the time of Crosby's service to that position the two districts would be operating under a dual superintendent agreement.

"They said they are committed to do it, but the reason they are making that decision to look at it is they had a full-time superintendent and when (former Manistee ISD superinten-

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SCOTT CROSBY,
ISD SUPERINTENDENT



dent) Char (Myers) left, you approached them to do the dual superintendent position," said Eckhardt. "But they also understand the need you have and want to be a good neighbor. They talked that the reason it works so well isn't because you have a dual superintendent, but because of the person."

Crosby said he didn't expect the board to go that route, but that he wouldn't leave the local ISD in a lurch. Eckhardt echoed those sentiments.

"You will be left whole in this process," said Eckhardt.

Crosby said that he expects the process to be completed by April or May. He said the person coming on wouldn't start until July 1 and that would give the MISD six to eight weeks to make a decision on that person.

"The law requires you to have a superintendent; it doesn't say you can purchase service for another organization," said Crosby. "If it said you could purchase services much like business cooperative provides the schools here. So, you have to get a superintendent on board by July 1, whether it is by Wexford Missaukee or someone else."

"From our conversations you do not need a full-time superintendent, so you can do a lot of things."

Eckhardt said he and Crosby would help the MISD with those options. ISD board member Mary Becker-Witt had concerns and questioned how the hiring would be handled.

"So it would be our hire after the fact? After they hire someone?" said Becker-Witt.

Eckhardt said it is important that they do have a full-time person over there. If the shared plan doesn't work out, Wexford Missaukee would still need a full-time superintendent for their needs.

Board member Doug Parkes said that he understood where Wexford Missaukee was coming from in that they already have 80 percent of the superintendent position.

"I understand where they are coming from," said Parkes. "They are the dog

and we are the tail. And basically, we go along for the ride. But we do have the option if we stick with it or not."

Crosby said that is why he feels it is important to stick with one-year agreements.

"If it doesn't work out you don't want to be stuck with anything either," said Crosby.

Lynda O'Shea broached the idea that maybe the MISD should be looking for a superintendent as well.

Becker Witt agreed. "Should we spend the money ourself or just let them look and then let us know who they pick?" said Becker Witt.

Crosby said he didn't think that would be a wise use of their dollars at this time. He said the feeling he got from Wexford-Missaukee was that they wanted to remain partners.

"If we are going to find the best person for this job there is no doubt in my mind that this is the best way to go with it, said Crosby. "By letting a single district do the search I think you will get more and more qualified candidates for the position. From your standpoint, the very minimal you could do if you didn't want the candidate in May is to appoint someone to that position."

Eckhardt said it isn't a crisis situation as they will have someone in place for the MISD come July 1. He said they will have input in the process.

Parkes said what he would like to see is have a non-voting member or two of the MISD board to take part in the process to get a feel for what candidates are out there.

Crosby said he didn't feel that would be a negative thing to have involvement in. He said if they hire Eckhardt's firm this coming Monday that could be written in as part of the process.

"Even if we did go back and decide to go independent it would give us a good look at a number of candidates," said Parkes. "It might give us an idea who is out there or willing to work in northern Michigan."

Board members agreed that might be the best route for the MISD to take in this matter.