

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

September 23, 2020

The Board of Directors of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, held a regular session at 7 p.m. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on September 18, 2020, and published in The Register-Guard on September 23, 2020.

NOTICE: In light of current public health concerns related to coronavirus COVID-19, the meeting of the Eugene School District Board of Directors took place virtually via Zoom Meeting. Pursuant to ORS 192.670, the meeting was open to the public via live radio broadcast on KRVM 1280-AM and via the Internet at www.4j.lane.edu/

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mary Walston, Chair
Judy Newman, Vice Chair
Anne Marie Levis
Alicia Hays
Martina Shabram
Jim Torrey
Gordon Lafer

STAFF:

Karen Hardin, Director of Human Resources
Christine Nesbit, General Counsel
Kerry Delf, Chief of Staff
Lisa Fjordbeck, Executive Assistant/Board Secretary

MEDIA:

OTHER: Jacquelin Horejs, Carolyn McKennan, Jim Hager, Gloria David, Mary Fasbender, Gary Ray, Michael Collins, Molly Schwarzhoff, Aida Buelna, Steven Lowder, Douglas Nelson.

I. Call to Order, Roll Call

Board Chair Mary Walston called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

II. Items for Information

1. Conduct Interviews of Superintendent Search Firm Finalist(s)

Chair Walston went over the procedure for the interviews. There were four firms, each would get forty minutes to answer five questions. They would take breaks between interviews and deliberate after all interviews took place.

Ms. Hardin clarified that if a firm was struggling with a question the Board might want to reword it. Also, during deliberation they should avoid comparing firms.

Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA)

Ms. Hays asked how they engaged with the community, including staff, in a meaningful way in a virtual search process. Also, based on your experience comment on some lessons you have learned about involving different stakeholder groups in different stages of the process.

Jacqueline Horejs said that they had successfully placed a superintendent virtually over the summer. The process, though virtual, remained like the process they did normally. First, the met with the Board to figure out which stakeholder groups they want to engage. Each group asked the strengths of the district, what they saw as the challenges the district was facing, and if they had any qualified recommendations. These answers help build their selection criteria. Can do a local based community survey or do a research based analytical survey. Carolyn McKennan shared that they learned that stakeholder involvement was crucial in the success of the superintendent and the Board. Stakeholder Committees could come up with their own set of questions alongside the Board's questions.

Mr. Lafer asked what methods they used to engage candidates who have been historically underrepresented in positions like superintendent. Also, could they share any data that showed the effectiveness of these methods.

Ms. McKennan said that HYA was committed to engaging a wide variety of candidates since they started. They had many associates that were a part of minority communities and diverse committees. She mentioned that they used these connections to minority committees to ask for candidates that were qualified and in those groups. Ms. McKennan stated that in the last two years districts made up for more than 15,000 or more hired nine were males, seven were females. Of those seven were Caucasian, four were African American, and five were Latino.

Ms. Newman asked how they identified, recruited, and screened candidates. How would they ensure that candidates fit the qualities required for the Eugene School District and fit the qualities of Oregon?

Ms. Horejs said that identifying the criteria from the Board and stakeholders and made sure the candidate had those qualifications and characteristics. HYA had a large social media presence, which gave them a broad reach of candidates. To ensure success they make sure the candidates are knowledgeable about the community and schools. They made sure the candidate, and their family, fit into the area. She said that they would help with every step along the way.

Ms. Shabram asked what was included and not included in their cost proposal and how searching remotely would change costs.

Ms. McKennan shared that if the search were conducted virtually it would cost \$25,250. They understood there would be some advertising costs, some of which could be done free of charge Through CASA and the OSBA. There would be a few of \$1,000 for any travel that had to take place. They did not foresee any travel taking place so the original number would stand. Ms. McKennan shared that they did background checks by calling everyone they could but did not go down to the courthouse unless that was something the district wanted. There would be an additional cost of \$1,100 for that.

Mr. Torrey asked if there was anything the firm would like them to know that was not already covered.

Ms. McKennan said that they went through and took the time to understand the districts, its size, and the values they had. They appreciated being asked to interview and looked forward to hearing back.

Gary Ray & Associates

Ms. Hays asked how they engaged with the community, including staff, in a meaningful way in a virtual search process. Also, based on your experience comment on some lessons they had learned about involving different stakeholder groups in different stages of the process.

Jim Hager said that the firm had been designed to be as virtual as it could be. They understood people were busy and they wanted to work around all the schedules involved. He said that the Board had the final say in who they chose, so cooperating with them was their highest priority. They were very knowledgeable on Oregon's open meeting law, which could get complicated when done virtually. Mr. Hager said their whole process was based on being transparent and accessible. They had partnered with the national firm K-12 Insight whose primary goal was to provide better communication for staff, parents, and the community. Mr. Hager said that the last search he had done was interrupted by COVID-19. This meant that they had to switch things up to virtual. In the end they were successful in placing someone. It was also important to have Board member be the main point of contact for the firm.

Mr. Lafer asked what methods they used to engage candidates who have been historically underrepresented in positions like superintendent. Also, could they share any data that showed the effectiveness of these methods.

Gloria David stated that they had connections with people across the Country. They had placed 12 minority superintendents in the last two years. Some of these people were the first minority superintendents that those districts had. It was important to recruit on established relationships and that was what they did. Ms. David stated that it was important to reach out to people who might not know anything about Eugene, Oregon and let them know why they should apply for the position.

Ms. Levis asked how they identified, recruited, and screened candidates. How would they ensure that candidates fit the qualities required for the Eugene School District and fit the qualities of Oregon?

Mary Fasbender shared that they got input from their stakeholder groups, conducted individual interviews with each Board members, and talked to students, staff, and leaders in their community. By identifying certain traits, they could create a profile for candidates. They provided surveys in around 50 languages, which ensured that all members of the community could participate. Ms. Fasbender stated that they made sure candidates were comfortable with moving before moving forward. Also, once the decision was made, they continued to stay involved and made sure that the transition was smooth.

Ms. Shabram asked what was included and not included in their cost proposal and how searching remotely would change costs.

Gary Ray said that usually they charged \$2,500 for travel, but that would be left out of the \$30,000 if not used. He assumed that \$3,000 would be used for advertising. There were many ways to advertise and they would give more details on that process later if needed. The best recruits were usually not looking, which was why they had to reach out through advertising. There would be no more additional fees.

Mr. Torrey asked if there was anything the firm would like them to know that was not already covered.

Mr. Ray said that they were the most experienced search team in the Country. They were diverse and would deliver a diverse pool of candidates who have a proven track record. Mr. Ray mentioned that 4J would be interviewing his old firm, Ray & Associates, which he sold three years ago before deciding he wanted to continue his work.

Ray & Associates

Ms. Hays asked how they engaged with the community, including staff, in a meaningful way in a virtual search process. Also, based on your experience comment on some lessons you have learned about involving different stakeholder groups in different stages of the process. Michael Collins shared that their engagement was centered around building a profile. They would interview each Board member individually to understand what they wanted from a superintendent. They then would talk to different stakeholders in the community as well as staff. There would also be a community wide survey. They would look into and encourage diversity in all aspects of the search.

Mr. Lafer asked what methods they used to engage candidates who have been historically underrepresented in positions like superintendent. Also, could they share any data that showed the effectiveness of these methods.

Molly Schwarzhoff was a diverse firm and had appointed more minorities in the Country than any other firm. They worked with national organizations to help connect them with diverse candidates who were fit for the position. Mr. Collins promised that they would provide a diverse selection.

Ms. Levis asked how they identified, recruited, and screened candidates. How would they ensure that candidates fit the qualities required for the Eugene School District and fit the qualities of Oregon?

Mr. Collins said that his candidates were required to register on an annual basis, which means they had an extensive qualified pool. They reached out to associates in different parents of the country. He shared that 70% of the people they placed were not “their” candidates. Mr. Collins said that they did not poach candidates that they had placed and did not reach out for at least five years after being placed. Since a profile is built with the district and community in mind, the candidates are a good fit.

Ms. Shabram asked what was included and not included in their cost proposal and how searching remotely would change costs.

Ms. Schwarzhoff said that the original proposal included travel, which would no longer be included. The virtual cost would be \$27,500. The only addition would be advertising, which was up to the Board to do or not do. She would work with them to figure out the best results for their money. At most advertising would cost them \$1,000. When it got down to the final interviews the Board would need to decide if they wanted to bring those candidates in or do it virtually. Ms. Schwarzhoff said that those travel needs would add cost.

Mr. Torrey asked if there was anything the firm would like them to know that was not already covered.

Ms. Schwarzhoff said that they were the most experienced firm in the Country. Their network was expansive and would help them find the best candidates. Mr. Collins shared that they would keep the Board updated on the number of candidates applying. There would be no surprises. The last few searches they had done were done virtually, so they had experience doing a fully virtual process. He mentioned that they would not be present when the interviewed candidates because that was not of their concern. They would help with deliberation and transitioning the chosen candidate. Ms. Schwarzhoff said that after being hired on they checked in every couple of months and facilitated meetings to evaluate how the everyone was feeling.

McPherson & Jacobson

Ms. Hays asked how they engaged with the community, including staff, in a meaningful way in a virtual search process. Also, based on your experience comment on some lessons you have learned about involving different stakeholder groups in different stages of the process.

Aida Buelna shared that they engaged the community, staff, and stakeholders by sending out Board criteria to them. Feedback from that would be presented to the Board and changes could be made. They then went forward and looked for candidates based on that information. Ms. Buelna stated that the community needed to feel like they were a part of the whole process. They have been able to successfully keep the community involved even during COVID-19. Steve Lowder shared that stakeholder meetings were also available in Spanish. He emphasized that community interaction was the most important part of the process.

Mr. Lafer asked what methods they used to engage candidates who have been historically underrepresented in positions like superintendent. Also, could they share any data that showed the effectiveness of these methods.

Mr. Lowder said that they showed up too many National school associates. Ms. Buelna said that in the last five years they had placed 210 superintendents, of those 84 have been female or a minority. In the last six months Ms. Buelna had done three searches, two were African American women and the other was a Hispanic woman. Mr. Lowder shared that one-third of their candidates were women and one-fourth were from a minority racial group.

Ms. Newman asked how they identified, recruited, and screened candidates. How would they ensure that candidates fit the qualities required for the Eugene School District and fit the qualities of Oregon?

Mr. Lowder said that the qualities of the superintendent would come from their interviews with the Board and the community. By doing this they would be able to pick a superintendent that fit the District's needs. We call references as well as anyone else they could find who knew the candidate. They made sure that the candidates were a good fit, which meant that they stayed in their positions for a long time.

Ms. Shabram asked what was included and not included in their cost proposal and how searching remotely would change costs.

Mr. Lowder said that conducting the search online would save them money since there would be no travel. The fee was \$17,900 for phase one through five. The only additional costs would be additional advertising which would include 30 days with AASA, 30 days with Top School Education week, 30 days with the National Alliance of Black School Administrators, six weeks with The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, OSBA, two days of stakeholder meetings (with Eugene they understood there would need to be more), surveys, interviews, criminal and financial background checks not exceeding \$20,800. Based on COVID-19 Mr. Lowder assumed the cost would not be that much.

Mr. Torrey asked if there was anything the firm would like them to know that was not already covered.

Mr. Lowder emphasized that they did everything they could to talk to everyone impacted by the decision (students, custodians, bus drivers, etc.). They would stay involved with 4J throughout the whole process and afterwards. If the chosen candidate left in the first two years after being placed the firm would come back and help them look for just costs. Mr. Lowder encouraged the Board to reach out to other districts that they have helped.

2. Deliberations

Chair Walston said that they would go one-by-one and list their lowest ranked firm. This way they might be able to rule one firm out before talking more.

Chair Walston, Ms. Shabram, Ms. Newman, and Ms. Levis ranked Ray & Associates the lowest. Mr. Torrey ranked McPherson & Jacobson the lowest. Mr. Lafer and Ms. Hays ranked Gary Ray & Associates the lowest. Ms. Hardin asked if anyone had Ray & Associates ranked highest. Mr. Lafer replied that he did but was willing to change his mind. Ms. Hardin stated that they would then talk about all four firms to be fair to all Board members. She added that when talking about each firm they should not reiterate what others had already said.

The first firm they would talk about was Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates. Ms. Hays thought they were very clear with how they would do community input. They also had local connections and were clear on their budget. She was annoyed whenever people said they would few things through “an equity lens” but did not say anything else. Mr. Lafer thought that the two consultants seemed very experienced. They had helped hire Gustavo Balderas, so they knew a lot about Eugene. He liked their proposal since it seemed thorough. Ms. Levis thought it was interesting that they mentioned 4J hiring their own interpreters for events. She did not like that they would need to pay extra for an online survey. Also, Ms. Levis stated that they did not have as much experience in equity as she would have liked. Ms. Newman agreed with much of what was said. Their responses and outcomes did not make it seem like they had much equity experience. She said that they also made a comment about talking to people about potential candidates, but the example they used was confusing. Ms. Shabram agreed with much of what was said. She appreciated that they talked about looking at big challenges and goals that the district would have in the coming years. She was concerned that the Board chose which stakeholders the firm reached out to. They needed the firm to reach out to everyone, even if the Board was not aware of them. Mr. Torrey liked that they talked about candidates that had not applied and reaching out to tell them to. He also liked that they talked about using the ‘chat’ element in Zoom. Chair Walston thought it was good that they were a West Coast firm. She thought they would be thorough on picking a candidate that fit the characteristics they wanted.

The second firm they would talk about was Gary Ray & Associates. Mr. Lafer thought they had a very sales pitch feeling to their pitch. He was also confused on their K-12 Insight information. Mr. Lafer was concerned with their response to the first question since they did not talk about engaging the community. Ms. Levis liked that one consultant had been in Beaverton. She liked that they talked about equity and felt they had proof points to that statement. Ms. Levis liked the K-12 Insight information and felt that it helped them stand out. Also, they knew the 4J mission statement. Ms. Newman liked their communication points. They needed to find new ways to talk to the community and liked the idea of having a button on their website. She liked that they emphasized background checks and talked about their process for a while. Ms. Newman thought they had flexibility in having virtual meetings to fit people’s schedules and were aware of Oregon’s Open Meeting laws. She also liked that they included students as stakeholders. Ms. Shabram liked that they talked about engaging with state and local legislatures. They also talked about making people comfortable engaging in the process even if they were historically underserved. Mr. Torrey liked their experience on in-sight expertise. He thought Ms. David did a great job of saying how she would fit in and help 4J. Ms. Hays did not like how often they used the term ‘minority’.

The third firm they would talk about was Ray & Associates. Ms. Levis liked that Mr. Collins talked about being trained in community engagement. She was confused in why they said they would “even involve staff in the process”. Ms. Levis liked that they said 70% of the people they

placed were not on their list and that they did not approach candidates that they had placed. Ms. Newman wondered why three of their associates were presenters with the Gary Ray & Associates group. She was also unsure of who Ms. Schwarzhoff was, since she was not listed on the application. Ms. Shabram was concerned with their answer about engaging the community, it just seemed like a survey on the website. Also, they wanted the district to oversee getting the survey out into the community. She did not like the repetitive use of the word “sensitivity” when talking about diversity. Ms. Shabram thought this proposal sounded the most like a sales pitch. Mr. Torrey liked that they would do individual Board interviews. Ms. Walston thought they had a lot of experience and connections across the Country. However, she was unsure of any connections in Oregon. Ms. Hays thought it was interesting that they said COVID-19 changed education forever. Mr. Lafer stated that some things people listed as negatives were positives for him. He thought that they were the least like a sales pitch and were very straightforward. Mr. Lafer liked that they mentioned including staff since many firms had not talked about that.

The final firm they would talk about was McPherson & Jacobson. Ms. Newman liked that they had already done three completely virtual searches. Also, they mentioned talking to the PTA and having a bilingual consultant who would be with them through the whole process. She liked that the consultants were close by. They had good data on their placements of women and minority groups. Ms. Shabram appreciated that they understood they would most likely want more than two community meetings based on the engagement they usually received. Mr. Torrey noted that they had a mixed outcome in one of their searches. It sounded like the Board would have to do a lot more work than with any of the other firms. Chair Walston thought their outreach plan was good and liked their diverse candidate placements. Ms. Hays liked their reference check process. Mr. Lafer said that in their proposal most districts they placed in had less than 2,000 students, which made him wonder if they were a good fit. Ms. Levis liked that they continued to go back to data to support their success. She worried they misinterpreted what they needed.

Chair Walston was unsure if they could rule anyone out at this point. Ms. Hardin took notes on what Board members said and could give feedback on how it seemed they were feeling overall. She mentioned that she did not hear the interviews and therefore thought she would not be biased. There was nothing that indicated that one candidate stood out or was underperforming. HYA had the least amount of concerns, but the one they had was about equity. Ms. Hardin said they could move into a comparative discussion. If after that they were still unsure, they would need to do an offline ranking.

Mr. Lafer wanted to talk about what he liked about Ray & Associates and if he changed no one’s mind then they could eliminate them. Ms. Levis thought it would be helpful to get rid of one or two firms by the end of the night. She heard what Mr. Lafer had said and her mind was not changed. Ms. Hays thought that they should just eliminate the two firms that had the most amount of low ranking (Ray & Associates and Gary Ray & Associates). Ms. Shabram thought it would be helpful for everyone to share their highest ranks firms. Ms. Levis did not want to get rid of Gary Ray & Associates since they were high on her list. Mr. Torrey agreed.

Ms. Delf wanted to clarify some of the concerns. One was about Gary Ray & Associates talking about K-12 Insights. They were a customer experience and community engagement firm. HYA also talked about a survey, which Ms. Delf understood that they had a basic survey, which they gave, and they only charged for a scientific survey that would include more.

The Board went through a named the highest ranked firm on their list. Ms. Walston and Mr. Lafer ranked Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates highest. Ms. Newman and Ms. Hays ranked McPherson & Jacobson the highest. Ms. Shabram, Ms. Levis, and Mr. Torrey ranked Gary Ray & Associates the highest.

Ms. Shabram liked that McPherson & Jacobson had a bilingual consultant, but they did not know that the other firms did not. Ms. Hardin explained that they could find that out when doing background checks. Ms. Hays was tied with McPherson and HYA and would move to HYA if needed.

Ms. Levis wanted everyone to list their lowest ranked firm out of the three (HYA, McPherson & Jacobson, and Gary Ray & Associates). Ms. Levis, Ms. Shabram, and Ms. Newman ranked HYA the lowest. Mr. Lafer and Ms. Hays ranked Gary Ray & Associates the lowest. Ms. Walston and Mr. Torrey ranked McPherson & Jacobson the lowest. Mary McPherson.

Chair Walston believed the remaining three could do the job and they needed to see background checks before deciding. She would change her vote in the interest of moving forward.

Ms. Hardin mentioned that since there was no consensus on the top two firms, they would need to take a vote later in the week. Ms. Delf reminded everyone that the votes would be posted publicly.

Mr. Torrey wondered if they could find out if the firms all had access to a bilingual consultant. He knew some Board members liked McPherson & Jacobson because they mentioned that, but that did not mean other firms did not have that available. Chair Walston thought that would be good to know before voting. Ms. Newman pointed out that they knew the consultants they would be working with and only one firm had a bilingual consultant on their team. Ms. Delf thought they should ask themselves why that was important to them. Ms. Shabram mentioned that Gary Ray & Associates said they could change the team if they wanted something else from them.

Chair Walston stated that they would be conducting a vote through a poll offline until one firm was eliminated. After the vote she would start making reference calls on September 25, 2020.

III. Adjourn

Chair Walston adjourned the meeting at 10:11 p.m.

(Minutes recorded by Lydia Dysart)

Cydney Vandercar
District Clerk

Mary Walston
Board Chair