

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SCHOOL DISTRICT 4J, LANE COUNTY, OREGON**

Date: October 16, 2024

The Board of Directors (BOD) of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Oregon, held a special board meeting at 4:30 p.m. in-person at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street in Eugene, Oregon, via live-stream and broadcast on KRVM. Notice of the meeting was emailed to the media and posted on the 4J website on October 11, 2024.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jenny Jonak, Chair
Tom Di Liberto, Vice Chair
Maya Rabasa
Ericka Thessen
Judy Newman
Rick Hamilton
Morgan Munro (online)

STAFF:

Colt Gill, Interim Superintendent
Carmen Xiomara Urbina, Chief of Staff
Debbie McKim, Executive Assistant to the Interim Superintendent and Board

EMPLOYEE GROUPS:

None.

OTHER:

Hank Harris, Human Capital Enterprises
Hector Garcia, Human Capital Enterprises
Robyn Bean, Human Capital Enterprises
Kathleen Rodden-Nord, Human Capital Enterprises
Steve Chestnut, Ray and Associates
Richard Lasso, Ray and Associates
David Faltys, Ray and Associates (video recording)
Libra Ford, Ray and Associates (video recording)
Walter Cooper, McPhearson and Jacobson
Debra White, McPhearson and Jacobson

MEDIA:

KRVM

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

Chair Jenny Jonak called the special board meeting to order at 4:33 p.m. She said the names of the board members who were present.

II. AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda was approved as presented.

III. CONSENT GROUP – ITEMS FOR ACTION

None.

IV. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

1. REVIEW OF MATERIALS AND PROCESS FOR SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH FIRM INTERVIEWS

Ms. Newman outlined the process for superintendent search firm interviews. She explained that each firm will have thirty minutes to respond to interview questions. The board members will alternate asking questions to the candidates. A break will follow the interviews. After the break, the Board of Directors (BOD) will individually review candidates, allowing each board member the opportunity to provide comments. Following that, each board member will name their first choice. The hope is to reach consensus on a top choice for a superintendent search firm.

2. INTERVIEW THREE SUPERINTEDENT SEARCH FIRM FINALISTS

1. HUMAN CAPITAL ENTERPRISES

Human Capital Enterprises consultants Hank Harris, Hector Garcia, Robyn Bean, and Kathleen Rodden-Nord introduced themselves.

Members of the BOD alternated asking the following questions:

1. How do you define community engagement? How do you consider important communities to engage? What are some successful strategies you have used to get community and district input? What pitfalls have you found? How do you share the information gathered with the board? Please provide examples.

Mr. Harris responded that community engagement is about asking a critical question – “Who is 4J at this moment in history and what does it specifically need from its next leader?” – and getting the broadest and widest response of the people who inhabit Eugene School District 4J.

He said their firm would engage the people who inhabit 4J, including students, staff, families, taxpayers, and individuals who work in Eugene. The firm would be strategic to make sure they are capturing voices they do not always hear.

Mr. Garcia provided an example of how their firm has engaged traditionally underrepresented groups. He explained that because email and robocalls are not sufficient, their firm focuses on personal phone calls and invitations. He added that they hold focus groups in Spanish.

As an example of a pitfall, Mr. Harris described a time that their firm experienced a smaller outreach event turnout due to a blizzard.

Ms. Rodden-Nord responded to the question about communicating with the board. She described connecting with 20 focus groups and conducting a survey expected to generate hundreds of responses, then analyzing the input and gleaning insights. After that, the key findings are compiled into a document detailing the criteria for the next 4J superintendent and presented to the Board of Directors (BOD).

2. Tell us about how the firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts impacted and improved a search led in the last three years.

Mr. Garcia responded that DEI is woven into their work. It is the core of not only their philosophy, but of their operations. Their firm has been successful ensuring that the candidate and school culture are a good fit. Their recruitment efforts focus on six areas:

1. Mitigating implicit bias
2. Ensuring inclusive recruitment material
3. Streamline the application process
4. Collaborate with district to ensure a diverse interview panel
5. Provide training and resources on implicit bias
6. Help structure the interview process

3. Provide an example of a time the firm supported a board who had a disagreement about what they were looking for in a superintendent and how it was resolved.

Mr. Harris responded that because there is so much engagement and collaboration around determining the next superintendent criteria, there is typically widespread board support for the criteria document. He could not think of a time there was disagreement about what they were looking for in a superintendent, but there were other times boards disagreed. He described a time a board struggled with moving forward on selecting a candidate. He said after a few hours of deliberating it was clear that the board needed more time. At their recommendation, the board decided to conduct site visits to the school districts of the finalists, which proved to be a gamechanger. The board ultimately reached near consensus, four to one.

4. Share one or two examples of how the firm recruited diverse and highly qualified candidates for positions.

Ms. Rodden-Nord responded that in terms of specific recruitment strategies to reach diverse candidates, the firm selects advertising on sites known to be highly visible and highly visited by diverse candidates, such as the Oregon Association of Latino Administrators (OALA). She emphasized networking directly with individuals who are powerfully engaged in the work of equity in the Pacific Northwest and nationally. In their experience, direct communication and networking is even more impactful than advertising. She provided one example of a success story.

Mr. Harris provided an example of a time when a school board asked their firm to look nationally for a diverse, talented pool of applicants. He said six of the seven applicants that the firm selected identified as BIPOC and one applicant identified as LGBTQ. The talent was so rich that of those who were not selected, one is now the superintendent of one of the 15 largest school districts in the country, and two others are superintendents of the largest districts in their state.

5. Are there any specific qualities or characteristics related to longevity that they look for in a potential candidate? What is their track record for how long superintendents they recruit stay in the district?

Ms. Bean stated that the first thing they look for is longevity in the position they have held. Secondly, they seek to know what specifically interests the candidate about 4J. They want to hear a good articulation of their “why.” Ms. Bean spoke to their robust reference call process. She added that twenty-four out of twenty-nine superintendents their firm recruited in the past six years are still in their positions.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ms. Bean responded that their firm is unique in that they pair Human Resources (HR) professionals with sitting and former superintendents, and they are impeccably professional and bring that great combination to your district.

2. RAY AND ASSOCIATES

Ray and Associates consultants Steve Chestnut and Richard Lasso introduced themselves. Managing Director David Faltys and Regional Sales Associate Libra Ford provided their comments via video.

Via recording, Mr. Faltys introduced himself and provided a brief description of his professional history. He went on to explain that he has participated in several superintendent searches in Texas, Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, and elsewhere. He added that Ray and Associates is a nearly 50-year-old firm specializing in superintendent searches and that their process is tried and true.

Via recording, Ms. Ford said she is excited for 4J to have a leader who will shape today and the future of the community. She mentioned that she resides in Damascus, Oregon,

and would serve as 4J's local representative. Ms. Ford said she would make sure that 4J finds not only someone they are looking for but feel amazing about. As a former school board member herself, she is committed to providing feedback from a board member's perspective. She said selecting a superintendent is one of the most important responsibilities that a school board has. She closed by stating that Ray and Associates can walk them through the process in a way that they would feel profoundly satisfied.

Members of the BOD alternated asking the following questions:

1. How do you define community engagement? How do you consider important communities to engage? What are some successful strategies you have used to get community and district input? What pitfalls have you found? How do you share the information gathered with the board? Please provide examples.

Dr. Chestnut introduced himself and provided a brief description of his professional history. He responded to the question by stating that community engagement is the foundation of their superintendent search process. They start with a web-based survey of board members, community members, parents, staff, and students. The results are cross tabulated and shared with the board. The survey is helpful in assisting the board in identifying the ideal candidate profile. He noted that the web-based survey can be provided in Spanish and other languages.

Mr. Lasso added that their community engagement process includes ten to fifteen stakeholder meetings with teachers, classified staff, administrators, parents, students and other key community members. He said that during the meetings, two of their consultants take notes, and the information gets summarized before being presented to the board. The information is necessary for building the ideal candidate profile.

Mr. Chestnut mentioned that during the interviews with finalists, there is an option for community members in the audience to be provided with a SurveyMonkey impression form.

2. Tell us about how the firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts impacted and improved a search led in the last three years.

Mr. Lasso commented that last spring their firm conducted a superintendent search for the North Thurston Public School District. The district is located in Washington and has approximately 15,000 students. He stated that the firm integrated DEI from the outset, actively seeking candidates with diverse backgrounds with a track record of advancing equity within their current leadership. He said the most critical was exploring the board's

understanding of implicit biases and helping the board develop selection criteria that were mindful of bias. He added that the board was in turn intentional about discussing bias as they chose the semi-finalist, the finalist, and ultimately the superintendent.

Mr. Chestnut added that in all three searches their firm has conducted in Arizona, they have had highly qualified diverse candidates.

3. Provide an example of a time the firm supported a board who had a disagreement about what they were looking for in a superintendent and how it was resolved.

Mr. Lasso responded with an example about how there was disagreement amongst a board about two things: First, how many nontraditional candidates (without direct educational experience) should be included. Secondly, recruiting internal versus external candidates. In both instances the firm facilitated candid dialogue, structured discussions, and guided questions to weigh the pros and cons in a constructive way. That open discussion ultimately led to consensus.

4. Share one or two examples of how the firm recruited diverse and highly qualified candidates for positions.

Mr. Chestnut responded that in their search for a North Thurston Public School District superintendent, their firm utilized what they call “candidate care,” which he described as involving lengthy conversations and great communication.

Mr. Lasso added that the diversity of their consulting team allows them to draw from a wide range of professional networks.

5. Are there any specific qualities or characteristics related to longevity that they look for in a potential candidate? What is their track record for how long superintendents they recruit stay in the district?

Mr. Lasso responded that one of the key qualities they look for in a candidate is their career track and if they have demonstrated stability in previous roles.

Mr. Chestnut added that superintendents their firm has placed typically stay in their roles for four years or more.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr. Lasso mentioned they are committed to offering the most competitive pricing and offer a two-year satisfaction guarantee.

3. MCPHEARSON AND JACOBSON

McPhearson and Jacobson consultants Walter Cooper and Debra White introduced themselves.

Members of the BOD alternated asking the following questions:

1. How do you define community engagement? How do you consider important communities to engage? What are some successful strategies you have used to get community and district input? What pitfalls have you found? How do you share the information gathered with the board? Please provide examples.

Ms. White responded that a good definition for community engagement is facilitating transparent communication and interaction from members of a school district through the entire superintendent search process. The purpose is to include representation of all groups of school and community stakeholders. In their experience they have been able to involve the following: principals, teachers, students, student leaders, central office staff, community members, faith group leaders, PTA members, and community leaders. She said their firm will work with the school board to ensure a carefully planned and efficient meeting schedule allowing all groups to participate at times and locations that are convenient for them. They strive for optimal participation. During the meeting, the firm's consultants will take notes and briefly explain the search process and timelines. They will facilitate the meeting and manage technology.

Mr. Cooper responded to the question about pitfalls. He said in addition to the aforementioned stakeholder meetings, they have a significant, robust online survey process. Regarding inclusiveness, he said the best way to achieve that is by using an online survey component. He mentioned that small groups can be limiting for various reasons. To give every voice an equal opportunity they recommend the online K12 Insight survey, or a survey designed using the firm's own technology.

Ms. White spoke about communicating information gathered to the board. She said they take the common trends and overarching ideas and create a written report to present to the board.

2. Tell us about how the firm's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts impacted and improved a search led in the last three years.

Mr. Cooper responded that they pride themselves on their history of percentage of female and BIPOC candidates in their pools. Their DEI efforts begin with stakeholder

engagement long before candidate recruitment. He said they their firm has conducted 29 searches in the last three years and DEI has been a critical part of that. He emphasized crafting nonbiased criteria as that will drive the rest of the search.

3. Provide an example of a time the firm supported a board who had a disagreement about what they were looking for in a superintendent and how it was resolved.

Mr. Cooper offered an example of a superintendent search conducted in Reno, Nevada during a time when the board was experiencing a lot of turbulence. The firm worked through the process with them, ultimately reaching unanimous consensus for a superintendent candidate for their district.

4. Share one or two examples of how the firm recruited diverse and highly qualified candidates for positions.

Mr. Cooper responded that the best way to recruit diverse and highly qualified candidates is by selecting the correct criteria up front.

5. Are there any specific qualities or characteristics related to longevity that they look for in a potential candidate? What is their track record for how long superintendents they recruit stay in the district?

Ms. White responded that their firm spends a lot of time evaluating the candidate and has an excellent track record of longevity. 86% of candidates hired remain in the same position after five years. 53% of candidates hired remain in the same position after 10 years. 43% of candidates hired remain in the same position after 15 years.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mr. Cooper thanked the board. He added that their firm prides themselves on using lead consultants, national consultants, and national recruiters in combination with local personnel.

V. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. SELECT SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH FIRM TO MOVE FORWARD WITH NEGOTIATIONS AND CONTRACTING

Ms. Newman stated that they interviewed three well-qualified applicants for the superintendent search firm. She invited board members to provide their individual feedback relating to each firm:

Human Capital Enterprises

Chair Jonak reported a favorable opinion of Human Capital Enterprises. She liked their written proposals, how proactive they were during the interview, and their emphasis on DEI; however, she expressed feeling like they had a narrow definition for what they considered diversity.

Mr. Hamilton got the impression that they were really a team, and they seemed in sync.

Vice Chair Di Liberto said the candidates made a good impression on him overall. He appreciated the time they spent responding to the question about DEI.

Ms. Rabasa reflected that DEI felt like the driving force in their proposal and they appeared to have put in a lot of time and energy into preparing for the interview. She noted that Ms. Rodden-Nord's previous superintendent work informed the district's racial harassment policy.

Ms. Thessen offered that while Human Capital Enterprises is the most expensive firm, their track number records for longevity of a superintendent are impressive. She echoed sentiments about their comprehensive focus on DEI and anti-racism.

Ms. Munro expressed an overall favorable opinion of Human Capital Enterprises. She appreciated the human network that they have and said the superintendent opportunity could be fantastic.

Ms. Newman made a point about the firm having local experience. She noted that while they are the most expensive, travel has not yet been reflected in the budget for the other consultants. She added that their responses were refreshing and less canned.

Chair Jonak invited staff to provide their feedback.

Interim Superintendent Gill noted that the firm has a strong track record in Oregon.

Ms. Urbina added that the firm has a reputation for taking good care of all of their candidates throughout the process.

Ray and Associates

Mr. Hamilton said the consultants sounded like they knew the business, but the video recording component did not give him the impression that they were unified. The interview was pretty good, but he was less impressed with their response to the DEI question compared with other candidates.

Ms. Thessen said that while she was in favor of the price match, the Ray and Associates was her least favorite choice.

Vice Chair Di Liberto said that while the firm was prepared and organized for the interview, he did not feel as comfortable with their approach compared with other

candidates. He added that they put an inordinate amount of emphasis on the survey questions.

Ms. Munro said that while Ray and Associates has a lot going for them, they would not be her first choice. She brought up their definition of a non-traditional candidate as an example of something that might not be a good fit for 4J, specifically.

Chair Jonak offered that she thought the firm interviewed well; however, their references were the least impressive.

Ms. Rabasa reported feeling that the interview with Ray and Associates was the least impressive. She did not feel like the firm answered all the questions. She noted that they addressed DEI last in their written proposal.

Ms. Newman observed that the interview with Ray and Associates felt more disconnected than the others. She noted that having a former Oregon school board member as a consultant was refreshing; however, she would feel more comfortable if the other consultants (from Texas, Arizona, and Washington) were largely from Oregon as well.

McPhearson and Jacobson

Mr. Hamilton said the firm's descriptions of their community engagement process made a positive impression on him.

Chair Jonak expressed that the interview with McPhearson and Jacobson was her least favorite. She was not impressed when Mr. Cooper mentioned that consulting is a part-time job for him.

Vice Chair Di Liberto echoed Chair Jonak's initial statement.

Ms. Rabasa reported liking that the firm emphasized the development of criteria as crucial to recruiting diverse candidates. She agreed with Chair Jonak's mention of consulting not being Mr. Cooper's full-time job.

Ms. Thessen noted a discrepancy between the numbers reported in the firm's proposal versus the numbers reported in their interview relating to their longevity track record.

Ms. Munro agreed with the statements shared previously by board members. She added that she approved of Ms. White's comment about finding candidates for whom once they are in Eugene, they are home.

Other board members agreed with Ms. Munro's observation.

Ms. Newman said the firm demonstrated flexibility; however, it was not clear to her if they had any local consultants. She approved of their attention to setting the criteria.

Interim Superintendent Gill responded that he believes there was the mention of at least one Oregon-based consultant for McPhearson and Jacobson.

MOTION: Vice Chair Di Liberto moved to select Human Capital Enterprises as the superintendent search firm and to move forward with negotiations and contracting. Mr. Hamilton seconded. **The motion passed unanimously, 7:0:0; Chair Rabasa, Vice Chair Jonak, Ms. Thessen, Ms. Newman, Ms. Rabasa, Ms. Munro, and Mr. Hamilton all voting in favor.**

There was board consensus approving the district to enter into negotiations with Human Capital Enterprises.

VI. ITEMS FOR ACTION AT A FUTURE MEETING

None.

VII. ADJORN

Chair Jonak adjourned the special board meeting at 8:09 p.m.



Colt Gill
District Clerk



Jenny Jonak
Board Chair

*(Recorded by LCOG)
Approved on 11/20/2024*