

SPECIAL CALL BOARD MEETING
EXEMPT NEGOTIATIONS SESSION AND
SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROCESS
MAY 23, 2005

The Board of Directors of the Davenport Community School District in the Counties of Scott and Muscatine, State of Iowa, met for a Special Call Meeting regarding the Superintendent Search Process on Monday, May 23, 2005, pursuant to law and the rules of said Board. The Board met prior to the Special Call Meeting in a Exempt Session for Negotiations from 5:20 PM to 5:30 PM. When the Exempt Session ended, the Board met in open session remaining in the Parent's Conference Room, at the Children's Village West, 2826 West Locust Street, Davenport, Iowa, in said district. President Zamora called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

On roll call the following board members were present: President Patt Zamora; Directors Richard Clewell, Nikki DeFauw, Ralph Johanson, Larry Roberson, and Timothy Tupper. Director Alan Guard arrived a few minutes later at 5:38 PM. Interim Superintendent Dr. Norbert Schuerman attended the meeting to discuss areas relating to the search for the superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROCESS

Dr. Schuerman offered assistance to the Board in their search for a permanent superintendent. The contract would be a separate contract with his own corporation and he would be a consultant. He would provide top notch candidates for the Board to interview and would start in the fall of this year. He would look through the application files and aggressively seek outstanding candidates to apply. He would narrow the list to the top four or five and present these to the Board. He would utilize the services of his assistant and the board secretary to do the extra work and there would need to be reimbursement for this and expenses. He would travel to locations where the candidates worked and in his interviews he would know if the candidates would be willing to accept the position if it was offered for consideration. He would provide screening and handle details involved. There would be a timetable to set up with the final selection made by the beginning of March for the next school year. He would work on development of the salary package with fringe benefits and would outline criteria for the Board to review. If his consultant firm were hired, the Board would have to trust he has the best interest of the District in mind and he would find someone who really wanted the position and would be responsive to the issues. The cost would be a base fee of \$15,000 plus expenses.

Director Tupper felt board members should look at all the applications and they should narrow down the list. Dr. Schuerman would agree with this if the entire Board wanted to review the applications, but he thought that would be a waste of board members' time. He thought having lay people evaluate all the applications and doing the field work was not efficient. Director DeFauw talked about the Board having the best interest of the District at heart but she didn't like having one person making the final choice of five candidates to interview. She suggested a smaller group might include a board member, PTA person, and representatives from the bargaining groups. They would review applications and bring recommendations back to the full Board. With many eyes viewing the applications there might be a better chance to pick up details one individual would miss.

President Zamora wanted homework on whoever was recommended because people always put their best foot forward on the application. Dr. Schuerman can't make recommendations to the Board on applications alone but he would need to make sure the individual could be certified in Iowa. Dr. Schuerman said he would make sure individuals could qualify for the position and weed out those who would not be able to get certified ahead of time. Director Johanson talked about the criteria to be established for people to qualify for the job and felt the criteria would eliminate many people. He felt Dr. Schuerman would have insights into this and would save the Board time in conducting interviews

of candidates who don't qualify. Dr. Schuerman explained plans in more detail, how he would handle background checks, and how he would conduct initial research on the applicants. He planned to personally interview the best candidates and arrange for additional meetings with the Board.

President Zamora asked about recruiting minorities and women candidates. Dr. Schuerman said this must be done and his search firm would handle this in a positive and open manner looking for strong candidates to fill the position. Director Roberson was concerned about having too narrow of a focus with only one person making the selection for the top five. He felt the review process had to be out-of-the-box and several individuals involved to keep things well rounded. Dr. Schuerman said he had a number of colleagues who could assist him in the process. Director Johanson asked about Dr. Schuerman's philosophical approach to attracting the right kind of candidate for our District. Dr. Schuerman talked about the importance of experience because of the complicated system in place with such a large school district. The responsibilities are large and the person would need to have had personal responsibilities dealing with complex issues in order to handle the work and extensive background needed for working with a Board of Education. The person should have experience in working with unions because we have a strong labor union culture. The successful superintendent would have a top notch history of working with Board and staff. If the person was successful in a smaller district, this would be a good opportunity for growth. A superintendent from a small district of 400 students may not have the ability needed for this size district. Dr. Schuerman said he would get to know the person and see how they viewed ethnicity and other crucial issues. It is easy for people to talk positively about minorities but racism can take on many forms. We need someone very diverse and willing to promote the Board's mission.

Director Clewell talked about selecting a superintendent as one of the most important roles for a school board to handle. He felt the Board needed to hire someone who they trusted to act on their behalf in the process. It was not the Board's job to do background checks on candidates. It would be a time saver for the Board to have someone else seeking out individuals who were really serious about taking the position. Dr. Schuerman felt good knowing the current Board had confidence in his understanding of their needs. If more Boards would follow along these same lines, there would be less turn over in the superintendent's position.

Director Guard felt the first company failed at being an advocate for this district. They didn't find people who really wanted to come here; and he believed Dr. Schuerman would be our best advocate. We need to find someone who would be committed to the Davenport and surrounding communities. Director Guard didn't want to look at all the applications, but if other board members did, they could. He didn't feel that was the best use of his time. Although we want to save time, we still have to be comfortable with the person selected. Dr. Guard said the interim superintendent has been able to think outside the box and has been bold in his approaches so far. Dr. Guard thought board members may want to sit in on the group interviews as non-participants to see how the candidate responded to questions for staff and community members.

MCPHERSON CONTRACT: President Zamora asked board members to express feelings toward continuing to use the McPherson and Jacobson firm. Director Guard was not in favor of continuing. Director Tupper felt we should use all the resources we have and they still have an obligation to us. He felt they could be used as a resource along with someone else being in charge. Director DeFauw felt it would be muddled having two companies conducting a search and candidates would be confused as to who they should work with on their applications. Director Clewell felt it would be the consultant's choice as to how to use McPherson in the search process. Director Roberson wanted to use all the resources available. He wanted the lead person to look at the person from a different perspective than their own. He didn't want someone disqualified because he/she thought differently about issues. President Zamora wasn't impressed with the choices from McPherson and favored severing the relationship with them. She would be willing to interview four or five candidates but

didn't want to deal with 30+ applications. President Zamora said she was only in charge of the process but the rest of the Board should state their objectives.

Director Tupper wanted to see the process we used over the last year and outline how we established criteria, created the process, interviewed candidates, and negotiated a deal. What would we do differently this time? Dr. Schuerman said he would have examples of criteria and develop a brochure. After that we would get applications and even go online. The breath comes from the confidence other people have in him to look for the job. He would want time to look at the interview process we used previously. Director Guard said McPherson didn't really do much on background checks or actually interviewing candidates but they provided video tapes for board members. Dr. Schuerman talked about expanding the posting of the search to areas beyond Des Moines and go to Kansas, Minnesota, Omaha, and Chicago. We would need to make this national and would have to evaluate the national resources in terms of dollars to spend. Director DeFauw said it would be interesting to know where the first and second group of candidates actually heard about us. Dr. Schuerman said a posting in AASA would be crucial since so many administrators belong to this group.

There was additional dialogue about the scope of the search and perspectives to be used. Some talked about more experience, being an advocate for the District, having commitment, and being focused. Some felt using the existing firm was not to our advantage and the Board would be better using Dr. Schuerman's services. He will be going to the urban leaders' conference and that would be a great time for him to make contacts with potential candidates. Some were concerned about candidates not being qualified or being able to be certified in Iowa. Some people said they trusted the motivation of Dr. Schuerman and valued the present relationship they had with him as interim superintendent. Others still had concerns about the narrow scope of selection of candidates. Some felt we should use all the resources possible and responsibilities will need to be designated. They even talked about going through the entire process of having consultant firms come back to present proposals. Others thought McPherson could be responsible for on-line items and the web-site for interested candidates. Others wanted the expertise of Dr. Schuerman but also be allowed to have more input.

TIME FRAME: Board members talked about having some things start immediately but getting applications out in the fall and posting the position in November. This is not a good time to start a search in the summer and we have to give people time to complete the application and think through the process. Dr. Schuerman said he wasn't pushing his consultant firm, but the Board needed to get something started so we can get going by the fall. Alan Guard asked to have this as an agenda item at the next meeting. President Zamora said we also have to decide how to utilize McPherson and Jacobson in the process. President Zamora said she could arrange to have McPherson representative come to the Committee of the Whole meeting. Director Roberson expressed his concern that his experience tells him to use all possible sources instead of narrowing the scope. Dr. Schuerman felt the Board needed to make a decision on the firm they felt comfortable using and who would be the most help in assisting them; that should be their main objective at this point. President Zamora would be responsible for checking with McPherson to see if they could come to the Committee of the Whole or next Regular Board Meeting in June.

ADJOURNMENT: President Zamora adjourned the meeting at 6:35 PM.