

**ACTON-BOXBOROUGH TRANSITIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABTSC) MEETING Minutes** (approved 11/7/13)

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Wednesday, October 9, 2013
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Dennis Bruce, Mike Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik,
Members Absent: none
Others: Beth Petr, Andrew Shen, Heather Harer (in audience)

Chairman Maria Neyland called the ABTSC to order at 7:00 p.m. Due to Acton TV’s schedule, this meeting was not taped.

Acton-Boxborough Regional Superintendent Search

1. Search Firm Interviews (*see 10/3/13 memo*)

1. ***Future Management Systems, Inc.(FMS)***

Dr. Richard Warren presented for Future Management Systems. He would be the lead along with Lyle Kirtman and Herb Levine. This would be the only search Dr. Warren would be involved in. Dr. Levine is the Executive Director of the New England Association of School Superintendents.

FMS recommends networking and advertising in EdWeek, but not doing newspaper ads like the Boston Globe. They can talk to people who are not currently looking and “sell our community” to them.

The Committee asked about including an online survey to gather community input. They discussed whether it is best to have internal candidates go through the regular screening process or not. More women are now applying for Superintendent positions but selection-wise, Dr. Warren said that the jobs are held by many more men than women. Typically, 30 – 40 candidates will apply for these kinds of jobs. The proposed timeline was considered aggressive, but doable, if it is everyone’s priority. An ad should be out not less than a month and 6 weeks is best. A spreadsheet with rankings for discussion will be provided. Person to person dialogue is very important and one of FMS’ strengths. They will not approach a candidate that they have already successfully placed.

The Committee liked that FMS would seek out and speak to excellent candidates, who may or may not be looking for a new position, to see if they are interested. They stressed that successful leadership experience, followed by management experience should be top priority for this position.

2. ***New England School Development Council (NESDEC)***

Art Bettencourt and Dr. Carolyn Burke presented for NESDEC. They felt the proposed timeline and plan was workable and well thought out. The candidate profile is important because it drives the search. They cover all of New England and do a lot of recruiting. All searches are national, but most candidates will come from New England. Emphasis would be on the School Committee being in control and owning the search.

If there are several internal candidates, they advised running an internal process first. Including internal candidates in the applicant pool can be detrimental because some good outside candidates may not want to compete with someone who is internal.

If hired, Art and Carolyn would be assigned to the search. Art has a comfort level with how people get things done in this area because he has lived and worked here. They currently have 4 searches going on. Since fall 2006, NESDEC did 82 superintendent searches and 18 other position searches. They warranty the search for two years and will come back if a superintendent leaves other than for retirement. Art stressed that because they are a non-profit, he is never asked at the end of the year how much money he has made, but “What have you done for school districts?”. NESDEC does not use print advertising at all. The Boston Globe has not been cost effective. They do not “poach” candidates they have placed within a 6 year period.

After the presenters left, Maria Neyland asked the Committee if they wanted to discuss how to handle internal candidates. FMS and NESDEC both said good internal candidates may cause some outsiders not to apply. The same advice was given for the last superintendent search. Internal candidates applied with everyone else and it did not seem to affect the process.

Because NESDEC is doing other searches, the Committee wondered whether they would be competing for candidates. NESDEC does all kinds of trainings, where FMS only focuses on executive searches.

3. *Ray & Associates*

Dr. Bill Adams presented and said that they have done searches for all kinds of districts all over the country. He would coordinate the search directly for Mr. Ray. There is a two year guarantee for the search and it has only been invoked 5 times since they began. Their average tenure is 8 years which is a lot longer than the national average. He stressed that there will be people who should apply that don't know that they should and the search firm's job is to find them. There was some concern about needing to add some time to the timetable. Dr. Adams had read about our school district and appeared to be familiar with it during the presentation.

Ray & Associates feel that an EdWeek ad is expensive but a must. They prefer that ads run 45 days. They average receiving 60-65 applications with 15 – 20 of them having the “essential” characteristics desired. They would do extensive vetting of candidates before presenting them to the Search Committee. Skype is an important tool to get a visual of how someone presents him/herself and answers questions. Site visits are not used that often now because they tend to be very biased.

Ray & Associates does not seem to have much direct contact in and/or from Massachusetts. Examples focused on New Jersey and Florida. Travel expenses may be higher as a result. Dr. Adams advised that internal candidates be treated the same way as all candidates. An interim candidate who applies may scare good candidates away.

Note: Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates withdrew from the presentations due to scheduling.

2. Discussion followed by ABTSC VOTE to select Search Firm

The Committee discussed the three presentations. Costs are comparable. FMS is \$20,000 and Ray is \$25,000.

Some committee members liked that Ray & Associates laid out the process in a very formulaic way, but others were not sure our community would appreciate this. Their ranking of candidates was appealing and similar to what was very helpful during the last search. The extensive vetting of candidates was also good.

FMS was most compelling regarding having a handle on this segment of the Massachusetts job market, including important comments made regarding pensions and how they are handled in this state. Members noted that the FMS material contained a number of typographical errors.

NESDEC also had good experience and contacts in the state and was familiar with pension issues.

Andrew Shen shared the reference information that he had gathered on the three companies. He said that people were generally very happy with their results from all three firms.

Maria asked the Committee how they would like to handle internal candidates because there are a few who are qualified and may apply. She asked the Committee if there was anyone who, if they applied, they would give the superintendency to right away. The Committee did not respond to the question and agreed to have internal candidates apply through the regular process.

It was a sense of the Committee that all three firms could handle the task, and all had strengths, but it came down to which one would best fit our community.

ABTSC VOTE:

Michael Coppolino moved, Brigid Bieber seconded and it was,

VOTED: to use Future Management Systems as the Search Firm for our Superintendent Search. (Yes: Brigid Bieber, Mary Brolin, Mike Coppolino, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Maria Neyland, Deanne O’Sullivan, Kristina Rychlik No: Dennis Bruce)

The Committee adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: See agenda and materials provided by the three search firms