

SAU 56 School Board

Board Meeting

January 18th 2017

SAU Conference Room

6:30 pm

- 1. CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Tom Kunz called the meeting to order at 6:30pm upon call of the roll the following members were present: Austin, Rivers, Anderson, Nelson, Pepin, Hanlon, Leach, Kunz and Hiller. Absent: Robinson, Bolduc and Brennan
- 2. NHSBA Discussion:** Kunz stated that NHSBA is here tonight to present the process for the Superintendent search and the things we need to look for. Ted Comstock stated thank you for inviting us and selecting us to help in the search. He stated that he will give an overview of what the search process looks like. He stated that it was tough seven years ago to find a Superintendent and he wishes he could say it is easier now but we have had a shrinkage in the pool of Superintendents. He stated that the reality is that there are many more openings than qualified candidates, it is not impossible but it puts more focus on the aspects of the search. He stated that it used to be that you could put an ad in Fosters and get 20-30 completed applications and of those 10-15 people you would like to interview but we are not there anymore. Now if you get 15-20 complete applications and of the 15-20 there are 6-8 that you would like to talk with. He stated that included in the handout is what a typical search looks like but any search can be fine-tuned to what you want us to do, we are here to serve you. He stated that from beginning to end the typical process is about 3 ½ to 4 months. He stated that you are in a good position that your Superintendent gave you plenty of notice. He stated that if you start the search with the recruitment in mid-February it will take 6 weeks for recruitment which puts you at mid-march and then you will do the screening which takes about a month so then you are in April and then in May you would do the final selection. He stated that all things going well you would have a finalist by May. He stated that it also allows time in case the first round you don't find a candidate you like. He stated that the first step is to determine what it is that we want and need in our next Superintendent. He stated that you would be surprised at how many searches start out that don't have a good idea of what they are looking for. He stated that you have to dive deep and decide and look at your goals and what you need for the next 2-3 years and that will drive what you are looking for in a Superintendent. He stated that you want to do this at the front end of the search. The SAU board will talk about their needs, possibly do community surveys and do focus groups with the community and staff and possibly students. He stated that all this work leads to a leadership profile to guide the search and the ultimate decision. He stated that this is a really important step. He stated that then you would start the recruitment which is a critical phase and you need to allow six weeks for this as it is hard to find good people. He stated that in the old days you would put an ad in print but now everyone looks online so we will put it in education week publication, the American Association of School Administrators and we will send it to all SAU offices. He stated that we can't expect people to come to us. He stated that the next step is the screening process. He stated that once we have a good pool you would decide which people are worth bringing in for an interview. He stated that you can either employ a sub-committee of the SAU board or do a search committee. He stated that the search committee would be appointed by the SAU board with the charge of bringing back three candidates who meet the criteria. He stated that a search committee should be no more than 8-12 people. He stated that you want it to be a fairly small group. He stated that confidentiality becomes an issue with more people that are involved and managing and scheduling also becomes an issue with a larger group. He stated that as far as who these people are you want to represent people in the community who have knowledge of the school system, possibly police or city council and teachers and administration. He stated that the more diverse the group the better. Joanne Pepin asked if a screening committee is different than a search committee. Comstock stated no. Joanne Pepin stated that in the flyer it says 10-18 and now you say 8-12 which one should we go by. Comstock stated that we have found over time that having a smaller committee works better. He stated that once you give the charge to the committee to screen down the candidates based on the leadership profile and recommend the three candidates you step back and trust the committee to narrow the field down. He stated that the SAU board will then decide on who is qualified and the best fit for the community and the way to do that is to have the candidates come in and visit the schools and do community forums and then culminating with an

interview by the SAU board. He stated that they provide reference checks and then the decision is made and the offer of employment and to negotiate a contract and approve it. He stated that it is popular if the candidates work close by that a team is sent out to each place of the finalists work and you can learn a lot by doing that. Pepin asked if the search committee does that. Comstock stated no the SAU board. He stated that in terms of negotiating a contract times have changed today it is very competitive. He stated that now Barrett will talk about legal issues and confidentiality. Pepin asked if they supply a background check. Comstock stated that they do a reference check but the employer would need to do the criminal background check. Hiller asked how many other searches they are involved in. Comstock stated that they have three other searches and some are close to the end. Barrett Christina stated that we have several consultants and we rarely do more than two at a time. Comstock stated that we do it in a team approach so there is not just one person and there could be four different individuals working on a search. He stated that there are two options for a search. There is a full search which includes all the stages which costs about \$8,000 plus mileage reimbursement for a total of about \$12,000-13,000. He stated that they also offer a partial search which is menu driven and if you are interested in that option we would sit with you and see which options you feel comfortable doing yourself and then based on that it would be \$100 per hour charge and we would give you an estimate on what that would cost depending on the menu items that you choose. It is usually 50-60% of the cost but it can vary a lot. He stated that Superintendents move around a lot more than they used to and if you have done a search in the last couple of years then you may feel that you can handle some phases but if it has been a long time since you have done a search people typically go with the full search. Barrett Christina stated that we are attorney's and we can identify the legal pitfalls that you can run into and assist you and provide advice accordingly in relation to the process to make sure that it is clean from a legal standpoint. He stated that if you engage the community in your committee the average community member may not have the background of confidentiality and the right to know law. He stated that they have significant documentation on the aspects of questions that you can and can't ask. He stated that they did one search where they wanted to know if the candidate was willing to move their family to the community and you can't ask someone that. He stated that NHSBA will assist with those things and we have sample questions that we can give you and you can choose which ones you want to ask. He stated that confidentiality is significant if you want to attract the best candidates the board needs to do what they can to maintain confidentiality. He stated that if every superintendent in the state knew that their current employer would find out it could be problematic even talking about who applied for what you thought about the candidates. You need to be careful talking to people about why the candidates got a second interview or didn't. He stated that he is happy to attend and give this speech to the different groups of people in the committee that they are stepping into the role of the board and the confidentiality discussion applies to the committee just as if it was the board doing the search. He stated that Dover is involved in a right to know law case related to their superintendent search when Dr. Arbor got the job seeking information on the candidates such as rubric sheets. He stated that in response to that NHSBA has developed a practical guidance about which documents to keep and share and which ones to shred. He stated that we can't give a complete guarantee but we can come up with strategies in each step of the process and we will be there to answer right to know law questions. Comstock stated that the position we are taking in the search to say to the candidate that their information will be kept confidential until they are named as the finalist and at that point say you have been named a finalist and we will be doing a press release of the names and that gives them the opportunity to tell their current employer. Christina stated that you should try to give them 48-72 hours to let their board know and let them know you will draft a press release and ask them if they are ok with that. He stated that it gives them time to inform who they need to inform. He stated that relative to the search committee it is a good idea to keep the numbers low as the last search he assisted with was a large committee and it was too many. He stated that scheduling becomes problematic so it is important to keep it a manageable size. Hiller stated that they came up with 13 and they had questions on a public person or PTA member. Christina stated that he would recommend one or two board members or two from each of the communities, maybe a police officer. A member of the public is fine and it doesn't have to be affiliated with the school. He stated that aside from the makeup of the committee it needs to be clear with what their charge is. He stated that they are advisory

to select the candidates and make recommendations of the finalists but the board is responsible to select and interview the finalists. He stated that in regards to the number of candidates there is no magic number but ideally you want more than two finalists in case one backs out. Pepin asked what he would recommend as the makeup. Christina stated 4 board members two from each community, two administrators one from each community, two community leaders one from each community and sau staff. Austin stated that the last committee was 13 and it worked well because we were able to do concurrent interviews. Comstock stated that when you select folks you want them to bring perspectives that are useful to you. Christina stated that don't think that by leaving anyone off that they are excluded from the process, there will be public forums and at those you can reach out to constituent groups even if they are not on the committee. If you hold two public forums and do the leg work and reach out to certain groups instead of just posting. He stated that a lot of boards do online surveys to see what people are looking for in a superintendent. He stated that he has seen boards do public forums and surveys but the information was not aggregated. He stated that you want that leadership profile printed and handed out to the members of the committee because they are using that as a guide when screening and interviewing. You can also weight the leadership profile on what is most important. Comstock stated that he sees all the time with employee groups on a search committee that they have self-interests on why they are on the committee so you don't want to load it up with employee types. You want the profile to do the screening and guide their work. Nelson stated that the public forum that you talked about to build the leadership profile. We talked more about the finalists having one but to have one before makes sense. Comstock stated that you hold one public forum on the front end and once the finalists are chosen hold another forum for the finalists for individuals to have an opportunity to provide input. Kunz stated that based on feedback from other boards what is the biggest disappointment with the candidates. Comstock stated that he would say the size of the pool and the lack of experience with the candidates. He stated that a lot of places want people who have been a superintendent for a period of time and those people are hard to find. You may find Assistant superintendents or may have a principal who has been in the position for quite a while. Kunz asked if applicants are coming from out of state. Comstock stated not as much as they used to most are within NH or upper New England. Kunz stated that geographically we may be at an advantage. Comstock stated that NH superintendents are paid higher than ME. Hiller asked for a ballpark salary. Comstock stated that it is so diverse in this state it is all over the ballpark. Nelson stated that you can find that on the NH DOE website. Christina stated that you need to be mindful of that you can't just look at salary because there are other contractual benefits that are not reported on the DOE website. Comstock stated that we do a salary study as a part of this process so you will know where you fit. Kunz stated that it also depends on the experience of the person we are hiring. He asked more about the right to know law issue. Christina stated that the current litigation is asking for all names who had applied. He stated that the committee had created scoring rubrics for the finalists and at the end they gathered them and kept them in the HR office. The school board in response to the petition stated that they should remain private because they have internal personnel practices that are exempt from public disclosure under the law but the Superior court said that they have to provide the documents. He stated that NHSBA is recommending that you put on the ads and application materials that their information is confidential and we hope that it helps show the candidate that their information is confidential. Comstock stated that it does address the points the judge made on the rubrics that when people apply for public employment they have to know that it is public information. He stated that if you have to make things public even applicants, if you think the pool is small now just wait. Hiller asked if there are certain people that shouldn't be on the committee. Kunz stated that we will work that out. Comstock stated no unless there is a direct conflict. Leach stated that we can't hand over what we don't have so we need to destroy everything prior to leaving the meeting and we don't have to worry. Nelson asked if they needed to take action this evening to hire NHSBA. Comstock stated yes and which option that you would like and we will generate a letter of agreement and get the ball rolling. A motion made by Nelson seconded by Pepin to hire NHSBA with the full search option. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Comstock asked who the contact person will be. Kunz stated either Don or myself. Comstock stated that they will send out a letter of agreement that will need to be signed by the SAU chair to formalize the relationship and then we will talk about the process. He stated that you are at a good place time wise so you should take

advantage of that. He stated that naming the search committee is important but they won't have work for 4-6 weeks. Nelson asked if they have a generic ad to put out looking for superintendent. Comstock stated that the ad will capture the community and the main part will be relatively generic but will get more specific with the screening. Hiller stated that we have a town and a city and the town sends their middle and high school students to another state, do we need to look for someone with experience in that. Nelson stated no, the students are overseen by the NH superintendent. She will be looking for someone with good interaction skills which is what they need. Pepin thanked them for coming as this is the first time she has been involved in a superintendent search and your knowledge and experience is appreciated.

3. **Board Discussion:** Kunz stated that we got a lot of information and he learned a lot. He stated that we need to talk about the search committee and what it looks like. He stated that we got some recommendations on the numbers and make-up. Hanlon stated that the list before was evenly weighted and he doesn't want to get too deep into the committee. He stated that it needs to be even between the two communities and board members, employees and municipal is the way to go. Rivers stated that we shouldn't get too hung up on the community aspect. He stated that Dover had public input and nobody showed up. He stated that there isn't enough community involvement in a lot of things. Kunz stated that the last community forum was fairly well attended. Pepin stated that the two finalists had a public forum last time that was also well attended. Kunz asked if there is a real benefit to go any different than having a final candidate's forum to meet the public. Hiller stated that a survey may be a better thing. Hanlon stated that is too much data. Nelson stated that we want consistency with the same people traveling to districts. We should layout the makeup of the committee. Austin stated that he received an email from the president of the teacher union asking us to allow them to pick two people their executive board picks. Pepin stated that the staff and the sau should be picked by Jeni. Hanlon stated that both board chairs should be on the committee and they should appoint who should be in these spots. Kunz stated that the chairs should be involved and he would also like to be involved but it tips the scale for Rollinsford and he would suggest Dana be on it. Hanlon stated that Don could appoint someone. Austin stated that we need to get the framework and allow us to fill it out. Hiller stated that she is concerned with the different school levels being involved, when we say admin is it elementary middle and high school. Kunz stated that it is a huge time commitment. Anderson stated that we could invite groups to the forum. Hiller stated that admin should be there. Kunz stated that it will all depend on their availability and desire to do this and we need to take that into account. Austin stated that we don't need four principals and 6 teachers. One or two can represent the interests of that group. Preliminary list of committee members:

Board Members (4)

SAU Staff (1)

Admin (3) One from Rollinsford Two from Somersworth

Community (2) City Council and Select board

Pepin stated that the Mayor already approached Marty. Austin stated that is not his role, he needs to let us do our job. It should come from this board. Kunz stated that we need to find people available to do this. He stated that a lot of things will vary here, we need to find people that are available and interested. He stated that we will make the decision. Pepin stated that the Mayor was looking for people who are interested and have the time. The sooner we get started the better and we shouldn't wait to get feelers out there on who is interested. Austin stated that this committee won't start immediately so we have the time to do the leg work and have conversations on time commitment. He stated that my point was we need to be assessing the qualities of who is interested. Hanlon stated that people are casting nets. Kunz stated that he doesn't want anyone to think that we are prescreening the committee, we are open to anyone who falls into this group. Nelson stated that the town of Rollinsford isn't even completely aware that Jeni is retiring, we are getting people up to speed. Kunz stated that we could have a host of people saying that they have the time. Hanlon stated that it should come to the chairs to appoint. Pepin stated that the issue I have is in my opinion before this meeting there was prescreening. She stated that she was approached about being on it. Don told me that it looked like it would be just the board chairs and I was against two Rollinsford and one Somersworth, she thinks that it should be two and two. If it was already discussed by the three chairs then that is prescreening. Austin stated that it was not a done deal and it

was open for conversation. Kunz stated that the whole point of being here now is to decide what we want to do. Pepin stated that she got the impression from the conversation last time that it was if you were interested in being on the committee. Kunz stated that this was an SAU board meeting to hear the process. Austin stated that we did say it was the opportunity to hear about the process because this was our most important role. Leach stated that I am interested in the hiring process but not interested in being on the committee. Kunz stated that the SAU board will be making the final decision and this was to understand the entire process. Leach stated that there is an appropriate time and place to make decision on who and the type of people we want on the committee and we haven't even finalized that yet so it was quite presumptuous of the Mayor to be asking people when we haven't set direction on who we want on the committee. We haven't even determined that yet. A motion made by Hanlon seconded by Pepin to allow the board chairs to make the appointments for committee members per their community. Leach stated that we need to determine the list before we vote on the motion.

Board Members (4) Two from each SAU (1)

Admin (3) Elementary, Middle, High School

Community (2) City Council Somersworth, Rollinsford Community Member

Teacher (2) One from each community

Kunz asked if we needed to have teachers, it is an enormous pool to choose from. Nelson stated that maybe some other groups such as custodians or para would want to have representation for the group. Kunz stated that we want everyone to be a part of the process but the beginning needs to be smaller. Leach stated that we could send a survey to teachers on what is important to you in order to have their input so they can see we are listening to them. Hanlon stated that we have a cross section of every aspect except for teachers and their questions would be different than any other person. Kunz stated that what if we have 50 people who are interested how do we determine who we pick. Hanlon stated that he would hit administration and have them give two people and then whittle it down. Anderson stated that at the beginning of the process you could have a meeting to allow the teachers to have input. Nelson stated that we are getting way too deep in the weeds. We have to come up with a leadership profile and we could get input from the staff at the school or with the community and build the profile. Austin stated that he feels that teachers need to be represented. Kunz stated that it is a huge time commitment and some don't live around here. Nelson stated that she would suggest that we don't make this list hard and fast and just use it as a guideline. Austin stated that we may need to add or take away. Kunz stated that this will help us when we are being asked and give an idea of what we are trying to do by giving a fair representation of the educational community. Hiller stated that we should add a second SAU person and that gives us 13 to avoid a six to six vote. Nelson stated that is fine and it puts us back on our original list. A motion made by Hanlon seconded by Pepin to move forward with the tentative list with the appointments being made by the board chair for each community. VOTE: motion passed, unanimously. Pepin stated that Jeni already has two tentative administration for the middle and high school. Hanlon stated that they will need to funnel that information to the chair. Kunz stated that he and Don will follow up with Ted and Barrett and get the ball rolling. Austin stated that we need to start on the leadership profile. Hanlon stated that this board knows best what we are looking for and we can define what we want and what we need. Austin stated that we always talk about being transparent and the more we concentrate on doing the work ourselves the less transparent we become and he doesn't know the needs in each of the buildings. He stated that he doesn't know what the Superintendent entails just because I sit on the board, I know what I need but don't necessarily know what the buildings need. He stated that it is worth the effort to reach out to groups to provide us some input. Kunz asked if we are talking the community at large or the schools. Nelson stated that it is great to get community support. Kunz stated that part of this is getting a good representative sample. He stated that we want to get input but the community put us in the positions to sit on the board to do what they ask us to do and this is the most important thing we will do. Pepin stated that we could have people email us to let us know what they want. Hanlon stated then you are collecting data and have to sort through it. Nelson stated that we should split and decide at our own board meetings. Austin stated that the leadership profile is something that we need to come up with beforehand so we can give it to the committee. Hanlon stated that we

could add it to our agenda to discuss at our board meeting. Kunz asked if he wonders if there is value in a public forum. Nelson stated that we need to sign the agreement and get the ad out and while doing that we can do the other stuff and then have the leadership profile in February.

4. Next Meeting: The next meeting is February 15th at 6:00pm at the SAU office. Agenda items include Leadership profile and makeup of search committee.

5. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.