

SAU 56 School Board

Board Meeting

October 2nd 2017

SAU Conference Room

6:30 pm

- 1. CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL - PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Hanlon called the meeting to order at 6:30pm upon call of the roll the following members were present: Austin, Bolduc, Yoder, Pepin, Cavanaugh, Nelson, Kunz, Hanlon, Smith and Hiller. Absent: Rivers, Brennan, Leach and Anderson
- 2. Superintendent Search:** Hanlon stated that Dr. Brown has declined our offer to apply so we are here tonight to discuss the process moving forward. Hiller asked if she gave a reason. Austin stated that she just chose not to accept the offer. Hanlon stated that Barrett is here to discuss the process. He stated that the position was posted today. The executive board reviewed and approved the ad to be posted so that is where we are at the moment. Barrett Christina stated that the ad had some editorial type changes and has been posted on the AASA site as well as school spring. He stated that it went live today and two people have applied both from out of state. He stated that he has done some outreach to local candidates that are interested and he anticipates them applying. He stated that he is in touch with an individual from Massachusetts who we got a good report on. He stated that they will be doing some active recruiting this year. He will get a list of candidates from his colleague in Massachusetts. He stated that when we were in a pinch across the state he sent out a list of people that were verified by him and he trusts his word so he will reach back out to him to see if I can contact them. He stated that as the apps come in he will let the executive committee know or they can log in and see them. Nelson stated that she tested it and she can get in. Christina stated that the two that came in came from the AASA site so he gets an email and their materials are attached. He stated that the next step is to do community forums and invite people to offer comments on what they are looking for and we can also do them online. Nelson stated that she thought they discussed skipping that and just do a community forum with the candidates. Christina stated that the way the process is laid out is that himself and the executive board will screen the applications as they come in not just when the ad drops. He stated that they will meet and ask individuals to come in for first round interviews the first week of November. He stated that the first round of interviews will be with the executive board and myself. He stated that NHSBA will develop interview questions but in the meantime he will be doing initial background checks and contact references and anyone I know who has worked with the individual. He stated that once the finalists are selected NHSBA will do more thorough background checks. He stated that they will select the finalists the week of the 9th and at that point they will contact the individuals for second interviews and if it is feasible do site visits the week following thanksgiving. He stated that they will be invited to SAU 56 and we will select members of the board to the candidate's schools. He stated that given the number of schools in SAU 56 they may not get to every single one. He stated that he would recommend they visit Rollinsford, the high school and one elementary school or middle school. He stated that you would have staff available for them to talk to. He stated that presuming everything comes back clean we will schedule community forums with the finalists the following week December 4th through the 8th. Ideally with a decision made by Friday the 8th. He stated that gives us one week of leeway time. Hanlon stated that we have some room in between the 9th and the 27th to schedule site visits as well. Nelson stated that we talked about when we visit their schools that it not just be board members and possibly having admin who know more of what is going on. Christina stated that it will be 3-4 people going, some from Rollinsford, Somersworth and the SAU. Hiller asked if the final interview will be with the full board. Christina stated yes, the full board. It is important for everyone to participate and listen. He stated that we will need to figure out for the community forum if we want them to go both at the same time. Hanlon stated that that is what we have done in the past and he would prefer people to see them side by side. He stated that we could also have it televised depending on where we do it. Christina stated that he has seen it done both ways; it depends on timing and scheduling. He stated that assuming we like the candidate and the board is ready to make an offer we would offer the job and then start contract negotiations to have something signed before Christmas. He stated that we have the leadership profile from last time and the community survey from last time but if we want to solicit additional feedback from different constituents, we can do that with online polling. He stated that he will be making calls after Wednesday to reach out to Superintendents and Assistant

Superintendents in New Hampshire and out of state. Joanne Pepin asked when the deadline is. Christina stated that it is the 27th but we can push it out a week if we need to. Austin stated that he doesn't see a need to push it out. Kunz asked if there was some sort of deadline to have this done before Christmas that we need to be aware of. Christina stated that there is no requirement to get it done before Christmas. He stated that generally, people who are applying are looking to make a step up or lateral move and once February comes, they are locked in for the following year and after that, you get leftovers. He stated that there are already 8-10 openings in New Hampshire so there is a lot of competition with a shallow pool. Bolduc asked what their closing date is compared to ours. Christina stated that it is about the same time, a five-week ad is typical and people generally apply within the first two weeks of it being posted. Hiller stated that we could see how many we get and then decide if we need another week. She stated that the problem is last time we kept it open for a month and if we had kept it open a couple more weeks we may have gotten more people. Hanlon stated that another reason to try and get it done before the end of the year is that we only have two incumbents on the Somersworth side who are running unopposed so we don't want to get through the process and then have a bunch of new people come in. Kunz asked how the questions are being developed. Christina stated that we will make the questions more specific this time. He stated that you need to look at the resume and ask specific questions about that. He stated that the board can email Matt individual questions they would like asked but you need to stay away from broader philosophical questions and make them more specific. Kunz stated that the whole process last time was clumsy. He stated that he was surprised of the caliber of candidates that came in. He stated that we need to get more direction from you on what we should be asking, narrow it down, and not waste time. He stated that you have been through this with us and not a lot has changed. Christina asked what are your priorities in Rollinsford that you need a leader to address. Kunz stated dealing with town budget committee on our budget needs. Christina stated that we didn't get that deep last year. He stated that nobody was enamored with any of the candidates last year. Nelson stated that part of the problem is the questions were general so we need to be very specific on what is in their resume and what we need to know. Christina stated that we can come up with hypotheticals, which is where he will draw on their knowledge of issues. Kunz stated that many of the folks who have been a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent have a good handle on what the role is. He stated that they have some understanding of what needs to be done. He stated that he didn't get the feeling that they knew what the job entails so how did they get past their initial screening. Christina stated that it was the pool of candidates the last time. Hanlon stated that partly it is because we did it later in the season. Christina stated that is part of it. He stated that last year there were 6-8 interims come May and June last year. He stated that part of it was the pool. He stated that it is going to be very challenging and there are more openings this fall than last spring. Kunz stated that he is fine with leaving it up to the executive board but after the last round we need to focus in on areas that we feel we should have for us. Austin stated that he thinks Tom is right. He stated that we need to be laser focused in the first round so only qualified candidates make it through. Christina stated that we need to draw in on your needs. Hanlon stated that we should look at superintendents in the past and what we liked. Kunz stated that we did all that, we came up with a whole list and we spent a lot of time on that. Hiller stated that we need to take last year's questions and make them better. She stated that we asked them too openly. Nelson stated that the process last time started out with great enthusiasm and then it fell apart. She stated that we came up with 40 questions, we only asked like 8, and some of them were meaningless. She stated that people gave long answers that didn't answer anything. She stated that she never knew who was in charge. She stated that she hopes that we are avoiding that with the new process. She stated that we have to take some responsibility for the process last time. She stated that we need to fix the process. Hanlon asked if it was due to the size of the committee. Nelson stated that she doesn't think so; nobody was really in charge to keep people following in the same direction. Kunz stated that we don't need to reinvent the wheel; we have already spent a lot of time on this. Hiller stated that she had a concern last year with some questions that didn't come up. She stated that she is concerned with the commissioner of education and she would like a question on how they plan on dealing with the state department of education. She stated that if they say they like him then it is not the candidate for us, at least I don't think so. Hanlon asked if they want questions to come to this board for approval or just let Barrett come up

with them and the executive board. Kunz stated that why doesn't the executive board look at the questions and refine them. Joanne Pepin stated that you need to change the wording for Assistant Superintendent in the ad. Nelson stated that we can review the questions but also leave room to ask specific questions on their resume. Christina stated that we will leave time to go off script. Austin stated that we did good work on the profile that we did so we don't need to go back out to get more input now. He stated that there are very specific things in both Rollinsford and Somersworth that we are looking for. For instance in Somersworth we have an elementary school with infrastructure needs that need to be addressed so we may be looking for someone with building project experience with renovation versus building new. Hiller stated that we need someone with negotiations experience because we have a difficult contract to deal with so we want a superintendent who is good at negotiations. Bolduc stated that he is a little frustrated and not happy with what happened last time. He stated that he is not sure if it is a legal question to ask or not but why they are leaving their other district and why they want to come to Somersworth. He stated that their resume is very important. He stated that all the other questions they will just give us an answer that won't mean anything. Don't ask a question just for the sake of asking a question. He stated that he saw that you won't accept a paper application and asked why. Christina stated that it is all done online. Bolduc stated that not everyone is computer savvy. Austin stated that nobody does paper anymore. Nelson stated that one reason is to show they do have some computer expertise. Cavanaugh stated that they need help with negotiations with the teachers union. Kunz stated experience dealing with unions and examples of things they were able to do to help facilitate. Nelson stated that the voters have not passed the contract the last 6 of 9 years. Christina stated that so a follow up question could be on that as well. Kunz stated that he wants to know what they know about us and the issues that we face. He stated that he was disappointed the candidates didn't know more last time. Yoder stated that she would like to know what draws them to us. Joanne Pepin stated that it is important to the Somersworth community that we have an equitable relationship with the city council because that is very rare. We could have a question on how they would facilitate that going forward because it won't be the same board and council when they come in. Smith stated that he agrees that people need to know what any company does that they are applying for. He stated that with the scenario that there are more positions than people sometimes people cast a net as wide as they can. Is it realistic that someone chooses Somersworth. Christina stated that we have some that we call perennials who apply for every job every year they don't care where. Then you have a handful of people who are putting their toe in the water to see what is out there and then you have a handful who are very interested in their job and perhaps have qualifications. Bolduc stated that Somersworth sometimes is used as a stepping-stone. Hiller stated that she doesn't mind them using us as a stepping stone but out of the three candidates they interviewed two of them were using us a retirement and she is leery of that type of candidate as well. Austin stated that we have some significant budget issues here in Somersworth with a loss of state aid, building aid and lower enrollments. He stated that the tax cap presents us with a problem and has been a significant issue. Nelson stated that we made good progress today. She stated that she is personally disappointed that Dr. Brown has chosen not to go forward as she has started us on a good foot, she is hoping to see that in the future, and our horse is treading up stream. Hiller stated that she is concerned about if she doesn't want the job does she still want to move forward this year. Nelson stated that progress will be made but the process will start over with a new superintendent. She stated that she fully expects she is professional and will do her job. Austin stated that he has gotten no impression at all about that so you don't have to worry. Bolduc asked what happens if the applicants aren't acceptable. Christina stated that either we open it again or we have a conversation with Connie to see if she wants to revisit it. He stated that he will make the changes to the ad. He stated that we have had good conversation and feedback for me. Email Matt your thoughts if you have any questions. Hanlon stated to send them to the executive board. Christina stated that he will do some recruiting now and make some phone calls to out of state to see if they know people that are looking. Smith asked if there are any SAU's that function without one. Christina stated that you don't want to go two years with an interim.

3. ADJOURNMENT: A motion made by Austin seconded by Nelson to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

