



Superintendent Search Committee: Minutes

Date:

Monday, May 19, 2014

Time:

7:00 p.m.

Location:

Winter Chambers
26 Court Street, 1st Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Attendees:

- Hardin Coleman, Co-chair
- Bob Gallery, Co-chair
- Richard Stutman
- Michael Contompasis
- Dania Vazquez
- Michael O'Neill
- Andrew Vega
- Jeri Robinson
- Laura Perille

BPS and City Hall staff, as well as members of the community, were also in attendance.

HYA Update on Candidate Recruitment and Search Calendar

The co-chairs called the meeting to order and thanked those who were able to attend. They asked representatives from Hazard, Young, Attea, & Associates (HYA) to describe the results of the candidate recruitment efforts to date. An HYA representative described the number of candidates and gave summary information on the backgrounds of those candidates. He also expressed that HYA would feel comfortable bringing forward a slate of candidates for the committee to consider.

At the same time, HYA stated that they had heard repeatedly during public forums that people wanted to slow down the search. There are many major initiatives underway, and they want to ensure that these initiatives are executed well and not affected by a change in the district leadership. In particular,

people had expressed interest in carrying out initiatives on Madison Park, human capital, student assignment, and a reorganization of central office.

Given this feedback, the HYA representative recommended that the superintendent search be extended for another year to allow the interim superintendent the time to implement these and other ongoing initiatives. In this case, the calendar could be extended so that candidates would be named in late 2014 and the final appointment would take place in early 2015. This would allow the interim superintendent to carry out current initiatives without the distraction of a superintendent search. It would also probably yield a more robust slate of candidates, since Boston would be one of the first major cities selecting a superintendent rather than one of the last.

Discussion on Extending Search

A co-chair noted that extending the search based on community feedback would be consistent with the intention of the search process. Members asked for more details on exactly when the candidates would be announced and interviewed under the proposed longer timeline. The HYA representative outlined the possible calendar, adding that the successful candidate could start in March or April if available at that time, allowing him or her to work alongside the current superintendent for a few months.

A member expressed some concern over using a very condensed timeline between when candidates are named and when the final decision is made. HYA indicated that this condensed timeline is important because once names are announced, it is good to make a final decision as soon as possible. Another member asked what work would be done over the summer and in the fall if the timeline was extended, and HYA responded that recruitment efforts would continue, although candidates would have a longer time to deliberate and respond. A co-chair proposed that the committee reconvene in January 2015 to review candidates, since this would give BPS time in the fall to implement initiatives without the distraction of a search.

The co-chairs asked whether any members were uncomfortable with the recommendation to extend the search. A member expressed support for the idea of building a deeper and more diverse candidate pool by taking more time for recruitment. Another member added that the extension would be a good move, and that there is no downside to extending the search until January. Another member noted that there are persistent issues facing the district that are not going away, such as educator evaluations and increasing teacher diversity, and that extending the search will not affect these. While he supports the extension of the search, it will be important for the interim superintendent not to put these issues on the back burner during this time. A member suggested that it is not within the committee's purview to advise the superintendent on how to use his time during the extension, although it makes sense to extend the search to allow more time for recruitment. A co-chair clarified that if everyone on the committee is comfortable extending the search, there would be no reason to meet later in the week to review candidates.

Discussion of Timeline and Search Calendar

The HYA representative brought up several factors to consider in determining a timeline for the search process. For instance, once an appointment is made, the current superintendent would be a lame duck in the district, so it wouldn't make sense to make the appointment too early. He also cautioned against planning too much committee activity for December, since people are usually very busy during that month. HYA proposed that names could be submitted to the search committee in December or January.

One member indicated support for the timeline initially laid out (presenting names in mid-January with a goal of appointing a new superintendent in mid-February). This seems like a reasonable balance between giving more time to carry out initiatives and giving the new superintendent enough time to get used to the district. HYA offered to create several calendars with different alternatives, but members indicated that they would like to pin down a calendar while they were all meeting together.

With members' input, HYA proposed cutting off candidate recruitment at the end of 2014 and then presenting a slate of candidates to the committee in mid-January. The final slate would be presented to the School Committee in mid-February. Under this proposed timeline, the search committee would be interviewing all candidates in January, and the final decision would be made by the end of February.

There was a consensus among members to support this proposed timeline. The HYA representative confirmed that the committee's work would restart in January, and he offered to send periodic progress reports describing the pool of candidates and giving a demographic breakdown of them.

Conclusion

The group asked that a message go out expressing that the timeline is being extended based on community feedback, enabling the district to continue implementing ongoing initiatives, to attract a broader range of candidates, and to avoid rushing through the search process. A member asked that this message be put up on the superintendent search website, and other members called for it to be conveyed through social media. HYA would contact candidates immediately to let them know about the extension.

Since there were no speakers for community comment, members agreed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.