

**Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday November 17, 2010**

**Present:** Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;  
Dr. Rich Robison, Michele MacDonald, Lisa Gutch

**Also Present:** Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; Dr. Robert Mealey, SEA

**Open Session**

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

**1. Superintendent Search Consultant Selection**

Susan Iuliano announced that two firms were selected to interview on the basis of their technical proposals, which were reviewed at the November 10 Executive Session. Representatives from both firms will address the Committee.

**(a) Discussion of Interview Questions**

Susan Iuliano circulated draft questions that fell into five general categories. Each member identified a particular area of inquiry to focus on. Members suggested additional questions, including those related to handling multiple searches for similar districts. Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley suggested providing an opportunity for the candidates to express how they distinguish themselves from other firms.

The Committee agreed that there should be some uniformity to the questions to both firms, but recognized that the individual presentations might inspire additional lines of inquiry.

**(b) Search Consultant Interviews**

New England School Development Council (NESDEC)

Art Bettencourt, NESDEC Executive Director, introduced himself and Dr. Carolyn Burke, who would assist him with the candidate search, along with NESDEC staff. Mr.

Bettencourt is a former superintendent and Dr. Burke recently retired as an elementary school principal. Mr. Bettencourt described NESDEC as a not-for-profit organization that specializes in strategic and facilities planning, enrollment projections, and special projects, in addition to executive candidate searches. Additional areas of expertise include research and development in team governance. Search consultants specialize in each of the New England states, building searches from the ground up, rather than relying on a stable of candidates.

Mr. Bettencourt described a process whereby a candidate profile is developed from a needs assessment. The company then relies on its proprietary network to engage in active recruiting in order to uncover the best pool of candidates. He noted that Superintendent Brackett was identified in this way by NESDEC.

**School Committee Questions**

Jeff Beeler asked about the roles of the firm and the School Committee in driving the overall process and schedule.

Mr. Bettencourt responded that NESDEC serves in an advisory capacity to the Committee. He stated that decision making in terms of search design and community participation is up to the School Committee.

Mr. Beeler asked about responses to possible issues, for instance, a weak candidate pool, finalist drop-out, or the need to accelerate the search process. Mr. Bettencourt acknowledged the need to remain flexible. He believes the search will attract high quality candidates, but if it does not, NESDEC can assist in redeveloping the candidate profile. He stated that NESDEC will do what it takes to get the job done.

In response to Michele MacDonald's inquiry regarding national search capability, Mr. Bettencourt described the nationwide network of study councils, a national electronic network, and a print mail network. In addition, he indicated that NESDEC consultants travel quite a bit, providing further exposure.

Lisa Gutch requested more information on the needs assessment and outreach activities beyond focus groups. Dr. Burke described the use of electronic surveys, which can be customized to reach a particular target group. Mr. Bettencourt noted the downsides to electronic surveys, including the fact that they are anonymous and do not allow for much depth. He views discussion groups, where ideas can be built upon comments, as the source of richest input. He furthermore noted the value of interviewing town officials.

The consulting team noted that the best questions for a focus group are broad questions that generate broad responses, for example, the qualities and characteristics necessary for the position. They shared that the value is not in what is reported in the majority; rather, the value is in what is uncovered that wasn't expected.

Rich Robison asked about the extent of the screening process. Mr. Bettencourt noted that NESDEC's search consultants are familiar with many prospective candidates. Additionally, he stated that the firm or screening committee can conduct anonymous electronic searches and will go well beyond the list of references to obtain background information.

Susan Iuliano asked if being a K-8 district is a significant factor. Mr. Bettencourt offered that it might actually generate a broader applicant pool, in that high performing building administrators or assistant superintendents might be interested. Dr. Burke added that it's possible the search will attract those whose primary focus is on education and curriculum, rather than business.

Susan Iuliano asked for a comment about what general qualities are important for a large K-8 district. The consulting team stated the necessity for good relationships and communication through all levels of the system and with all constituencies. They noted the critical need for skill in bringing people together and in developing trust.

Rich Robison asked what an outsider might find attractive and unattractive about Massachusetts. Mr. Bettencourt responded that Massachusetts enjoys an attractive history of leadership and decision making and is unique in the high level of impact from community members. It is also known for the lack of autonomy of the superintendent and the restrictive aspects of the Open Meeting Law.

#### Future Management Systems

Lyle Kirtman, FMS President, introduced Executive Vice President Bill Garr and Dr. Herb Levine, Executive Director of the New England Association of School Superintendents. He noted that FMS has worked with SPS on strategic planning and leadership initiatives.

Mr. Kirtman characterized the role of FMS as one of active assistance in analyzing the system and its needs. He stated that FMS has worked with almost all communities generally considered comparable to SPS and characterized the search and recruitment techniques as aggressive.

Because of its involvement in coaching and strategic planning, Mr. Kirtman believes FMS enjoys the benefit of seeing up-and-coming candidates. He stated that the candidate pool right now is very poor.

Mr. Garr noted the firm's emphasis of finding good matches as well as good leaders. The approach involves working with the School Committee to generate general parameters and engage the community. Mr. Garr stated that the timing is such that FMS would start immediately if awarded the contract.

The consulting team noted that in its history of 100 searches, none have been broken. Dr. Herb Levine's professional contacts were highlighted as an advantage in recruiting.

#### School Committee Questions

Michele MacDonald asked about the capacity for a national search. The team noted its extensive contacts spanning all states. Additionally, FMS works with MASC, noting that it is difficult to recruit or retain candidates if they do not have local ties to Massachusetts.

Lisa Gutch asked for a comment regarding community outreach and the use of Myers-Briggs data. Mr. Garr provided examples of questions, for instance, the values envisioned for the superintendent. Additionally, he described focus groups as an opportunity to discuss long-term plans. With respect to Myers-Briggs data, Mr. Garr characterized it as providing objectivity. He cited FMS's significant database, out of which a profile of success was developed.

Susan Iuliano asked the FMS team to describe the general skills or qualities of a successful superintendent in Massachusetts right now. The team noted the significant atmosphere of regulation at present. Mr. Kirtman commented that data show that the most successful people are those who are geared less toward compliance and more toward being good communicators and supportive leaders within their districts.

Following up on the use of Myers-Briggs data and the notion that people are not interested in coming to Massachusetts, Rich Robison asked if the Committee should be wary of anyone who expresses an interest. The FMS team emphasized the need to understand the values and motivations of the candidates and to probe beyond their references.

Jeff Beeler asked the consulting team to comment on the extent to which it leads the process versus how much is left to the School Committee. Mr. Kirtman stated that the FMS team provides as much information as possible, but that the School Committee leads the process.

Mr. Beeler also asked about how FMS handles possible issues, for example, the need to accelerate the search. Mr. Kirtman indicated that FMS uses a flexible approach. He also noted that extending a search does not usually help, as it does not increase the applicant pool.

Susan Iuliano asked how FMS handles work with competing districts. Mr. Kirtman responded that FMS works with each committee to determine the particular search focus, which usually leads to identifying differences between competing districts.

Ms. Iuliano also asked how being a K-8 district will affect the search. Dr. Levine noted that candidates must want to work within a community like Sudbury. Mr. Kirtman suggested the Committee might want to look at people with alternative backgrounds.

Mr. Garr called attention to a proposed timeline that identifies the candidate by March in order to overlap with Superintendent Brackett. He ended by noting that candidates' number one concern will be about the school committee and that Sudbury has the advantage of good working relationships with its superintendents.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to move to Executive Session to review and rate the technical proposals from NESDEC and FMS in compliance with M.G.L. Ch. 30B, §6, to return to Open Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 9:35 p.m.

Return to Open Session 10:10 p.m.

The Committee had requested a rate schedule as part of the RFP. Director of Business and Finance and Chief Procurement Officer Mary Will presented the rate schedules from the two firms. Future Management Systems provided a lump sum bid of \$19,730 along with an hourly rate. New England School Development Council provided a bid of \$18,780, but did not include a fee schedule for principals. There were some differences in the way additional expenses, including advertising, were captured by the two firms.

(c) Discussion and Selection

Rich Robison stated his opinion that either firm could assist SPS in its search. He noted some differences in style and in technical matters, favoring NESDEC by a small margin.

Jeff Beeler agreed with Rich Robison. He found the written materials of both firms well prepared, with NESDEC's being somewhat more polished than requested and more directed to the request. Mr. Beeler commented on the very different energy of the interview presentations. He also commented positively about NESDEC's history of having identified Superintendent Brackett.

Lisa Gutch stated that, although she believes that either consulting firm will conduct a successful search, her instincts say the energy and sense of urgency of FMS might help the District find the right candidate sooner.

Susan Iuliano commented that the differences in style make it difficult to compare the firms' sense of urgency. She offered that NESDEC's experience suggests an appreciation for the rigor required. Ms. Iuliano believes NESDEC's style might work better for engaging the community.

Michele MacDonald expressed a concern that NESDEC might be too reserved, but that perhaps the style of FMS might be "too much".

Lisa Gutch liked the idea of drawing in the best pool of candidates, which she believed might best be achieved by FMS. Moreover, Ms. Gutch favored FMS for having worked with a number of districts similar to SPS.

The Committee did not consider FMS's current work with Wayland to be a competing interest.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to award the superintendent search consultant contract to New England School Development Council. The vote was 4–1 in favor; Lisa Gutch dissented.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Jeff Beeler to authorize Susan Iuliano to enter into a contract with NESDEC. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

The Committee will meet on November 30 to plan for the superintendent search.

## 2. FY11 Budget to Actual

Mary Will presented the FY11 budget to actual summary, noting that the numbers are very similar to last year's quarterly report. Areas of concern include the benefit line: unemployment might be over by as much as \$100K. Ms. Will noted that town and state revenues are unknown at this time.

**3. Noyes Green Repair Project Update**

Superintendent Brackett announced that the SPS SOI for repair of the Noyes roof, windows and boilers was approved in full by the Massachusetts School Building Authority. An initial compliance certification (ICC), signed by the School Committee, Superintendent, and the Town, must be submitted, along with worksheets and a questionnaire.

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to authorize Superintendent Brackett and Susan Iuliano to sign the ICC. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

Superintendent Brackett noted that the District must meet with the SBA to enter into a project funding agreement. The meeting schedule of the SBA is such that the proposed dates for the special town meeting, January 18, and special election, January 25, must be rescheduled to earlier dates.

Jeff Beeler asked if the Committee could provide the Selectmen with information for them to make a decision on the dates. He emphasized the need to publicize the reasons for expediting the process.

Bob Mealey asked if the school calendar is affected, either at the end of this year or beginning of next year. Superintendent Brackett responded that the proposed work schedule fits with a post Labor Day start. He stated that work would be scheduled to allow teachers time and access to the building before the start of school.

Jeff Beeler commented on the unprecedented coordination among the involved committees in town, including the Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Capital Planning Committee, all of which are expected to support this opportunity to obtain significant, real money from the State.

**4. Anti-Bullying Plan**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the Sudbury Public Schools' anti-bullying plan, *Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan: A Commitment to Safety and Respectful Behavior of All*. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

**5. School Committee Report**

None.

**6. Open Forum**

No comments.

**7. Superintendent's Report**

(a) Donations

None.

(b) Recognitions

None.

(c) Bill schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

**8. Minutes—November 10, 2010 Regular Session**

Tabled.

**9. Communications**

None.

**10. Members' Forum**

Bob Mealey announced that the annual holiday party is scheduled for December 10 at Lavender. The following teachers and staff will be honored for their 25 years of service in education: Mary Taylor, Ellen Donahue, Gail Doster, and Beth Dineen.

Superintendent Brackett announced that the District is working on automating the substitute calling system, with the hope to start using it in February. He commended the work of Ellen Berkel, who has been scheduling substitutes within the District for many years. He also noted that the automated system will yield a cost-savings over the long term. The financials are being studied at the G4 level and Lincoln and Weston have expressed an interest in partnering to utilize the system.

Dr. Brackett also reported that both he and Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley received calls related to why Haynes is no longer a Title I school. He explained that funding is based on the numbers of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. Enrollment this year qualified Nixon to obtain Title I funding. He emphasized that this did not involve any overt efforts by either the schools or the District and was furthermore unrelated to redistricting.

**10. Adjourn**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Michele MacDonald to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 11:05 p.m.

Yes Susan Iuliano  
Yes Jeff Beeler  
Yes Rich Robison  
Yes Michele MacDonald  
Yes Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary