

GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MSN Project Room

Workshop Minutes

March 23, 2005

Approved April 6, 2005

PRESENT:

Ms Cindy Barrett

Ms Karen Lofgren

Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair

Ms Patricia Murray, Secretary

Mr. Alan Vervaeke, Chair

ABSENT:

Ms Judy Converse

Mr. Frank O'Connell

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: S. Rubel, J. Mitchell, G. Baker, N. Bugbee, B. Erickson,
L. Chrisis

CALL TO ORDER

The GDRSC Workshop was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by the chair, A. Vervaeke.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Superintendent Finalists

A. Vervaeke announced the finalists:

-Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent of Schools of Mohawk Trail Regional School District (8 towns), Harlemon Regional School District (2 towns) and Rowe Elementary School District (1 town), since 1998.

-Dr. Richard Hoffman, Superintendent of Schools in Ashland, MA., since 2000.

-Dr. David Troughton, Superintendent of Schools for the North Reading Public Schools, since 1994.

A. Vervaeke stated the fourth candidate has withdrawn their name for consideration and there is a question as to whether the Screening Committee had an alternate name to be considered. G. Baker stated he is uncomfortable having just three finalists as one of them could be lost to another district. He stated this person is well liked and school committees often "up the ante" to keep someone.

C. Barrett stated the Screening Committee had a backup name if one of the candidates withdrew on Monday or Tuesday. The fourth candidate withdrew today. K. Lofgren would like the alternate name forwarded to the School Committee. C. Barrett stated she polled Screening Committee members today and the majority do not feel the alternate's name should be moved to the final candidate list unless it would leave the School Committee with no names. They do not feel it would be helpful to bring one more name.

P. Murray stated she understands the time constraints but is also uncomfortable only having three names and would like the alternate name brought forward. N. Bugbee stated she does not feel it is

appropriate to bring that name forward. Dr. Rubel feels they need a fourth candidate and noted the School Committee would be in a worse position if others withdraw. K. Lofgren felt they were going to have four finalists and suggested they let the Screening Committee choose what name to bring forward. C. McKinney stated the Screening Committee was charged with bringing back three to five names and C. Barrett stated the Screening Committee's paperwork said three to four names.

G. Baker asked what the rationale was for Monday's cutoff date and C. Barrett said it was so the process would not go on indefinitely. G. Baker said he does not see this as a factor as all candidates will be interviewed by April 6th. He again expressed concern with having just three candidates. Dr. Rubel stated the fear on the part of the Screening Committee was that if someone else pulled out, the School Committee would want them to get another name. She stated she would rather err on having more people to consider.

A. Vervaeke stated the Screening Committee had four finalists and an alternate and feels it should be the School Committee's decision to insert them into the process. He noted two of the candidates are involved with other searches.

B. Erickson stated she does not see a problem with adding the alternate's name and feels the time frame set by the Screening Committee was useless. She stated

P. O'Sullivan told her he agrees with her. C. Barrett asked if they would agree the Screening Committee would not have to go for another backup candidate if another finalist withdraws and G. Baker stated there was no consideration of a second alternate.

Dr. Rubel noted the Screening Committee did not anticipate this set of circumstances and it was not their intent to lock into these dates. G. Baker stated he would have to tell the alternate that he/she has to come for an interview by April 6th.

**P. MURRAY MOVED THE GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
DIRECT THEIR CONSULTANT, GARY BAKER, TO NOTIFY THE SCREENING
COMMITTEE'S ALTERNATE CHOICE AND ADVISE HIM/HER THAT HE/SHE MUST
AGREE TO AN INTERVIEW BY APRIL 6, 2005. SECONDED BY K. LOFGREN
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

With respect to press releases, G. Baker would like the candidates names released in alphabetically as this makes for a level playing field.

Mr. Baker left to contact the alternate.

K. Lofgren asked if the resumes are confidential and J. Mitchell stated the resumes are not but the attachments and references are confidential.

Finalist Interview Schedule

The suggested finalist visit schedule was reviewed. It was agreed they will begin at 9:00 a.m. with a tour of Swallow Union, then tour the high school from 9:45 to 10:15, tour Boutwell from 10:30 to 11:00 and tour Prescott from 11:00 to 11:30. Following lunch at the Central Office, a meeting with Dr. Jennings and a half hour break, the candidate will tour Florence Roche at 1:45 p.m. A meeting with the principals and PTYC Director will be held at the MSS library followed by a staff drop-in meeting, to include invited leadership representatives, at the MSN library. The candidate will have dinner with School Committee members and the public interview will take place at 7:00 p.m.

School Committee members will be escorts and it was noted they will not take part in the luncheon or the meeting with Dr. Jennings. L. Chrisis suggested a member of the Historical Committee could drive the candidates to the different schools and provide a history of each building. P. Murray volunteered to host the dinners at her house and will cook two of the dinners.

G. Baker announced the fourth finalist, Lorraine Tacconi-Moore will be here Monday, April 4th. She is currently employed in Westford.

C. Barrett asked if the high school students will have a time to meet with the candidates and A. Vervaeke said they are not providing any specific time for any particular group of students. Dr. Rubel will let Principal Dillon know the Committee would like some of the students involved if possible.

Since the interviews are open to the public, K. Lofgren stated she would like to use Mr. Baker's idea of providing an evaluation tool for members of the public to use. She will take care of providing this form.

The finalist schedule will be:

Monday, March 28th - Dr. Genovese (C. McKinney, escort)

Wednesday, March 30th - Dr. Hoffman (K. Lofgren, escort)

Monday, April 4th - Lorraine Tacconi-Moore (P. Murray, escort)

Tuesday, April 5th - Dr. Troughton (C. Barrett, escort)

With respect to inviting leadership representatives, it was agreed P. Murray will speak with Joe Twomey of the Booster Club, the principals will talk with the School Councils and PTO's, N. Bugbee will contact SpedPak, K. Lofgren will contact GDEF and Dr. Robinson will contact GDAY.

Discussion was held with respect to taping the interviews. Members agreed to have the interviews taped "live" but Mr. Baker advised one of the candidates is local and could watch and hear the questions. It was agreed the interviews will be taped but not broadcast until all interviews are complete. Candidates are to be told they are being taped.

Reference Checking

G. Baker stated he will call all the references on the candidate's list as well as other community members. He also does a "google search". C. McKinney asked when they will get the background information and Mr. Baker said feedback on the reference checks will be orally given to the Chair. C. McKinney suggested this be done as a conference call that includes a couple of the School Committee members. B. Erickson asked if there is ever any consideration about visiting the candidate's previous employer and Mr. Baker said they will be contacted during the reference check.

C. McKinney asked how they would address issues that are brought up by people who have done their own research on the candidates. Mr. Baker said the issue(s) should be raised with the candidate and he would raise the issue(s) with the references.

Finalist Site Visit Logistics

G. Baker will contact the candidates and arrange for site visits. Members would like them scheduled for next week since time is of the essence.

Appointment Timeline

May 4th is the date for announcing the name of the new superintendent. B. Erickson stated there is a reality to the market and they should not wait until May. G. Baker said he would like it conveyed to the media that they had a lot of out-of-state candidates.

C. McKinney stated the Committee wants to make the right choice and asked if they will deliberate and vote or if they will deliberate and vote a couple of days later. K. Lofgren said she would like to "sleep on it" after deliberating. P. Murray feels they need to be prepared to deliberate on April 6th and C. Barrett agrees. It was noted Dr. Genovese and Dr. Troughton are involved with other searches.

C. Baker advised members to check with their attorney but believes a decision on who the job is being offered to can be made in executive session. K. Lofgren asked if the candidate won't want to know what the contract is before saying "yes" and G. Baker said he works with the candidate under an "Agreement in Principle". He stated if there is something in the contract that members do not want to consider, they should say so up front. Discussion on the candidates will take place in public session and members can adjourn to executive session for purposes of negotiations. G. Baker said they should ask the candidates if they will accept the job if they voted on them that night.

K. Lofgren said she is willing to discuss the candidates but not ranking them if Committee members do not have all the necessary information. G. Baker stated the process becomes very competitive near the end. Dr. Rubel said the members will have a clear idea if they want to consider all four candidates.

Dr. Rubel noted people other than school committee members often go on site visits and asked if this will be the case. P. Murray said she would have no trouble with others going but noted they would have to be ready to go when the date is set. C. McKinney would encourage teachers and professionals to use their networks to provide information to Committee members. A. Vervaeke feels there will be plenty of time for people to give input and that it is the School Committee's responsibility to make the site visits and final decision. He stated it is a powerful responsibility and they need to own it.

Questions to Ask Finalists

G. Baker suggested they have twenty questions. Members reviewed the list of sample questions provided by NESDEC as well as questions suggested by Committee members. G. Baker noted that after reviewing the resumes, members will have "candidate specific" questions. It was suggested each candidate be asked what their response would be to a crisis. He suggested the interview close with the candidate being asked to describe any strengths they have not had the opportunity to discuss to this point. C. Barrett said they have been asked to include a question on the candidates philosophies around special education.

C. McKinney will compile the agreed upon list as well as any questions specific to a candidate.

ADJOURNMENT:

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:10 P.M.

SECONDED BY P. MURRAY

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary