

The Bethlehem School Directors met on October 14, 2009, to interview a superintendent search firm, Pennsylvania People Solutions, Inc. Dr. Charles Scott and William Vantine are the consultants who presented information to the Board and members of the public on their process, fees, and availability. Members of the public who attended asked questions prior to the conclusion of this interview. The following is a summary of some important points:

Qualifications: Dr. Scott and Dr. Vantine are both former school superintendents who are now retired. They have been assisting schools with superintendent searches for many years. They are well known in Pennsylvania and they assert that their contacts with Pennsylvania school leaders help them to attract highly qualified candidates from Pennsylvania as well as nationally. This firm indicates that they will be able to conduct a local, regional or national search with success.

Fees: The fee quoted would be billed on a service basis, but they suggest a contract with a fee of \$16,000, and expenses (including advertisements in national publications). A cap of \$22,000 which would be a “not to exceed” contract. The district would be responsible for payment of travel expenses incurred by candidates and their spouses for final interviews travel by the Board to the site location of finalist candidates, and any other miscellaneous costs. If the first round of the search does not yield a suitable candidate, they would assist with a second round at no charge.

Availability: Dr. Scott and Dr. Vantine works on searches as a team. Both individuals would be available to provide guidance to the Board of Directors, and generally, both of the gentlemen would attend focus groups with community members and employees. They are now available, and they suggest that the search process begin in December to meet the targeted date of having a new superintendent by around July 1, 2010.

Process summary: They state that a well conducted search will take about four to six months. The initial process would include a meeting with Board members to get direction regarding the process. The Board would first determine whether a national or Commonwealth search would be preferred. They would then target their search as they determine would best suit the needs of the district. They explained that candidates for superintendent positions are now moving quite commonly between states, and gave examples.

Drs. Scott and Vantine suggest multiple meetings with the Board, and separate meetings with focus groups in the community. These meetings would result in the identification of characteristics the district needs in a successful superintendent candidate. The search firm indicates that it is unlikely a candidate will have all of the strengths identified as desirable, and the Board will have to choose which skill sets in a candidate are most important. They suggest that in making this determination, we consider many factors including the needs of the district, the skill sets of the present administrative team, and candidate experience. The team from this search firm would conduct the focus group

meetings and provide written summaries to the Board, and the Board (with his guidance) would develop a district brochure/advertisement that would help to attract the candidates we would like to consider. They would place the advertisements in journals and professional publications that are known to attract the appropriate candidates. In addition, they would make personal contacts. If the district decides to advertise in the New York Times for candidates, this is the one exception that would drive up the quoted fee. They explained that the advertisement in that publication is quite expensive.

Once the application deadline is met and all information is received, Dr. Scott and Dr. Vantine review the candidate applications. They would help the Board to determine the strongest candidates to be selected for interviews, based upon our stated desired characteristics. If desired, they would provide all folders to the Board for selection of potential interviewees. This part of the process is entirely confidential and they emphasize the need for strict confidentiality of the identification of every candidate at this stage.

They would assist the Board to design interview questions and to establish a consistent process for interviews. The selection and number of candidates to be interviewed is determined by the Board. Finalists are also selected by the Board, after the first round of interviews. The final two to four candidates would be invited to the district for a day long visit, and they would be introduced to the public for a forum. The search firm would serve as moderators for the public forum. Board members could participate as observers but would not ask questions during the public component of the selection process. Public feedback would be obtained regarding the candidates.

Feedback would be summarized by the sent to the search leader, and summarized for the Board. The Board will then consider the feedback, along with other factors including the candidate qualifications and background information, and make the determination of the candidate to whom an offer will be given. The salary range will be established by the Board with the expert providing information relevant to the decision on salary range. Final arrangements such as the contract terms and start date will be determined between the selected candidate and the Board.

The search firm indicated it does not select the superintendent for the district, nor will it provide its recommendations. They will provide extensive background information, and will guide the discussions of the candidates and the feedback they have obtained on the finalist candidates.

Post search: The consulting firm provides assistance to the Board in developing effective evaluation of the superintendent. The firm will also serve as a guide for the selected superintendent (even after the superintendent is functioning in the position) if requested by the Board for periodic meetings or discussion of how the superintendent can best serve the identified needs of the district. There is no extra charge for the services after the selection of the candidate. This is an optional service provided by the search firm, which states that its objective is to maximize the benefits to the districts that choose to use their services. Both gentlemen have extensive resumes, and both have been superintendents for multiple district.