The Joint Meeting of the Board and Superintendent Search Committee of School District No. 4J, Lane County, Eugene, Oregon, convened at 4 p.m. on December 1, 2010, at the Education Center, 200 North Monroe Street, Eugene, Oregon. Notice of the meeting was mailed to the media and posted in the Education Center on November 29, 2010, and published in The Register-Guard on November 30, 2010.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Craig Smith, Chair
Alicia Hays, Vice Chair
Jennifer Geller,
Anne Marie Levis (also a committee member)
Mary Walston
Beth Gerot.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:    Jim Torrey

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Sabrina Parsons
Becca Eddy
Charles Martinez,
Tricia Duncan
David Tsai
Ben Sappington
Tad Shannon
Stephanie Cannon
Virginia Thompson
Marshall Peter
Curt Smith
Robin Holmes
Cydney Vandercar.

STAFF:
Barbara Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Communications Director

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS
School Board Chair Craig Smith called the Joint Meeting of the Board and Superintendent Search Committee to order. Everyone present introduced themselves.

PURPOSE OF JOINT MEETING
Ms. Levis explained that the purpose of the meeting was to have an open discussion on the committee's and the board's perspective on what the superintendent did.
Ms. Thompson said someone had made the comment that the district functioned differently and better than a lot of districts in terms of the board/superintendent relationship and that it might be helpful to the search committee to understand what that was.

Mr. Craig Smith noted that Mr. Torrey was not in attendance because he was out of the country.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Between the Board and Superintendent
- Between the Superintendent and Schools
- Between the Superintendent and the Public
- Between the Superintendent and the Union

BOARD EXPECTATIONS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT?

Mr. Craig Smith observed that superintendents tended to turn over about every 3 to 5 years. He said Mr. Russell had been with the district for 12 years and prior to his tenure, Margaret Nichols had served as superintendent for 14 years. He attributed this in part to the stability of the board in terms of values, systems, and approaches. He also thought they had a team approach to policies in the district. He noted that as chair he had the opportunity to meet with the superintendent every Monday, as did the vice chair. He said a third board member often attended, in rotation, in order to allow them to see what was going on.

Mr. Craig Smith considered the roles of the superintendent to include that of being the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an organization with a $142 million budget and between 1300 and 1400 employees. He explained that their expectations of the superintendent were that the superintendent should have a close relationship with the board and that the superintendent should serve as the spokesman for the board on most issues. He stated that the superintendent was the primary nexus with the representative groups. He noted that the chair and vice chair did meet with the Eugene Educators Association (EEA) for a lunch or breakfast meeting once a month. He thought the superintendent was a leader in terms of setting a vision for the district and communicating that to the staff. He stressed the importance of having a common values system and common communication. He pointed out that the district had enjoyed having superintendents who had a national reputation and following. He felt that kept the district current.

Ms. Levis related that she had heard about the good relationship Mr. Russell had with the various union groups at the National School Board Association (NSBA) conference. She also felt he had a good relationship with the public and she expressed appreciation for the relationship he had with the board. She noted that she had heard from other districts that this was somewhat unusual.

Mr. Craig Smith said another characteristic of their relationship was that they had trust and confidence in Mr. Russell.
Mr. Martinez asked how much boldness meant to the board. He wondered if they really wanted someone who would make them "squirm a little bit" or would they prefer someone that would "read the board well" and bring them along gently.

Ms. Walston preferred a candidate who would fall in the middle ground of that assessment.

Ms. Gerot observed that there had always been a clear understanding of the roles of board and superintendent. She pointed out that they were in different times now and needed someone on the cutting edge of education and instruction.

Ms. Geller agreed that they would want someone bold but they would also want someone who could bring others along.

Ms. Hays echoed this. She appreciated the board development; the board really did lead in the areas it was supposed to lead. She felt the boldness should come from both the board and superintendent.

Ms. Levis likened this search to the search that the city and the University had engaged in for new leadership in that the district needed someone who was bold and appropriate for Eugene.

Ms. Thompson related that the New York Times had printed an article, an opinion piece, about a school district that had hired a superintendent from the business community. She thought that one of the things they should look for in the portfolio that a candidate would bring was if he or she was not necessarily the educational or curriculum leader, then who had supported them in doing that particular part. She felt that while this was an important part of a candidate's portfolio but there were other important parts, too, such as how they hired people and who they had hired. She also underscored the importance of hiring someone who knew how to make connections with higher education and where the money was nationally.

Ms. Parsons asked if they had examples of good superintendents that they could point to.

Ms. Levis related that she had been doing some work in Beaverton; the superintendent there, Jerry Colonna, had come from School District 4J. She considered him to be an amazing leader who had demonstrated innovation and a willingness to learn. She noted that he was about to retire.

Ms. Gerot cited Krista Parent, superintendent of the South Lane School District as an example. She had been the awarded National Superintendent of the Year three years earlier. She felt there had also been several good local examples such as Nancy Golden and George Russell, who had both been named Superintendent of the Year.

Mr. Peter ascertained that the board preferred to hire someone who would remain at least ten years. Ms. Geller commented that it was hard on the community to make changes.

Mr. Martinez asked if the board had a preference of what the successful candidate's career level should be. Mr. Craig Smith responded that he did not have a preference.

Ms. Gerot said the best candidate should have vision.
Ms. Parsons wondered if it would be a bigger challenge to find someone who was willing to come into the current budget situation. Mr. Craig Smith responded that if they hired someone from within the State of Oregon, they would have been facing the same challenges. He said the situation for a candidate outside the state could vary; the fiscal situation might be more of a challenge to some candidates than others.

Mr. Sappington remarked that it really depended on where the candidate was coming from; a candidate from California, as an example, could find Oregon appealing by comparison.

Ms. Levis commented that School District 4J had a good reputation and would be a desirable place to work.

Ms. Bellamy perceived that there were different approaches to superintendency depending on whether someone was a key instructional leader. She noted that Mr. Russell had not come from the instructional environment, but had been a chief academic officer in the organization. She thought that in some other organizations the superintendent had played the key instructional leader role.

Mr. Tsai asked about the chief academic officer employed by the district. Ms. Bellamy replied that Assistant Superintendent Carl Hermanns served in that role currently.

Mr. Tsai wondered whether that position could become redundant should the search produce a candidate who was an instructional leader. Mr. Craig Smith responded that this could be the case. He thought that they would then have to hire an operational person, given that it was a district with many employees. He commented that the district was "very thin on the top." He noted that Mr. Russell had restructured the administrative staff a number of times to reflect the district's needs.

In response to a question from Ms. Duncan, Ms. Bellamy stated that Mr. Hermanns worked directly with the director of high school services, which included middle schools, and the elementary directors on what work plans and key strategies should be. She said Mr. Hermanns interacted with Mr. Russell with respect to how they expected to achieve the board goals and what strategies there were. She added that Mr. Russell attended principal meetings and interacted with them directly.

In response to a follow-up question, Ms. Bellamy said ultimately the superintendent did the most "hands on part of the role," in that he met with parents and heard complaints.

Mr. Craig Smith related that Mr. Russell also met with a Student Advisory Committee to get input from them.

Ms. Gerot considered Mr. Russell to be a life-long learner. She said he was well-known and respected nationwide and as a result of this had been invited to participate in a number of activities that had allowed him to be exposed to what was happening in education on a national basis.

Mr. Craig Smith commented that Mr. Russell had also brought grant money to the district.

In response to a question from Mr. Tsai, Mr. Craig Smith affirmed that the district had a Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Mr. Tsai asked how closely the superintendent was expected to work
with the CFO. Mr. Craig Smith responded that the superintendent certainly worked closely with
the CFO on budgetary issues but was not involved in operational issues such as making sure
the paychecks were out on time. He felt that as long as they had a strong leader in that
capacity, there was someone to delegate the responsibility for the economic side of the district
to.

Mr. Sappington asked if the committee should base the qualities it was looking for on who was
already in the other positions and the qualities they brought to the job. Mr. Craig Smith
responded that the district should have strong people in positions related to finance and to
human resources no matter what.

Ms. Bellamy related that she looked at Mr. Russell's calendar often and she had noted that he
spent a lot of time out in the community. She estimated that 50 percent of his time was
dedicated to representing the school board to other groups. Mr. Craig Smith added that he was
very accessible to the board.

Ms. Levis said Mr. Russell had taken leadership on the district's diversity. She said he had also
taken on leadership in training for the board. She also felt that Mr. Russell, as a person of color,
had done a good job in reaching out to the communities of color to increase diversity in the
schools in a community that was not perceived to always do its best job in that area.

Mr. Craig Smith noted that the board had established a goal toward diversity of hiring that had
been achieved in the past year.

Ms. Gerot stated that the superintendent's goals were aligned with the Board's goals and the
instructional achievement teams' goals were aligned with the superintendent's goals.

Mr. Craig Smith commented that from listening to the conversations, part of what the board
seemed to be saying was that they wished to continue doing what they were doing. He felt they
were open to new ideas, too.

Ms. Hays thanked the committee members for their time and commitment. She observed that
the district had a large population of special needs/special education students. She asked for
input in that regard.

Mr. Peter noted that Ms. Nichols had been a special education director before she became a
superintendent. He felt that the district had enjoyed a "splendid" national reputation over the
years as being a leader in educating students with disabilities. He feared that, on a national
level, the commitment they had been making to students who received special education might
start diminishing given the serious financial problems school districts were facing. He hoped
they could find someone who understood the cost/benefit to maintaining the current level of
services.

Mr. Peter also wanted to speak from the perspective of the Equity Committee. He related that
the committee wanted to express support for "tweaking" the current balance between site-based
and centralized decision-making. He said they believed that to mitigate some of the sorts of
problems schools faced they needed a centralized ability to set core expectations that were
uniform across all of the buildings.
Mr. Craig Smith commented that they had talked long about that at the board level. He averred that the district was very decentralized; most of the decisions about how the money allocated to schools was spent were made at the schools by site councils. He said they had a data-driven system, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, that sought to monitor progress. He stated that they were able to focus resources at the level and bring kids along. He thought that it would be good to ask a candidate about his or her understanding of this approach.

Ms. Gerot said many districts were moving in the opposite direction from 4J to a more centralized decision-making model.

Ms. Geller observed that there was a conversation happening nationally regarding whether or not to give schools so much flexibility in resource allocation. She thought it would be beneficial to have someone come in with an understanding of that.

Mr. Curt Smith asked if it would be a challenge to work on the sustainable budget without having resolution to the superintendent search first. Mr. Craig Smith replied that it would not be a problem. He said it would not be useful to engage in a conversation about where the district would be at the end of January given that it was an unknown.

Ms. Levis commented that the process was a two-way street; they would also find out who wanted to be at the district.

Ms. Eddy said being the superintendent sounded like a really big job. She wondered if they were setting the bar too high. She also wanted to know what key area of knowledge and experience the board valued most.

Mr. Craig Smith stated that they would have to find an interim superintendent if the first search proved to be unfruitful. He considered the key areas of skill to be educational expertise, experience with community involvement, and operational expertise, with emphasis on the educational expertise.

Ms. Walston echoed this.

Mr. Craig Smith related that Mr. Russell had been appointed as an interim superintendent when Ms. Nichols had become ill. Ms. Nichols had suggested he be appointed and Mr. Russell had indicated that he would agree to do so but only if he was not made superintendent on a permanent basis. He said after Mr. Russell had the opportunity to get a feel for the job he indicated he would consider continuing in that capacity. The board and others felt strongly that Mr. Russell was the best candidate for the job and he had served as superintendent since then.

Ms. Thompson considered knowing what one's weaknesses were to be a sign of leadership. She thought Mr. Russell had done well in finding people to assist him where needed.

Ms. Walston commented that being superintendent was a huge job. She thought a successful candidate would assemble a team.

Mr. Shannon asked if the board preferred educational expertise over experience in being a CEO. Mr. Craig Smith responded that he preferred educational expertise.
Ms. Eddy thought they needed to ensure that the relationship part went along with the educational part. She said school was mostly about students and learning. She felt that the new superintendent needed to be able to maintain those relationships.

Mr. Tsai ascertained that the superintendent had the ability to hire and fire an executive team.

Ms. Bellamy noted that all of the directors were on one-year contracts.

Ms. Levis underscored the board's willingness to take questions any time from the committee.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

*(Recorded by Ruth Atcherson)*