

Minutes of the County Administrator Search Stakeholders Group Meeting

The County Administrator Search Stakeholders Group met on Tuesday, August 10, 2010 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 404, Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Stakeholders Group

Present: Mr. Don Lee, Former Administrator, McLean County Nursing Home; Mr. Bob Dobski, President & CEO, R. U. Just, Inc.; Mr. Mike Swartz, Manager, McLean County Farm Bureau; The Honorable Steve Stockton, Mayor, City of Bloomington

Stakeholders Group

Members Absent: The Honorable Chris Koos, Mayor, Town of Normal; Mr. Ron Morehead, President, Bloomington-Normal Trade & Labor Assembly

Search Committee

Members Present: Chairman Segobiano; Members Owens, Moss, Gordon, Bostic

Other Members

Present: None

Staff Present:

Mr. Terry Lindberg, County Administrator; and Ms. Judith LaCasse, County Administrator's Assistant

Chairman Segobiano called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

Chairman Segobiano introduced the Stakeholders Group members and the Search Committee members. He asked the Stakeholders Group to share their reaction to the Candidate Profile that was included in the Committee Packet, and to share their priorities and suggestions for a strong County Administrator candidate. Chairman Segobiano stated that the Search Committee will take into consideration the suggestions and comments of the Stakeholders Group.

Chairman Segobiano advised that it is the responsibility of the Search Committee to take the information provided to it to assist in finding an administrator that will follow in the footsteps of Mr. John Zeunik and Mr. Terry Lindberg, and enhance those footsteps. He added that one of the most important accomplishments of Mr. Zeunik and Mr. Lindberg was keeping the County solvent.

Mr. Don Lee provided his thoughts on the qualifications of a candidate for this position, as follows:

- A person with a high degree of integrity;
- A person who can establish an honest and credible relationship with everyone with whom the County Administrator deals;
- The profile should emphasize Management style and personality traits;
- Ability to relate to other people and communicate in an open and honest manner is very important.

Mr. Lee noted that it may be difficult to find someone who is proficient in all of the requirements listed in the Candidate Profile, but certainly the above traits are very important.

Mr. Bob Dobski agreed with the traits that Mr. Lee provided. He presented the following additional suggestions:

- A person who knows the business dynamics and economic climate of McLean County;
- Ability to communicate and work well with people;
- A person who is prepared on issues and can anticipate the future.

Mr. Mike Swartz also concurred with Mr. Lee and Mr. Dobski. He added the following desirable qualities:

- A person who understands the feel of a County similar in size to McLean County, including the agricultural environment;
- Ability to communicate internally with Board members and Department Heads, as well as externally with outside organizations, businesses and the public;
- A person who recognizes the importance of the rural communities;
- A person who is “teachable”;
- Demeanor and personality.

Chairman Segobiano advised that the Stakeholders Group is comprised of two individuals from the City of Bloomington, two from the Town of Normal and one from the rural area. He pointed out that one of the qualifications brought up was to have someone who is familiar with McLean County or a county of a similar size. Chairman Segobiano reminded the Committee that both Mr. Zeunik and Mr. Lindberg were from out of state, and were certainly “teachable.”

Chairman Segobiano asked Mr. Lee what he believes are the most important and the least important requirements. Mr. Lee responded that the most important requirement is administrative style, which encompasses everything that has been discussed, including openness, honesty and the ability to communicate with everyone. He indicated that education and experience may not be as vital as other attributes that have been

discussed. Mr. Lee did not identify a requirement that he feels is least important.

Chairman Segobiano asked Mr. Dobski how important he feels it is to know McLean County versus someone who may be qualified, but comes from outside of the County. Mr. Dobski replied that having a Ph.D. and a Masters Degree does not necessarily make a person the most qualified. He feels that knowing McLean County's businesses, industry, schools, government and rural communities is much more vital. Mr. Dobski pointed out that Al Bowman, President of Illinois State University, has been in the community for over 30 years and is a good representative for the university and the community.

Mr. Dobski noted that another vital trait the individual should possess is the ability to delegate and not try to do everything personally. The administrator should be surrounded with competent staff that can be depended upon to get things accomplished. Mr. Dobski stated that the leadership aspect of the position includes the ability to put together a qualified staff. He added that knowing McLean County is an important aspect to that accomplishment.

Chairman Segobiano asked Mr. Swartz if his number one priority is that the candidate understands agriculture. Mr. Swartz responded that knowing agriculture is not the number one priority; rather it is included in knowing the dynamics of the rural communities. He added that it is important to be able to handle the urban-rural relationship. Chairman Segobiano told Mr. Swartz that he was invited to sit on this Stakeholders Group because the "County" government includes all aspects of the County including its agricultural community. He reiterated that the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal, McLean County business, the nursing home care industry and the rural areas are represented on this group.

Chairman Segobiano expressed his regret that the representatives from the City of Bloomington, the Town of Normal and the Labor area were unable to attend the meeting today.

Chairman Segobiano asked the Search Committee to provide their input on the qualifications of a new County Administrator.

Ms. Bostic suggested that a candidate who is not familiar with McLean County might offer a fresh look at the County and the way it is managed. She stated that the Committee should not discount anyone who is not "homegrown." However, Ms. Bostic added that she feels that local is always better.

Mr. Owens pointed out that the one quality that has been repeated is that the candidate should have the ability to work with everyone equally, and to be reachable and teachable. He indicated that the person should be unbiased, open and approachable by everyone.

Mr. Gordon advised that he agrees with Mr. Dobski's comment that education isn't everything. He stated that people skills, good interpersonal political savvy, and transparency are vital attributes. Mr. Gordon added that education is very important, but it isn't the most important qualification to look for in a candidate.

Mr. Gordon indicated that the internal relationships with the County Board and the Elected and Appointment Department Heads are crucial, and these same skills need to be applied externally. The main point that has been made is the importance of understanding the dynamics of the County, including the balance in the urban-rural relationships. Mr. Gordon noted that the comments that have been made by the Stakeholders Group as well as the Search Committee are extremely valuable.

Mr. Moss stated that he underlined several points listed in the Candidate profile that he feels are important, as follows:

- Communications with not only the Department Heads and staff but with the County Board;
- Common sense, which is a strong characteristic and one that some people do not seem to possess;
- Proven success in cutback management, which is vital in light of the currently economic climate;
- Someone with a similar background dealing with the same kinds of issues the County deals with, including the size and scope of the issues.

Chairman Segobiano opened the meeting up for general discussion.

Mr. Dobski reinforced Ms. Bostic's point that a candidate from outside the area might be able to offer a fresh view. However, he cautioned that some individuals with experience and knowledge in a similar sized county might not be willing to listen and be flexible. Mr. Dobski agreed with Mr. Moss' comment that candidates must have common sense. He added that the individual must know when to push, when to be aggressive, when to back off and when to compromise to get things done.

Mr. Gordon stated that the candidate should be willing to listen to competing points of view and have the confidence to engage and the confidence to admit to being wrong. He indicated that the candidate should have the ability to learn and the willingness to be taught, be willing to garner information from all of the sources and still be able to come to a decision that is rationally and sensibly based.

Mr. Dobski suggested that candidates should be asked what the hardest thing is that they ever had to do at their previous job or how did they deal with specific situations. He noted that it is important to let the candidates describe how they dealt with personalities.

Mr. Dobski expressed his belief that checking references is very important. He stated that checking references can provide critical information.

Mr. Swartz noted that, in written applications, he asks the applicant what their favorite job was in their career and why, and what job they liked the least and why. He noted that the candidates are not required to answer these questions on the application. Mr. Swartz indicated that their answers can provide an insight into their personality.

Mr. Moss stated that one of the unique challenges someone might find when they come here is dealing with not just one local unit of government, but two strong local municipalities with two councils to work with as well as members of the Mayor's Association of all of the smaller communities in the County, as well as a diverse citizenry. He indicated that if the potential candidate can't communicate with all of them successfully, then that person will struggle.

Chairman Segobiano advised that he would like to have the Stakeholders Group meet one more time to include members of the Group who were unable to attend today. After checking schedules of those members in attendance, it was decided to meet again on Wednesday, August 25th at 3:00 p.m. provided that Mayor Stockton, Mayor Koos and Mr. Morehead can attend.

Chairman Segobiano stated that the Search Committee will keep an open mind and look at the qualifications of all of the candidates.

Mayor Stockton arrived at the meeting at 3:50 p.m., citing a previous engagement.

Chairman Segobiano asked Mayor Stockton to check to see if his schedule would allow him to attend a meeting on August 25th. Mayor Stockton responded that he can attend at least the beginning of the meeting on the 25th.

Ms. Bostic asked Mayor Stockton to share his top ranks.

Mayor Stockton provided his top attributes of a candidate, as follows:

- Management style;
- Board relations;
- Administrative ability;
- Professional skills.

Chairman Segobiano advised that the minutes to this meeting will be included in the August 17th County Board packet.

Mr. Dobski asked if an outside search company will be brought in to conduct the search or will it be done internally. Chairman Segobiano replied that the search process will be handled internally. Mr. Dobski indicated that it is possible to get to know the candidates better when the search is conducted internally.

Board Chairman Sorensen asked that the Stakeholders Group as well as the Search Committee explore the importance of the differences between the structure of Illinois government and how it interacts with local governments as compared with other states. Chairman Segobiano requested that the Stakeholders consider the difference between Illinois and other states and provide their comments at the next meeting on the 25th. The same task will be given to the representatives for Labor and the Town of Normal.

Mr. Dobski asked for clarification on what Board Chairman Sorensen is looking for. Board Chairman Sorensen explained that County Government is a chartered sub-government of the State government in Illinois. He noted that the powers of government are different in Illinois than the power in other states. Board Chairman Sorensen questioned whether or not the local experience should also include the experience of dealing with the State of Illinois as opposed to another state, and whether or not this issue is important to the Committee.

Mayor Stockton stated that Mr. David Hales, Bloomington City Manager, was previously a municipal official in North Carolina, Oregon and Utah. Mayor Stockton indicated that Mr. Hales was surprised with the way things are done in Illinois as compared to those other states. He offered to provide Mr. Hales' experiences to share with the Committee.

Chairman Segobiano asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none he called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Bostic/Moss to Adjourn the County Administrator
Search Committee Meeting at 4:00 p.m.
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith A. LaCasse
Recording Secretary