

Minutes of the County Administrator Search Stakeholders Group Meeting

The County Administrator Search Stakeholders Group met on Wednesday, August 25, 2010 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 404, Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Stakeholders Group

Present: Mr. Don Lee, Retired 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; The Honorable Chris Koos, Mayor, Town of Normal; Mr. Ron Morehead, President, Bloomington-Normal Trade & Labor Assembly

Stakeholders Group

Members Absent: Member Gordon

Search Committee

Members Present: Chairman Segobiano; Members Owens, Moss, 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 3:05 p.m.

Chairman Segobiano presented the minutes from the August 10, 2010 Stakeholders Group for approval. Hearing no additions or corrections to those minutes, Chairman Segobiano advised that the minutes would stand approved as presented.

Chairman Segobiano asked Mayor Stockton to share his thoughts on the revised Candidate Profile.

Mayor Stockton advised that the second draft of the Candidate Profile covered the points that were provided at the last meeting.

Mayor Stockton pointed out that there are some advantages to using a Search Consultant. Mayor Stockton stated that the cost to Bloomington to hire a search consultant was approximately \$10,000-11,000. He pointed out the following advantages Bloomington experienced by hiring a search consultant:

- Consultant knew a lot of individuals who applied for the position;
- Consultant offered suggestions of individuals who could be asked to apply;
- Consultant attended a lot of ICMA meetings.

Mayor Stockton expressed his belief that it is important to weigh the potential cost of hiring a search consultant against the value of having the expertise of a consultant.

Ms. Bostic asked how the consultant facilitated the search process. Mayor Stockton replied that the consultant did the following:

- Met with the Bloomington Administration and Council either in person or by phone;
- Helped refine the search parameters;
- Put together a packet for interested candidates that provided information on the community, including pictures, community profile and history, etc.
- Screened the 70+ applicants and eliminated almost 50 applications;
- Interviewed 20+ applicants by phone and provided a recommendation of applicants to be seriously considered.

Ms. Bostic asked if there were any Central Illinois applicants. Mayor Stockton indicated that there were some Central Illinois applicants, and some from Bloomington-Normal. He added that one applicant from this area made it into the final 20. Mayor Stockton noted that all of the finalists were from outside of this area.

Chairman Segobiano announced that, unless the Stakeholders Group feels it is necessary, this will be the last meeting of the group. He indicated that the Search Committee will be asked to consider the information and comments offered by the Stakeholders Group when they begin to formulate the profile and prepare the process of finding the new County Administrator.

Chairman Segobiano advised that the next meeting of the Search Committee is tentatively set for Tuesday, August 14, 2010 at 3:00 p.m. prior to the Executive Committee meeting.

Chairman Segobiano asked Mayor Koos to share his thoughts on the Candidate Profile.

Mayor Koos stated that the position requires someone with the following strengths:

- A generalist background, without being too strong in only one area;
- A strong record of consensus building;
- Coordinate various elected officials;
- Entrepreneurial spirit who can work with the business community;
- Open to new ideas.

Mayor Koos agreed with Mayor Stockton that a search consultant can be a good salesperson for the County. He noted that it is the job of the consultant to go out and talk to people about the community and encourage strong applicants to apply. Mayor Koos noted that a search firm was successfully used by the Transit Authority's search for a Transit District Administrator. He stated that search consultants are very connected in professional networks, and they recognize good candidates as well as candidates who might not be a good fit.

Mr. Koos commented that it is important to find someone who understands rural and small community living.

Mayor Stockton indicated that there was one occasion where a candidate looked good on paper, but the consultant knew that this person had been rejected by other communities. The consultant talked to the other communities and collected information that resulted in the individual being dropped as a candidate.

Mr. Lindberg referred to the Second Draft of the Candidate Profile, noting that the section in italics reflects the comments and suggestions offered by the Stakeholder Group and the Search Committee at the meeting on August 10th. Also, the sub-point, "Management Style," was reorganized to show the management priorities discussed at the August 10th meeting. Mr. Lindberg pointed out a couple of corrections on the Second Draft, as follows:

- First paragraph should be changed to say "...to build upon a 34 year tradition of...";
- Under "Budget and Finance" the term "experience in cutback management" will be replaced with "...someone with strong financial background..."

Mr. Sorensen stated that he is still interested in the perspective of the Illinois experience versus non-Illinois experience. Chairman Segobiano responded that he would like to have Mr. Morehead provide his thoughts before this discussion takes place.

Mr. Ron Morehead, President, Bloomington-Normal Trade & Labor Assembly, shared the three things that he looks for in candidates, as follows:

- Where they have been and what they did;
- Where they are now and what they are doing;
- What we don't see, namely where are we going to be in five years and ten years and what the candidates see for the future of McLean County.

Mr. Morehead indicated that often times what we see is what we don't get. In other words, it is important to look at the long-term plan of the individual. It is necessary to know that this person plans ahead for all the residents in the community, including the senior citizen, the children, and the businessman, etc. Mr. Morehead advised that it is important to get an individual who is a doer, one who will take ideas and suggestions that all of the members of the community can reach out, grab, and want to be part of.

Mr. Morehead stated that it is important to find someone who is interested in taking care of all of the people, and all of the communities and not just one or two groups of people or one or two specific towns. He added that it is important for the Search Committee to know exactly what they are looking for in an individual before they start looking.

Mr. Dobski commented that it is important to check references and talk with people who may have worked with the individual.

Chairman Segobiano invited the Stakeholders Group to continue to provide suggestions and observations to Mr. Lindberg by way of e-mail or telephone and Mr. Lindberg will share their comments with the Search Committee.

Chairman Segobiano asked other members of the Stakeholders Group to add any comments or thoughts.

Mr. Dobski expressed his appreciation that the second draft of the Candidate Profile included suggestions and candidate traits that were reached at the previous meeting. He pointed out that there was a common thread throughout the meeting that included the need for common sense, familiarity with small towns, as well as the ability to work and relate to various groups and individuals.

Mr. Lee stated that he felt that the updated Candidate Profile included the consensus of ideas reached at the last meeting. He pointed out that he particularly appreciated Mr. Moss' observation that common sense is one of the most important issues in looking for a County Administrator. Mr. Lee noted that he considers common sense as important as management style.

Mr. Lee noted that it is a good idea to look outside of the County for candidates. However, he pointed out that knowing McLean County and understanding county government in Illinois is very important. Mr. Lee added that it is imperative that the candidate not be one who is looking at this position as a stepping stone to something else. He indicated that it is important to look for someone who wants to become part of this community. Mr. Lee concluded that he respects the longevity that people have and the value which that brings to an organization.

Mr. Swartz remarked that, in reviewing the minutes and in hearing Mr. Morehead's comments, it is apparent that we all want someone who will plan for the future. He noted we want someone who will work with the County Board and the rural communities to plan for the future of McLean County.

Chairman Segobiano referred back to the changes Mr. Lindberg noted were made in the second draft of the Candidate Profile. He stated that he informed Mr. Lindberg that the County has enjoyed 34 years (not just 22 years) of a productive County Administrator form of government. Chairman Segobiano suggested that putting in print the recommendation that the candidate have a "...strong understanding of Illinois laws..." may scare off someone outside of Illinois who might be a well qualified candidate. He also pointed out that the term "...success in cutback management..." is negative and may discourage some candidates. Rather, he suggested that the term "strong financial background" replace cutback management.

Chairman Segobiano opened the committee for comments from the Stakeholder's Group or the Search Committee.

Mayor Stockton indicated that Mr. David Hales, Bloomington City Manager, volunteered to meet with the Search Committee to discuss his experiences as a candidate from outside of the state. He added that Mr. Hales could also put together some thoughts in writing and pass them along to Mr. Lindberg. Mr. Sorensen responded that it would be interesting to know Mr. Hales' perspective on things he wished he would have known before he came and things that went well or not so well in his transition. He noted that Mr. Hales could provide insights into how difficult or easy the transition was for him to come to Illinois.

Mayor Stockton advised that Mr. Hales started as an Assistant City Manager in Kansas, became a City Manager in North Carolina, a City Manager in Oregon, was a Finance Director in a suburb of Salt Lake City with a population of 100,000+, and then came to Bloomington. He stated that when he talked to Mr. Hales, Mr. Hales commented that there were some things about Illinois that surprised him. Mayor Stockton added that he has observed that it has not been a difficult adjustment for Mr. Hales.

Mr. Swartz asked if Mr. Hales found his experiences in other states helpful when he came to Bloomington. Mayor Stockton replied that the City Council made a decision to highly encourage diverse candidates who had been in a lot of different places. He indicated that the City Council looked at Mr. Hales' experiences as a strength, which provided new ideas and options for the City. Mayor Stockton added that this was what Bloomington needed at the time.

Chairman Segobiano asked if anyone else had any comments regarding the structure of government in Illinois versus government in other states.

Mayor Koos stated that he does not consider a strong familiarity with Illinois law as a core experience. He noted that a well-rounded individual with good management capabilities can get up to speed on the local government. He pointed out that there are seasoned people in the County government that can assist the new administrator. Mayor Koos said that the right candidate will be able to get up to speed with Illinois laws in a reasonable amount of time.

Mr. Lee commented that he doesn't have exposure to other states and doesn't feel that he has the experience to speak on this issue.

Mr. Swartz advised that he doesn't think it makes any difference if the candidate is from out-of-state or lives right here in McLean County. Mr. Morehead agreed that it doesn't make any difference if the candidate is from Texas or Oklahoma or New York. He indicated that the best thing that can happen is for a person to walk in with a strong resume and the back-up to go with it. Mr. Morehead believes that the Search Committee will know when they interview the right person. He reiterated the importance of doing research and checking references on candidates. Mr. Morehead added that the Search Committee needs to look beyond what you see.

Mayor Stockton stated that it is far more important to find someone who is compatible with local values than someone who understands or knows Illinois laws.

Mr. Owens asked Mayor Stockton if any of the candidates for the City Manager's position researched the community and offered their opinion about the future of the City. Mayor Stockton replied that there were candidates who had done research and deliberately let them know that they had done research. He added that the research was appreciated.

Mr. Owens asked if Bloomington had an internal candidate. Mayor Stockton replied that there was not an internal candidate. Mr. Owens asked Mayor Koos if the City Manager, Mark Peterson, was an internal candidate when he was hired. Mayor Koos replied that Mr. Peterson was an internal candidate, and there were also external candidates.

Mr. Moss expressed his appreciation to Mr. Morehead for his thoughtful insights. He felt that the idea of looking at where the candidate has been, where the candidate is now and "looking for what you don't see" was an interesting way to look at things.

Chairman Segobiano advised that the Stakeholders Group has given the Search Committee insightful information. He asked the Stakeholder Group if they feel that they need to meet again. After some discussion, the following was decided:

- The Stakeholders Group will not meet again;
- The Stakeholders Group will share any additional ideas or thoughts with Mr. Lindberg;
- Mr. Lindberg will share that information with the Search Committee;
- Mr. Lindberg will share the final Candidate Profile and any additional information with the Stakeholders Group.

Mayor Stockton stated that if the Search Committee would like, Mr. Hales would be happy to meet with them to discuss his experience as an outside candidate. Ms. Bostic responded that she did not feel it was necessary, but that the Committee will reserve the opportunity to invite Mr. Hales in the future if it is deemed necessary.

Chairman Segobiano expressed his appreciation to the Stakeholders Group for their thoughts, suggestions and ideas.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

Judith A. LaCasse
Recording Secretary