LAKE FOREST COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 115
CITY OF LAKE FOREST SCHOOL DISTRICT 67

Joint Ad-Hoc Executive Search Firm Subcommittee Minutes
January 21, 2021

Due to COVID-19 developments in Illinois, Governor Pritzker issued an Executive Order to suspend physical presence requirements under the Open Meetings Act (OMA) to all public bodies across the state. Therefore, Lake Forest District 67 and Lake Forest District 115 Board of Education Meetings and Committee Meetings will be held virtually via conference call.

Title:	Joint Ad-Hoc Executive Search Firm Subcommittee Meeting
Date:	Thursday, January 21, 2021
Time:	5:00 PM
Location:	Virtual Meeting
D115 Committee Members Present:	Sally Davis, Dewey Winebrenner, Jenny Zinser
D67 Committee Members Present:	Justin Engelland, Suzanne Sands, Rich Chun
Administration Present:	Melissa Oakley
Staff Present:	Julia Polszakiewicz
Guests Present:	Dr. Glenn “Max" McGee, Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates Dr. Ken Arndt, Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates Dr. Jane Westerhold, Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates Dr. Linda Yonke, School Exec Connect Dr. Jake Chung, School Exec Connect Dr. Kelley Gallt, School Exec Connect Dr. Jean Sophie, GovHR Ms. Heidi Voorhees, GovHR Dr. Beth Sagett-Flores, GovHR

The meeting was called to order at 5:03pm.

Mrs. Sands provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting and stated the purpose of the meeting was for the Subcommittee members to listen to three presentations by three executive search firms, deliberate, and come to a consensus regarding a final recommendation to be presented to both the District 115 and District 67 Board members for their approval.

DISCUSSIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates Proposal – Dr. Glenn “Max” McGee, Dr. Ken Arndt, and Dr. Jane Westerhold

Dr. McGee, Dr. Westerhold, and Dr. Arndt outlined Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates’ (HYA) vision for an executive search and provided background information on the history of the firm’s experience. The firm would seek to understand the Districts and conduct a winning signature search process of engaging, recruiting, selecting, and transitioning. The firm representatives spoke to a timeline, costs, guarantees throughout the process, and distinguishing differences between HYA and other executive search firms.

The committee had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the consultants working for the firm across the nation, the attractiveness of Lake Forest to candidates, whether the District was behind in the search process, whether candidates would be recruited from the higher education sector, the unique shared services organizational model and competencies that would need to be identified in candidates, what distinguished enjoyable and successful searches from others regarding client engagement, the final dates of the proposed timeline, and whether HYA was involved in the recruitment of Superintendent Michael Simeck to Deerfield District 109. Additional questions revolved around how the search process was tailored given the COVID-19 pandemic and what had been successful and challenging, the involvement of District staff in the process especially the Board Clerk and the Communications team, the associate coaching involved in the transitioning phase of the search process, and whether candidates were less likely to be willing to relocate to Illinois versus other states.

School Exec Connect Proposal – Dr. Linda Yonke, Dr. Jake Chung, Dr. Kelley Gallt

Dr. Yonke, Dr. Chung, and Dr. Gallt discussed the services that School Exec Connect could offer and the professional backgrounds of the firm representatives and the firm. The firm would conduct a four-phase search plan of opening the search process, creating the new superintendent profile, developing a candidate pool and presenting a slate of candidates, and conducting Board and stakeholder interviews and selecting a new superintendent. The firm representatives spoke to details of the search plan, a tentative timeline, more specific details of the search process, firm guarantees, and costs involved.

The committee had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the exclusivity of firm consultants, how the firm would present the value proposition of Lake Forest to candidates, the process of a final internal candidate selection in New Trier's superintendent search, would there be any ability restrictions or negative impacts of having two sitting, current superintendents leading the search from the School Exec Connect team, negotiating the costs of the search should School Exec Connect be selected to lead the search, the size of a candidate pool, specifically, the percentage breakdown of local versus national candidates, and the strength of the firm's national-level recruitment and candidate pool development.

GovHR Proposal – Dr. Jean Sophie, Ms. Heidi Voorhees, Dr. Beth Sagett-Flores

Dr. Sophie, Ms. Voorhees, and Dr. Sagett-Flores presented reasons to hire GovHR to conduct an executive search, GovHR's COVID-19 response, and the experience of the firm's representatives. The firm also overviewed its long established history with its nationwide network and with a dedication to diversity in local government. While the firm had previously felt it did not have the experience necessary to conduct superintendent searches, it had recently added expert consultants who were able to allow for an expansion of existing infrastructure. The firm representatives also discussed services that would be tailored to both districts, a tentative timeline, levels of partnership, and guarantees.

The committee had the opportunity to ask questions regarding Dr. Sophie's individual experience with recruiting in the Lake Forest and Lake Bluff communities and specific identified challenges, GovHR's ability to tap into superintendent networks and professionals in the education environment given its newness in this type of search, the strengths of a local or national candidate pool given the uniqueness of the Districts' Shared Services model, and how knowing Lake Forest as a community would translate into helping to identify candidates for the role.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Patrick Patt, a community member, stated that he had conducted similar searches before. He felt that he had shared similar experiences with the Board in emails. He urged the Subcommittee members to remember that the search firms would tell the Boards what they wanted to hear. He stated that while Dr. Yonke mentioned that

Illinois was not as attractive to candidates because of recent changes, he found that this was not the case in a Cook County district for which he had conducted a search. He stated that many of the candidates mentioned by the firms in previous searches were unavailable at that point.

Dana Anderson, a parent of an Everett Elementary School student, shared a letter that was previously sent to the Board. She stated that she was speaking on behalf of the Anti-Racism Parent Advocacy Group and its members, a group of Lake Forest parents who were building awareness around race and were advocating deeper dialogue and action in the schools and community to enable systemic change with respect to race, racism, and racial justice. She addressed the Districts' recruitment and hiring of a new Superintendent and the new Everett Principal and asked that the Districts would give thoughtful consideration to the search opportunity being an opportunity for systemic change. She stated that research showed that children of color and white children greatly benefitted from seeing black, indigenous, and people of color in authority positions and that there was currently an underrepresentation in Lake Forest of black and brown individuals in Administration and teaching positions. The Group requested that the hiring body take deliberate action to ensure a diverse pool of candidates would apply for the superintendent position. She asked that this letter be considered in the process of choosing a search firm.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

Mrs. Sands asked the Subcommittee members to use the Chat box of the virtual meeting platform to write in their top three rankings of the search firms that presented that evening.

Mr. Chun:	1. HYA	2. GovHR	3. School Exec Connect
Mrs. Sands:	1. HYA	2. GovHR	3. School Exec Connect
Ms. Zinser:	1. HYA	2. GovHR	3. School Exec Connect
Ms. Davis:	1. HYA	2. GovHR	3. School Exec Connect
Mr. Engelland:	1. HYA	2. School Exec Connect	3. I would not hire Gov HR for this
Mr. Winebrenner:	1. School Exec Connect	2. HYA	3. GovHR

Mrs. Sands stated that this exercise showed that members across the Subcommittee were highly aligned. Mrs. Sands asked the members to clarify what members found appealing about HYA and why they may have ranked HYA as number one or number two, as the results pointed to some level of consensus developing around HYA.

Mr. Engelland stated that the Districts' search process had several added layers of difficulty including the Shared Services model with two Boards and a very strict timeline. He believed it was critical that the Districts select a firm that had significant experience in leading specifically superintendent searches, which HYA had. He was impressed by HYA's depth of experience, liked that their team had deep Illinois connections as well as a strong national network, and appreciated that HYA had done their homework by watching Board meetings and understanding the unique aspects of the Districts' organizational design as a component of the search process. He also mentioned the firm's tight, tried and true system for running searches and appreciated that their search process included the transition phase post-selection as part of the process which was a unique differentiator.

Mr. Winebrenner stated that it was a "jump ball" for him and he believed if the District was more interested in pursuing a national search that HYA would be the better firm. He hoped that there were strong candidates out there who were not local that would consider applying for this position. The quality and recency of other searches that School Exec had conducted resonated with him but he would rather go with a broader search. He agreed with Mr. Engelland's points about the depth of their experience and also appreciated their guarantees.

Ms. Davis stated that in addition to agreeing with all of Mr. Engelland's and Mr. Winebrenner's statements, she believed that HYA had a structure and resources that could be deployed very quickly given the timing the District was looking for. She also believed that HYA had a good understanding of Lake Forest's high-performing districts and would do a good job finding candidates who could impress the Boards. She stated that if the Districts were looking to undertake a broad-scale search, then HYA would be the firm to do that.

Mr. Chun stated that he felt his rankings were very far apart with HYA far out-ranking the other firms. He stated that along with agreeing with all other statements that had been made regarding HYA, HYA was ready to go with the national experience necessary, covered topics addressed at Board meetings, and had a great understanding of what the Districts needed. GovHR were new to the superintendent field but he appreciated Dr. Sophie's expertise. He felt that with School Exec Connect, two full-time currently working superintendents would not have the time available to engage in this search process.

Ms. Zinser stated that she agreed with all statements that had been stated. While all three firms did an outstanding job, she also believed that School Exec Connect's current superintendents would not be able to dedicate the time to this search process. She stated that while GovHr had done a phenomenal job in the communities, the demands of the Districts' timeline were significant and the lack of direct experience would be challenging. HYA had triple the amount of website traffic, and were offering multiple community forums including twenty focus groups, fifteen individual interviews plus the transition phase.

Mrs. Sands stated that she felt all three firms were strong and all brought different strengths to the search process. She believed that the community engagement structure and focus and the "we will do everything" approach were very attractive as was the opportunity for the Boards to have input in the process along the way. The COVID-19 pandemic and timeline concerns would necessitate a very structured approach which HYA would bring.

Ms. Davis stated that further conversation would be necessary about the HYA cost structure given their offer to match pricing of other firms providing similar services. Ms. Zinser agreed and felt that if the environment was different, aggressive pricing would be even more appealing but that the cost would be worth it in this scenario. The reliance or lack of on District staff would also play a role in whether the cost could be more easily justified.

The committee discussed next steps. Mrs. Sands stated that she and Ms. Zinser would conduct cursory checks on HYA and recent client experiences. They would also collaboratively create a formal written search firm recommendation which would be presented to both Boards for their approval, at the Tuesday, January 26 District 67 regular meeting and at the Wednesday, January 27 District 115 special meeting.

Mrs. Sands and Ms. Zinser would then take the lead for both Boards on the logistics side of running the process and being the contacts for the firm. They would come to Boards on an as needed basis to move forward. They would also partner with internal staff to facilitate the work, specifically with Melissa Oakley and the communications team who were in the process of creating a web page dedicated to the search process as soon as possible. Community engagement would be robust with robust opportunities for all stakeholders including current administrators and staff, the entire parent community and the entire tax-paying community to share inputs through forums, focus groups, and a survey. HYA would also have a dedicated portal for the Districts so that board members would be able to access all information coming in. In addition to this, HYA would also be providing weekly updates.

Mr. Engelland stated that he would like to further articulate what the scope around logistics would look like and ensure that both full Boards would be able to weigh in. Mrs. Sands stated that this would need to be done in conjunction with the firm in a planning meeting.

Ms. Davis asked about an April 1 timeline and thinking about interim superintendent coverage and Mrs. Sands stated that the goal for a final decision would be by mid-April. The start date for a new Superintendent would likely be July 1. Mr. Engelland stated that the priority was to choose a search firm, enable that firm to effectively kick off the process, and given the likelihood of the need of an interim superintendent, this would be worked into the conversation through a potential joint Board workshop once more timeline information was confirmed.

A joint Board planning meeting with the HYA consultants would need to be scheduled and Ms. Zinser asked if Subcommittee members would be available on Thursday, January 28.

Sally Davis motioned to adjourn the meeting and Dewey Winbrenner seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.