

SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Special Session in the Meeting Chamber Conference Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 24, 2013.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Chairman Patricia Cotham and Commissioners Karen Bentley, Dumont Clarke, Trevor Fuller, Bill James, Vilma Leake, and Kim Ratliff
Interim County Manager Bobbie Shields
County Attorney Marvin Bethune
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

Absent: Commissioners George Dunlap and Matthew Ridenhour

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cotham.

(1) REPORT FROM COLEMAN LEW+ASSOCIATES – COUNTY MANAGER’S SEARCH

Chairman Cotham said the purpose of the meeting was to receive an update on the search for a county manager from Coleman Lew + Associates, the Search Firm.

The representatives from Coleman Lew + Associates were Shana Plott and Janet DeLoache.

Prior to the start of their presentation, Commissioner Leake acknowledged for the record that she had met with the Search Firm since the Board’s September 17, 2013 meeting. At the September 17, 2013 meeting, other members of the Ad Hoc County Manager’s Search Committee, that were present, stated they’d been in communication with the Search Firm, but Commissioner Leake said she had not. Commissioner Leake said it was her fault that the Search Firm had been unable to connect with her prior to September 17, 2013.

Coleman Lew + Associates representatives Shana Plott and Janet DeLoache introduced themselves and shared their background and areas of expertise. They acknowledged and apologized for the absence of Ken Carrick, President of Coleman Lew + Associates, who was also involved with the search. They said Mr. Carrick was out of town on a prior business commitment. They then proceeded with their presentation. The following was covered:

- Firm Overview
- Search Team
- General Search Process Overview
- Update on County Manager Search

Highlights:

- The position description shared was not an all inclusive Human Resources job description, but gave a potential candidate enough information to hopefully engage them into dialogue.
- The position was posted on various websites and the firm proactively got the position

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description into as many hands as possible to spread the word about the position.

- The position description was developed with input from the Search Committee.
- Thus far, they've touched basis with 300+ contacts with respect to the search for a county manager.
- They've begun interviews with potential candidates.
- On October 17, 2013 the Ad Hoc Committee would be presented an initial group of candidates.
- Although the initial group of candidates would be presented on October 17, 2013, Coleman Lew + Associates would continue to source, talk to potential candidates and seek referrals until the Board has selected its "leader."
- They plan to bring forth a diverse group of candidates with respect to gender, ethnicity, and background.
- Their aim was to target city and county public administrators from similar size jurisdictions.
- This was a work in progress, but they felt good about where they were thus far.
- Coleman Lew + Associates would stay with the process for as long as it took in order to get the "right" person in the job.
- They were open to receiving information on any sources or referrals from Board members.
- Board members were welcomed to email Coleman Lew + Associates at meckcountymanager.com with any feedback.

Comments

Commissioner James asked about the number of applications received to date. *The response was that this was a "highly" confidential phase of the process, because they were talking to candidates that were in sitting positions. It was said if their names got out, they would probably withdraw from the process. Further, that it's a "fluid" number. It was noted that there were more than five that had been extensively interviewed and other interviews were scheduled.*

Commissioner Leake asked had there been any reluctance on the part of potential candidates. *The response was yes, some questioned whether they would be "seriously" considered. They were informed that it was an open process.*

Commissioner Leake said she wanted to make sure there weren't any barriers preventing someone from participating in the process. Commissioner Leake said she would not want anyone to be discouraged based on previous remarks made by anyone on the Board. *Coleman Lew + Associates said all candidates would be treated the same and everyone would go through the same process.*

Commissioner Bentley asked about the average time it took to hire someone on this level. *The response was four-six months. Further, that Coleman Lew + Associates won't "sacrifice quality for speed."*

Commissioner Leake asked about County Human Resources involvement in the process. *Chairman Cotham said she consulted with Human Resources Director Chris Peek early on in the process, but he had not been involved since that time.*

Chairman Cotham said County Human Resources was available to help if needed. She thanked Director Peek for what he and his staff had done to assist early on. She said their assistance probably would be needed when it came to the interviewing process.

Commissioner Fuller said he raised the question about the status of the county manager search at the September 17, 2013 meeting, because he wanted to make sure the Board had a good process and was being as transparent as possible.

Commissioner Fuller addressed the candidate profile. He said the Board as a whole hadn't had sufficient dialogue with respect to what the Board wanted in the next county manager.

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Commissioner Fuller said input was needed from the entire Board, as well as, the public.

Ms. Plott said the profile was developed per conversation with Committee members and their review of the N.C. General Statute regarding county managers. Ms. Plott said the Committee approved the description posted by Coleman Lew + Associates.

Ms. Plott said they would welcome additional feedback from other Board members.

Chairman Cotham said the job description was also shared with County Human Resources.

Commissioner Fuller asked was it too late for public input. *Representatives from Coleman Lew + Associates said that was up to the Committee.*

Chairman Cotham asked Coleman Lew + Associates if they'd heard from the public. *The response was no.*

Commissioner Bentley asked Coleman Lew + Associates what their experience had been with respect to having or not having public input when doing searches of this type. *The response was there was no evidence that one way was more successful than the other or that it generated better candidates.*

Coleman Lew + Associates said it was not too late to receive public input, but that any public forum held would need to be deliberate in purpose and not just a "free for all." It was stated the Board's purpose for wanting input and the type of input that was being sought needed to be clear.

Commissioner Leake said per her experience as a former member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board, public input with respect to the search for a new superintendent was received once the list of candidates was narrowed down. Commissioner Leake said the confidentiality of candidates was very important, especially early on in the process.

Commissioner Ratliff asked for clarity about the October 17, 2013 meeting. *Coleman Lew + Associates said the purpose of the meeting would be to present the Committee an initial list of candidates. It was noted that this would not necessarily be the "final" group.*

Commissioner Ratliff asked was it too late to receive input from other Board members regarding the position description, even though it was already posted. *The response was no that it could be revised but that direction would have to come from the Committee. It was noted that the functions listed in the position description were basically from the N.C. General Statute.*

Commissioner Ratliff asked Chairman Cotham would there be an opportunity for the public to provide input. *Chairman Cotham said the Board could discuss it.*

Chairman Cotham asked had Coleman Lew + Associates experienced any situations where citizens have served on the interview committee. *The response was no and for confidentiality reasons that would not be good.*

Commissioner Fuller explained what he meant by public input and that it was with respect to the county manager profile. Commissioner Fuller said he wanted the public to have a sense of ownership in the process.

Chairman Cotham asked about a possible public survey to obtain input.

Commissioner Fuller said some form of public input was needed.

Commissioner Bentley said she felt as representatives of the people of Mecklenburg County that

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the citizenry elected the Board to make the decision with respect to the candidate profile. Commissioner Bentley said she was not opposed to getting public input, but that it would need to be made clear what the purpose of seeking that input was for.

Commissioner James said this process was an employer's agreement. He said opening it up to the public would increase the risk of losing candidates. Commissioner James said he felt the job description was pretty clear.

Commissioner James said he was not opposed to receiving input from other commissioners.

Commissioner Clarke suggested holding a public forum to receive public input before the list of candidates was narrowed down.

Motion was made by Commissioner Clarke, seconded by Commissioner Fuller and unanimously carried with Commissioner Bentley, Clarke, Cotham, Fuller, James, Leake, and Ratliff voting yes, to hold a public forum to allow the public the opportunity to provide input on what they'd like to see in the next county manager. Secondly, the public forum would be held as part of a Regular Board meeting, rather than holding a special meeting.

Commissioner Fuller asked about the salary for the next county manager.

Chairman Cotham said that was "fluid" and would be negotiated. Chairman Cotham said placing a salary range in the posting would rule some people out.

Commissioner Clarke asked Coleman Lew + Associates what had they been told by the Committee about considering internal candidates. *Coleman Lew + Associates said they would treat everyone the same.*

Commissioner Bentley said Coleman Lew + Associates probably received "mixed" comments from Committee members with respect to internal candidates.

Coleman Lew + Associates said they would evaluate internal and external candidates that meet the criteria the same. It was noted that all internal candidates would be submitted to the Committee.

Commissioner Clarke said he was just seeking clarity with respect to whether or not there was any consensus on the part of the Committee regarding internal candidates.

Commissioner Leake said everyone would be looked at regardless of race, internal or external.

Chairman Cotham said she informed Coleman Lew + Associates that there may be internal candidates but she never said they should be eliminated.

Coleman Lew + Associates said the direction they received from Committee members was that internal and external candidates were to be treated the same.

Commissioner Clarke asked Coleman Lew + Associates what were three pitfalls any Board should be aware of in hiring a county manager. *The response was to remember as a Board that "you're selling" and you want to entice "good" candidates; keep in mind that constituents were watching the Board and what it was doing and so were candidates. The Board needed to remember that it's in a "selling and recruiting" mode. Secondly, it's important that the Board be united as whole, with the understanding that there would be different perspectives on certain issues.*

Chairman Cotham reiterated that interested candidates were looking at the Board and the County as well. Chairman Cotham asked County Human Resources for a list of accomplishments that could be used in selling the County.

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Prior to adjourning, Commissioner Fuller noted the following:

He would like the Board to have some type of document indicating what the process would be going forward beginning with the public forum through the end of the process. Commissioner Fuller said this way everyone would know where things were with the process.

Secondly, he wanted the Search Firm to feel “empowered” to tell the Board if it’s interfering with the “sales” job. *Ms. Plott said they would.*

Commissioner Fuller asked would Commissioners who aren’t on the Search Committee have an opportunity to review applications.

The Search Firm representatives deferred to the Search Committee for a response and guidance.

Chairman Cotham said it would be handled like it was with the assessor recruitment, which was that the Board saw those that weren't chosen when the committee brought forth its recommendation.

It was noted by representatives from Coleman Lew + Associates that it was imperative that information be kept confidential. She said persons who may be interested would not talk with them if their information wasn’t kept confidential.

Commissioner Ratliff asked County Human Resources Director Chris Peek when could the public forum be held. The response was at the October 15, 2013 meeting.

Note: The above is not inclusive of every comment but is a summary.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Commissioner Bentley, seconded by Commissioner James and unanimously carried with Commissioners Bentley, Clarke, Cotham, Fuller, James, Leake, and Ratliff voting yes, that there being no further business to come before the Board that the meeting be adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Janice S. Paige, Clerk

Patricia “Pat” Cotham, Chairman