

Nashua School Board Work Session
Tuesday, June 28, 2016
Nashua School Library
6:00 PM

The work session began at 6:12 pm and Board Chair Cole Sibley led the Pledge of Allegiance. Board members Joe Laumeyer, Michele Fromdahl, Greg Nybakken, Joel Novak, and Cole Sibley were present, along with Clerk Linda Parpart.

1. Review of Possible Letters of Intent for the Superintendent Position

Cole introduced Bill Colter, retired superintendent who lives in Missoula. Mr. Colter distributed his application materials for review by the board. Joe asked Mr. Colter why he came back to eastern Montana and noted Mr. Colter's longevity. Joe stated it's important that we find stability and success, and commented on Mr. Colter's accomplishments. Joe asked Mr. Colter about his philosophy of leading a team. Mr. Colter replied you need to be open-minded, lead by example, get everybody on the same page, and be open, honest, and visible. He talked about being raised in a small community and how important the school is to a small community.

Michele asked about the comment in his letter of intent stating that Nashua would have to work with TRS so he can receive his full retirement. Mr. Colter explained that the school would have to work with TRS to make an exception for him to be employed. Michele asked about his experience where he lists date ranges as Superintendent, wondering if that time was at one school. Mr. Colter described his work experiences.

Greg thanked Mr. Colter for and commented that he has an impressive resume. Joel commented that Mr. Colter has an immense background and thanked him for coming in person. Cole mentioned our timeline and asked Mr. Colter his thoughts on coming in. Mr. Colter talked about the things that would need to get done since it's already the end of June, such as the budget and student handbook. He talked about getting organized for the start of school and his experience working with combined classrooms.

Cole asked Mr. Colter if he had any questions for the board. Mr. Colter replied that he had a list and began with his first question. He asked if the board considered themselves liberal or conservative. Joe replied we try to do what's in the best interest for students, and described our progress with technology and curriculum upgrades. Mr. Colter asked if the board would have a problem with him bringing a teacher or two to board meetings to talk about things in the school. Cole replied that the board has been talking about doing that. Mr. Colter talked about methods for keeping the board informed of what is happening in the school.

Mr. Colter asked as superintendent, how do I communicate with the board – email, phone, hard copy. Joe talked about using whatever is appropriate. Mr. Colter asked if the board uses committees or if everything is full board. Joel replied we have generally done things as a full board and Cole commented that we haven't utilized committees much but there is a place for them.

Mr. Colter asked about a strategic plan and if the board has goals or a long-range plan. There was discussion on the importance of planning. Mr. Colter asked if there are any legal issues to be aware of and the reply was no. He asked who the district's legal counsel was. He was told that generally we used Kris Goss at MTSBA and have used Jeff Weldon some this past year.

Mr. Colter asked about how many bus routes there are. There are three. He asked if buses are contracted or school-owned. They are school-owned. He asked if we have trouble finding bus drivers. There was discussion on finding bus drivers and Mr. Colter talked about the importance of background checks. He asked if we have a bus depreciation fund. Linda replied yes.

Mr. Colter asked who does maintenance and was told we do most of our own maintenance, utilizing outside providers for big projects. He asked what is the board's assessment of the physical plant. There was discussion on the recent HVAC upgrade and Mr. Colter talked about lighting improvements. Mr. Colter asked what is the board's perspective of the superintendent in the community. There was discussion of community activities and Mr. Colter stated he feels it is very important for the superintendent to be approachable and visible.

Mr. Colter asked if we have a back-to-school event for parents and the board replied we would like to do this. Mr. Colter asked what is the role of the superintendent in negotiations. Cole stated he would like to see the superintendent have a larger role. Mr. Colter asked if the clerk is involved. Cole replied yes, very involved. Mr. Colter stated that the master agreement is a contract between the board and the teachers and the superintendent has to interpret it. In 45 years, he has never had a grievance filed. He talked about the importance of being open and honest.

Mr. Colter asked if we have a classified staff union. He was told we may be getting one. Greg talked about the work done by the board salary committee.

Mr. Colter asked if the school owned housing or apartments. We do have school-owned housing and Joe commented that the Nashua Booster Club would like to purchase a house in town and donate it to the school. Mr. Colter asked what is the role of the superintendent in school-owned housing. Joe replied that the superintendent has been the one to offer the housing to new hires. Mr. Colter talked about the importance of maintaining the housing.

There was discussion on Mr. Colter's family in Missoula and him being here. Mr. Colter stated that his phone number is on his letter and the board should call him with any questions. Joe asked Mr. Colter if he was the candidate of choice, when could he start. Mr. Colter replied it wouldn't take much to get here.

Cole stated that the board will now go through the other applications that were received. Joe commented that we started with a good one to compare and contrast. Cole stated that there would be no decision tonight, just open discussion. Michele suggested that we eliminate any candidates who do not have superintendent experience since we are looking for someone who can come in and help us out. Joe said we have a couple things which are critical – extensive experience, strong budget background, strong team leadership, and community-mindedness.

It was agreed to eliminate Mark Stordahl since he has no superintendent experience.

Joe stated he was not interested in Ron Friehe since he doesn't meet his criteria. Michele commented that it wasn't clear if he has been a superintendent. Cole said he visited with him on the phone and he is a principal. It was agreed to eliminate Ron Friehe.

Cole stated he visited with Robert Smith on the phone. He is a principal in Williston and has lots of experience but no length of time in one place. It was agreed to eliminate Robert Smith.

There was discussion on Steve Henderson. Joe pointed out he has many jobs but none are long-term so he does not show stability. It was agreed to eliminate Steve Henderson.

Next was Steve Morgan. Cole visited with him on the phone and was told he is in Wyoming and wants to get back in Montana. It was agreed to eliminate Steve Morgan.

Cole stated he has visited frequently with Steven Schwartz. He told Cole his wife is an elementary teacher who has sent in her application. It was agreed to look more at Steven Schwartz.

Joe stated that Bill Colter is in the top two. Cole said Mr. Colter seems to know everybody and everybody seems to know him. The board agreed they all liked everything about him. Joe encouraged everyone to call Mr. Schwartz to find out more about him.

Cole said that if we like someone we can offer a contract or we can setup interviews or use MTSBA.

2. Discussion of the Extra-curricular Hiring Process

Cole asked for ideas about what's important. Joe said we need to figure out a process. He has asked around and found it is often a committee involving the A.D., superintendent, board member(s), etc. that does the hiring. Joe thought the A.D. should be hired first so they can be involved in interviews and he felt we need a committee to do the interviews. Greg asked Cole if it has to be an open meeting if a board member is on the committee. Cole was not sure, but thought so. Cole did not agree with having a committee. He said the A.D. should do the hiring in conjunction with the superintendent. Joel agreed that it should be the A.D. and superintendent. Michele said the committee is good in theory, but not in practice.

Cole stated we need to hire head coaches ASAP. Michele suggested we hire the coaches we need now and look at implementing a procedure in the future. All agreed.

Cole asked Greg Fromdahl and Kirk Sibley for thoughts on how we should go about this. Mr. Fromdahl said the long-term process is a good idea, but even if we got a new A.D. now, how able would they be to hire coaches. Mr. Sibley agreed with Mr. Fromdahl and said that coaches need to get hired now. There was discussion on hiring assistant coaches and it was agreed to wait to see about new teacher's interest. Joe asked about hiring for cheerleading tomorrow night at the special meeting so that can get going and Cole said we can probably do that.

The session adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Chairman

Clerk

Date: _____