

State Board of Education

Virtual via Microsoft Teams
Call in Number: 1-802-552-8456
Conference ID: 287 639 1#

Secretary Search Committee Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: September 1, 2023

Present:

State Board Members (SBE): Jennifer Samuelson, Chair; Lyle Jepson, Jenna O'Farrell
Agency of Education (AOE): Maureen Gaidys

Others: Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), Rep. Arsenault, Rep. Burrows, Rep. Stone, William Mathis, Rep. Christie, Sean-Marie Oller.

Item A: Call to Order, Roll Call and Amendments to the Agenda

Chair Samuelson called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. and asked for a roll call. There were no amendments to the agenda.

Item B: Approve Draft Meeting Minutes from [August 23, 2023 Committee Meeting](#)

Jepson moved to approve the draft minutes; O'Farrell seconded the motion. Chair Samuelson called the vote; the motion carried, and the minutes were approved.

Item C: Public to be Heard

There were no members of the public to be heard. Chair Samuelson noted the number of members of the public who were listening to the meeting and said the SBE Search Committee is accepting written comments. She encouraged those to be provided via email or however is convenient.

Item D: Review and Approve the Overview, Job Description and Preferred Qualifications

Chair Samuelson recapped the suggestions from the Department of Human Resources (DHR) from the last meeting. There was work outstanding from the last meeting – for Committee members to look at and individually draft proposed edits to the job overview, descriptions, and preferred qualifications. Chair Samuelson said, in respect to Open Meeting Law, there have been no conversations prior to today's meeting on this work and that the Committee would now consider each other's proposed drafts in order to reach consensus on the final language to be used. Jepson offered to start the Committee's discussion by sharing the overview that he drafted.

Chair Samuelson returned to the Public Comment period.

Item C: Public to be Heard

Chair Samuelson recognized Jeff Francis, VSA, as a member of the public. Francis said he did not have public comment but felt compelled to note that he and others on the phone are not able to see documents that are being shared. Chair Samuelson said that the work being shared is a starter to develop language. Francis noted that it seems contrary to Open Meeting Law (OML) that some meeting participants can see a document that is under discussion, while members of the public cannot. Jepson offered to read his comments. Francis continued that this does not meet the spirit of OML and that it is an inconvenience to not have the documents referred to throughout the meeting and instead have these documents read as the meeting progresses. Chair Samuelson said if language was read and additions were discussed, it was no different than what usually happens and would satisfy public members' access to hear the Committee's deliberations. Francis reiterated that it is challenging to participate in a meeting with two formats.

Representative Angela Arsenault: spoke about thinking that the agenda posted had today's meeting starting at 2:15 p.m. and public comment scheduled for 2:20 p.m. She said there is now a different agenda posted. Gaidys confirmed that the agenda for today's meeting was only posted once and listed the correct meeting start time and agenda. Rep. Arsenault asked if there would be another opportunity for public comment at the end of the meeting. Chair Samuelson confirmed that there would be a second public comment session. Rep. Arsenault read her [public comment](#) that she also provided via email.

Rep. Elizabeth Burrows: spoke about looking at the job description and asked what the salary range would be for this position. Chair Samuelson said that DHR is confirming the salary and that DHR said it will be consistent with other Agency Secretaries.

Rep. Stone: said it is very challenging to follow a Teams meeting with only phone access and no access to the Teams Chat and asked if, in the future, a meeting link can be shared. She asked that anything put in the Teams Chat be read aloud so that members of the public are aware of conversations taking place in the chat. Chair Samuelson said that, per OML, individual drafts were not discussed by Committee members in advance of this meeting, and today's purpose is to work through these individual drafts in open meeting and finalize them. No screens will be shared, nor will language be dropped into the chat, so that everyone has equal access to the materials being discussed.

[Written public comment from Graning, Jones and Alberghini](#) was also provided via email.

Item D: Review and Approve the Overview, Job Description and Preferred Qualifications

Chair Samuelson returned to the working session. Both Jepson and Samuelson separately read their general overview of the position. There was discussion on how much information goes into a job description, a scoring rubric for candidates, how all the parts are used to evaluate a candidate, qualifications are set in statute, grabbing attention of those who are qualified, and having priority of preferred and tertiary skills.

After reading out loud proposed language was under consideration each time prior to discussing it, Chair Samuelson read the final proposed version of the overview that the Committee agreed upon: The Vermont State Board of Education is seeking a Secretary of Education who will provide a relentlessly positive vision and inspirational leadership of over 150 employees at the Agency of Education. The Secretary works closely with State Board of Education to ensure that both public and independent schools located in the state comply with applicable federal and state statutes, rules, and policies and serves as a non-voting member of the Board. The Secretary is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. As a member of the Governor's Cabinet, the Secretary works collaboratively with a professional team of state-level agencies overseen by the Governor.

The Committee moved on to discussion of the job description and Jepson read his draft, then Samuelson read her draft. There was discussion on special education, Section 12, emphasizing special needs, data driven strategies that improve test scores, aligning strategies for early learning systems, afterschool and summer enrichment, experience managing complex issues, strong management experience and effective leadership skills, capacity to build a strong organizational culture to support the vision, career technical education (CTE) and training, reducing education inequality, demonstrable commitment through experience of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), evidence not just commitment, and promoting/fostering DEI.

After reading out loud proposed language was under consideration each time prior to discussing it, Chair Samuelson read the final proposed version of the job description that the Committee agreed upon: The successful candidate will demonstrate experience managing complex issues and a belief in the transformational power of education as the key to revitalizing our communities. The Secretary will focus on reducing educational inequity in schools in communities that have experienced the most substantial demographic declines and commit to ensuring that students are successful academically and have the skills to engage constructively with their peers and communities. The Secretary will be expected to implement data-driven strategies that will improve student test scores, support students across the educational spectrum, including students with special education needs, and align strategies with early care learning systems and statewide access to afterschool and summer enrichment. The Secretary will increase the number of students who are engaged in career and technical education and work-based learning opportunities and ensure that high school students are prepared to enroll in higher education and training. The Secretary will demonstrate strong management experience, effective leadership skills, and the ability to build a vibrant organizational culture to support the vision of the Agency. Through past experience and practice, the Secretary will demonstrate a commitment to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion within the Agency of Education and all Vermont schools.

Chair Samuelson moved on to Preferred Qualifications and read a list that she had drafted. There was discussion on duplicating language, adding a commitment to children and families/communities, wraparound supports, and a holistic view of Committee's beliefs.

After reading out loud proposed language was under consideration each time prior to discussing it, Chair Samuelson read the final proposed version of the preferred qualifications that the Committee agreed upon:

Candidates who meet the Statutory Requirements will be evaluated by the State Board of Education on the basis of Preferred Qualifications, as set forth below.

1. experience with PK-12 education delivery systems;
2. familiarity with school governance structures and practices typical of Vermont or similar states;
3. experience with executive and legislative entities in the public sector at the state and local levels and/or experience in private sector governance and leadership;
4. knowledge of fiscal and tax policy and education-funding issues at the federal, state, and local levels;
5. expertise in framing, communicating, and advancing public and/or business policy issues, options, strategies, and tactics;
6. experience driving organizational effectiveness, managing complex issues and continuous improvement in large organizations;
7. effectiveness in communications, oral, written and in multiple media, with the public, with special constituencies and interest groups, with decision-makers, and with employees;
8. Demonstrated success as a transformational leader;
9. willingness to relocate to Vermont if currently residing out-of-state; and
10. commitment to all Vermont children and their communities

Jepson suggested that DHR determine where this job should be posted. Possibilities previously discussed were Success Factors, School Spring, Education Week and using an AOE press release. O'Farrell moved that we support the posting locations as recommend by DHR (Success Factors, School Spring, Education Week); Jepson seconded. There was no further discussion. Chair Samuelson called the vote. The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Samuelson asked for a motion to authorize the Committee Chair to work with the Vermont DHR to finalize and publish the job posting. She suggested re-reading the overview, job description, and preferred qualifications prior to the vote. The overview, description and preferred qualifications were read. She asked for the motion again. O'Farrell moved; Jepson seconded. There was no discussion. The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Samuelson shared that the goal is to post the job the week of September 5 and initially post for three weeks. In the meantime, she suggested scheduling another meeting to discuss interview questions and said there will be a Doodle poll for dates.

Item E: Other

Item F: Public to be Heard

Bill Mathis: said the Committee ended up with a good product and engaged in a thoughtful process. He said equity is critical and suggested that wordsmithing make a balance toward equity not being an effort but an expectation. He also offered that the work of the State Board with the Secretary was not well described.

Rep. Christie: Responsibility and relationship with the State Board and new Secretary is important. He also suggested that along with the DHR support, they include support from the Office of Racial Equity to ensure recruitment of non-traditional candidates. Rep. Christie also offered to share with the State Board a document from a woman who recently left the state after 5 years that explains the conditions of racism that she experienced.

Sean-Marie Oller: asked where the letter from the Governor could be found. She reflected on the “vision of the Agency” and wondered if it is the vision of the State Board or the Governor that the Secretary follows. She asked about the “complex system of issues” and if this meant complex system of education or a complex educational system vs. issues. She also asked what is meant by demographics - declining enrollment or decline in Vermont population. And lastly, she expressed concern/question for the timeframe for the process.

Adjourn

O’Farrell moved to adjourn; Jepson seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Maureen Gaidys