

1 **Shaker Regional School Board**  
2 **Meeting with Ted Comstock**  
3 **October 6, 2009**  
4

5 **IN ATTENDANCE:**

6 *Board Members:* Diane O'Hara, Chair; Roy Roberts; Vice-Chair; Tom Goulette, Pret

7 Tuthill, Sumner Dole, Heidi Hutchinsin, Sean Embree

8 *Administration:* Debbie Gay, Business Administrator

9 *Guest:* Ted Comstock, NHSBA

10 *Public:* Alison Bryant, Richie Bryant

11 *Media:* Harrison Haas, Laconia Citizen

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13 Diane O'Hara called the meeting to order at 6:57 pm and welcomed Ted Comstock.

14 Diane asked Ted to provide an overview of the Superintendent Search process.

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16 Ted began by saying if board members had been involved in a search before they need to  
17 be aware that the process takes longer now due the decreased number of candidates. It  
18 usually takes 3 ½ - 4 ½ months to go through the process now.

19  
20 **Process Outline:**

- 21 1. Know what you want in a Superintendent.  
22 a. Identify those strengths that you want and need  
23 b. Look at what you want to accomplish in the next 3-4 years  
24 2. Know how much – and how -you want to involve the community  
25 a. Forums  
26 b. Surveys  
27 3. Recruitment  
28 a. Takes Time  
29 b. Recommend a national search  
30 c. Use the internet – it's a great help  
31 4. Selection Process  
32 a. Determine the steps that will be taken to narrow down the list of  
33 applicants  
34 b. Determine who will do the semi-finalist interviews  
35 c. Determine the finalists  
36 d. Complete site visits  
37 e. Vetting of the candidates  
38 f. Reference Checks & Criminal Background Checks.  
39

40 Diane said she is aware the recruitment process is labor intensive and asked how the  
41 School Boards Association can help. Ted said NHSBA provides choices:

- 42 1. Soup to Nuts – do all the process for a fee (\$8,000 plus expenses – a large district  
43 can run \$11,000 - \$12,000  
44 2. Package – very minimum cost – helps a little with each area  
45 3. Provides a Strategy for recruitment  
46 a. EdjobsNH very useful  
47  
48  
49

- 1 b. SchoolSpring
- 2 c. Education Week
- 3 d. AASA on-line publication
- 4 4. Provides interview questions
- 5 5. Can complete background checks on semi-finalists
- 6 6. Can help winnow down applications
- 7 7. Can help set meetings
- 8 8. Can act as the clearinghouse for applications
- 9 a. NHSBA Prestige
- 10 b. Confidentiality
- 11

12 Roy asked if they provide a bid of if there is a menu to select from. Ted said districts can  
13 customize what they would like and the charge is about \$100 per hour.

14  
15 Sumner asked if NHSBA could provide someone to help facilitate the focus groups. Ted  
16 said they could – and typically there will be multiple focus groups: Administration; SAU  
17 Staff; Faculty – may want to do one for each school; Community.

18  
19 Roy asked how someone on the selection committee would look at the applications if  
20 they are housed at NHSBA. Ted said after the final due date for submission the  
21 applications would be delivered to the person designated.

22  
23 Sumner asked if it is typically the board, a subcommittee of the board, or some board  
24 with staff and community members that completes the search. Ted said there is no right  
25 or wrong. Ted said a large board become difficult to arrange schedules. Ted noted that  
26 confidentiality can be an issue and that should be the first topic discussed at the original  
27 meeting of the committee.

28  
29 Sumner asked if the focus group or survey is more effective. Ted said he has found the  
30 focus groups to be better. You would advertise that the facilitator will be available  
31 between the hours of x and x to listen to what people want.

32  
33 Tom asked where Shaker is as far as attractiveness, and if there are a number of districts  
34 looking for superintendents. Ted said there are a number that will be looking – some  
35 have started. Ted believes Shaker will be attractive for the following reasons:

- 36 1 Single District
- 37 2 Good reputation
- 38 3 Good geographic location – close to Concord, in the Lakes Region
- 39 4 Longevity of Administration and Staff
- 40

41 Roy asked what boards do wrong in a Superintendent Search. Ted replied:

- 42 1 Not investing the time up front to determine what they want in a  
43 superintendent
- 44
- 45 2 Lack of confidentiality – particularly in the semi-finalist stage
- 46 3 Toss out applications too quickly on a paper screening
- 47
- 48
- 49

1 Sumner asked what the role of the outgoing Superintendent is. Ted said there is no hard  
2 and fast rule but in general most do not take an active role in the search, but will provide  
3 information.  
4

5 Ted said when the applicants have been narrowed down to the 3-4 finalists it becomes a  
6 matter of “fit”. Ted said it is better to interview more. His rule of thumb is when in  
7 doubt – interview. Most SAUs receive 15-20 applications and people who minimally  
8 meet the job specifications should seriously be considered.  
9

10 Salary requirements should be discussed as part of the up front considerations and Ted  
11 recommends a generous range to attract more candidates. NHSBA can help negotiate the  
12 salary and benefits for the final contract.  
13

14 The NHSBA does not facilitate site visits, but the investment in time to do those visits is  
15 very valuable. You can ask the finalists who they would like you to talk to but you can  
16 take to others. The NHSBA can help with references and can find out who else to contact  
17 or can get more information for us. The NHSBA would verify degrees and certifications  
18 but does not complete the background checks.  
19

20 Tom asked if, worse case, we don’t find a superintendent – does NSHBA help us find an  
21 interim? Ted said they do and there is no charge to help with that.  
22

23 Ted was asked for time estimates and for an estimate of a “menu” plan. Ted said  
24 estimates would be 6-8 hours for the focus groups (at 1 hour per group) ; 4-5 hours for the  
25 vetting of the candidates (based on 2-4 candidates). Ted said probably the \$3,000 -  
26 \$5,000 range.  
27

28 Ted said the SAU, Administration, Community, and Board should be engaged at the front  
29 end to determine what the district wants. Then the selection committee would work on the  
30 search, interviews, etc.; the board would complete interviews of the finalists, and the staff  
31 and community would then be engaged for the meet and greet before the board makes the  
32 final selection.  
33

34 Tom asked if there are typical contract amounts and perks. Ted said he did not have that  
35 information but that Debbie could get it from NHSAA.  
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37 The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.  
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39 Respectfully submitted,  
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41  
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43 Debbie D. Gay  
44 Clerk pro temp

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Article published Oct 7, 2009

## Shaker Board told not to rush supt. search

CANTERBURY — As the Shaker Regional School Board prepares, for the first time, to undertake a full-fledged search for a new superintendent, the members have been told to prepare for a lengthy search process.

Superintendent Michael Cozort announced that the 2009-10 school year would be his first year with Shaker Regional. Since his announcement, the school district has been collecting information on the best way to recruit its next superintendent of schools.

On Tuesday, the school board invited Ted Comstock, executive director of the N.H. School Boards Association, to come in and talk with board members about possible recruiting options and methods to find a well-qualified superintendent.

Chairwoman Diane O'Hara said that the school board is acquainting itself with the search process since it never had to hire a superintendent from scratch.

"We're on new grounds here since this is the first superintendent search that SAU 80 has ever done," O'Hara said. "We haven't really started the process yet, but we decided we need to begin by getting information."

Prior to Cozort becoming superintendent he was assistant superintendent of the SAU, which at the time oversaw schools in both the Shaker and Merrimack Valley school districts. Prior to being named an assistant superintendent he was principal of Belmont Elementary School.

Since this is a new process for the Shaker School Board members, they will be looking to see what services are available to them during their search from outside agencies and determine what costs are associated.

Comstock told the board that to be successful, it needs to know what members are looking for in their next superintendent before beginning their search.

"You used to be able to put an ad in the newspaper and get a list of many well-qualified individuals, but that's not the case today," Comstock said. "The process takes longer and needs to be done in a more focused manner."

Comstock explained how the Internet has broadened the recruiting spectrum significantly since it's relatively easy to use, cheaper than traditional methods and there are so many people searching for jobs online. By using the Internet, the school district could get applicants from far beyond the typical New England region, possibly giving them a nationwide pool to select from.

He advised the board that recruiting a new superintendent is a multiple-set process and could take several months before they find a candidate. Comstock said that the school district is in a good spot since Cozort gave sufficient notice of when he plans on leaving.

"Some superintendents have given as few as 90 days notice, which complicates the process of finding an adequate and well-certified individual," he said.

Before entering the meeting, Comstock conducted some research on the Shaker Regional School District. Based on his findings, he said he thinks the district is an attractive place for applicants who are interested for the superintendent position.

"Shaker has a good reputation, the board and administration here have built a great school district and it will serve you well," Comstock said. "It's close to Concord and two hours from Boston, it's in a good geographic region. There are a lot of things working in your favor."

The longevity in the district was also seen as a plus since the school district has not had a handful of changes in administration.

At the end of the meeting, O'Hara said that Comstock was very knowledgeable on the topic and it gave the board some ideas to think about during the process. On Thursday the Shaker School Board will meet again at 6 p.m. in Canterbury where it will be hearing from Mark Joyce from the New Hampshire School Administrators Association for more information on the selection process.

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