

## **Eau Claire School Board Agenda Monday, December 16, 2019**

*Generated by Meta Miske*

### **Members present**

Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

### **Members absent**

Laurie Klinkhammer

### **CALL TO ORDER - 5:00 p.m.**

President Eric Torres called the meeting to order at 5:01pm. Board Secretary Meta Miske confirmed the meeting had been properly noticed and was in compliance with the Open Meeting Law. A roll call was conducted to verify quorum.

Motion by Aaron Harder, second by Tim Nordin to adjourn to Closed Session pursuant to 19.85(1)(e); Deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session and 19.85(1)(c); Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

Motion carried

Yes: Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

Not Present at Vote: Lori Bica

### **WORK SESSION - 5:30 p.m.**

#### **Implicit Bias Training with Teresa O'Halloran, Affirmative Action Director, UW-Eau Claire**

President Torres called for the Board to reconvene in open session for a work session at 5:35pm. Commissioner Bica introduced Teresa O'Halloran, UWEC's Affirmative Action Director.

Ms. O'Halloran said she oversees UWEC's search processes. She shared a video about implicit/unconscious bias. Ms. O'Halloran made several suggestions to reduce/eliminate bias.

- Use a coding system for initial reviews of applications to remove candidates names
- Be cautious of letters of recommendation as they can sometimes contain phrases that are lesser meaning of someone's qualities
- Recruit widely for a large and diverse applicant pool
- Do not make assumptions

- Ex: don't assume someone living in a warmer state wouldn't want to move to Wisconsin, don't assume a candidate with young children cannot work odd hours
- Have a conversation about highly qualified candidates, not a numerical rating scale
- Review each application carefully and without distraction
  - Keep the job description and supporting documents close when reviewing applications to remember what to judge candidates on

Ms. O'Halloran said it's uncomfortable to talk about our biases with others, but if a judgement-free conversation is held, the committee can then hold each other accountable regarding biases. It is also important to have a common understanding of the job requirements and qualifications. As both search committee and hiring authority, the Board must hold itself accountable for ensuring thorough and wide recruitment and a thorough review of all applications.

Ms. O'Halloran shared several documents including a search timeline, scoring rubric, and guide to reviewing applicants for employment. Ms. O'Halloran welcomed questions.

A Board member asked how UWEC's quality control works. Ms. O'Halloran said she reviews demographic information of candidates in addition to qualifications and if typical diversity in the applicant pool isn't met, she may take action to expand the pool, or look at candidates who may have initially been ruled out.

A Board member asked what concerns people may have with sharing demographic information. Ms. O'Halloran said it's a sensitive subject because anyone may get upset and believe they didn't get a job because of their race, gender, etc. For example, a white male may believe he didn't get a job because a woman applied, or a person of color applied.

A Board member asked about bias that could be within feedback the Search Committee receives from the community. Ms. O'Halloran said feedback can be utilized but should be taken with caution. Not every person who provides feedback will have thorough knowledge of the required qualifications, nor will they necessarily understand and try to eliminate their own biases.

A Board member asked about calling references who are not listed. Ms. O'Halloran said that is common in high-level searches, and sometimes they will assign a trusted staff member to check Google, social media, etc. prior to bringing in candidates. There have been high-profile instances of that not happening and it was problematic. Commissioner Bica said that as part of

the application process, candidates agree to off-list reference checks, but the committee will be careful to not put any candidate's current position at risk.

A Board member asked if implicit bias can inform a decision. Ms. O'Halloran said yes, that has happened, and it can impact the ability of the group to agree on candidates. Ms. O'Halloran recommends reviewing the job description and rubrics in those cases to ensure everyone is making a good decision.

A Board member asked if there is implicit bias training involved in every search at UWEC. Ms. O'Halloran said they try to do it for every search unless a department makes multiple hires in a year with the same committee.

A Board member mentioned that in some cases, bias may be preferred. For example, a lawyer may prefer bias during jury selection while another lawyer may not. How do we treat bias in real life? Ms. O'Halloran said that certain biases help get to a desired outcome, but we don't want to categorize people into categories that are irrelevant. We must weed out biases that are illegal and unhelpful for getting the best candidate.

Ms. O'Halloran welcomed any additional questions via email and left. There was 35 minutes remaining until Regular Session and President Torres invited discussion among the Board.

A Board member said the deadline is getting closer and there are only two applicants; what can the Board do to encourage applicants? Commissioner Bica shared that she has received a list from ECASD's Human Resources Office of over 120 candidates with the appropriate license who've made themselves "searchable" in WECAN. She is in the process of e-mailing each person individually and will check for newly licensed candidates weekly. A Board member asked if "read receipts" can be part of that process and Commissioner Bica agreed she can begin that.

Discussion ensued about establishing a process for accountability. There was discussion about dividing applications for review, having a second review team to consider applications that were not selected, and establishing other checks.

Discussion occurred about biases felt at the schools and prevalent themes from the Superintendent Search forums. Many staff expressed feelings that the next Superintendent should "fit in" and be from Wisconsin. Suggestions were made to recruit certain area Superintendents. Concerns were discussed about biases in the feedback provided and the Board's need to do what is in the best interest of all. Discussion about the Board being solely responsible

for the decision and it's their most important job as a Board.

President Torres suspended the session at 6:40 for a 15-minute break requesting that everyone return 6:55.

### **REGULAR MEETING - 7:00 p.m.**

President Torres called for the Board to reconvene in Open Session at 7:00pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Putnam Heights Elementary student Winnie J.

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

Lisa Hedrington spoke about Board Policy 454. She shared a personal story, thanked the ECASD for the way her family's situation was handled, and asked the Board to approve updates to the policy to protect students and ensure partner programs are committed to student safety.

Sue Bornick, Executive Director of Eau Claire Community Foundation, and Sarah French, Executive Director of Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation spoke together. They thanked the Board for considering the approval of the Solar on Eau Claire Schools project and made themselves and other resources available to answer questions during the agenda item.

### **BOARD/ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

#### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Hardebeck reviewed the calendar of events for the school board. She said the State of Wisconsin recently initiated a global education achievement certificate which districts may award as the distinction of "global scholar" on transcripts of students who meet criteria. ECASD has established several goals to work toward offering this distinction and she will update the Board of progress. ECASD has initiated another partnership with UWEC to collaborate on an application for a Smithsonian traveling exhibition called the "The Bias Inside Us." If awarded, the exhibit will come to Eau Claire in 2021.

#### **Board President's Report**

President Torres expressed solidarity with students, faculty, and leadership at UWEC in the wake of serious bias incidents. He is pleased ECASD initiated collaborative efforts with UWEC to apply for the traveling Smithsonian exhibition "The Bias Inside Us." He believes it would create multiple learning opportunities and would hopefully spread to the community at large to help ensure Eau Claire is a community that embraces inclusion.

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

#### **Student Representative Report**

Johnny Xiong was absent.

Morgan Priem gave a sports update from MHS. Orchestra's annual cookie walk fundraiser was a success. The Eau Claire FFA from North and Memorial has been conducting an adopt a family project. This year they adopted 3 families with needs. An FFA officer presented to the Cleghorn's Lions Club who decided to donate \$1,500 to be split among the 3 families.

## **OTHER REPORTS**

### **School Board Committee Reports**

Budget Development Committee will meet December 17 and continue work including developing a historical budget trend report, writing a charge for the proposed staff working group, and tax changes with the debt drop.

LEAP will not meet in December but is working behind the scenes.

Demographic Trends & Facilities Planning Committee will meet December 19.

Policy & Governance met this morning and approved changes to Policy 185 which will come to the Board on January 6.

### **Legislative Update**

Commissioner Nordin said the legislature is back in session and working on several bills. Some are related to dyslexia which will be unfunded mandates. There's also a bill related to adjustment of revenue limit for energy efficiency projects, one related to modifying the laws regarding restraint and seclusion both in procedure and reporting and four bills on increasing accountability for voucher schools which were all in Governor Evers' proposed budget but were removed.

## **CONSENT RESOLUTION AGENDA**

Motion by Tim Nordin, second by Phil Lyons to approve the following consent resolution agenda items:

- Minutes of December 2, 2019
- Minutes of Closed Session - December 2, 2019
- Financial Report - November 2019
- Gifts in the amount of \$54,137.25 for the period of November 1, 2019 through November 30, 2019
- Payment of all bills in the amount of \$4,516,425.31 and net payroll in the amount of \$5,693,775.86 for the period of November 1, 2019 through November 30, 2019.
- Human Resources – Employment Report

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

## **INDIVIDUALLY CONSIDERED RESOLUTION(S)**

### **Board Committee Assignments**

Motion by Charles Vue, second by Lori Bica to approve Board Committee Assignments as presented.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

### **Solar on Eau Claire Schools Donation**

Motion by Tim Nordin, second by Aaron Harder to approve the Solar on Eau Claire Schools Donation contingent upon donors obtaining full funding, a donor agreement, RFP for installation and maintenance, and update of Memorial roof prior to installation.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

## **ADJOURN TO COMMITTEE**

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS/ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **Chippewa Valley Montessori Charter School Committee Report**

Mr. Todd Johnson, Montessori Principal, and Ms. Rebecca Brustad, Montessori Governance Board President, were present to respond to Board member questions and discuss changes to the Montessori contract.

Mr. Johnson said there were many changes from the DPI since the contract was last revised five years ago. The DPI reviewed the contract and compared it to benchmarks set for charter schools. Mr. Johnson said the DPI recommended several language changes that didn't change the nature of the contract.

Changes in the contract include the following:

- Lottery system must give preference to students already at school and their siblings
- Qualifications to be employed in the school and the amount of time they have to complete the requirements; teachers and principal must start a program within one year now instead of two, but have more time to complete
- Request to add 4K bussing

Mr. Johnson said in order to be a Montessori School, they must have multi-age classrooms, so it just makes sense to offer transportation for 4-year old students who share a classroom with 5K.

Ms. Brustad said the Governance Board is committed to increasing diversity. Mr. Johnson shared Montessori's Diversity Plan from 2018 and said they have not yet developed this year's plan. Last year focused on trauma, language, unconscious bias, and have reached out for help from outside sources.

Commissioner Bica said she wants the Diversity Plan to be more holistic or comprehensive moving forward. She requested any additional documents that came before or after the 2018 plan such as goals and outcomes, how the goals and outcomes are assessed, results, and next action steps. She'd like to review the documents that capture the long-term trajectory since the school opened or whenever Montessori started working on diversity. Ms. Brustad asked if there's a focus or gap they aren't presenting. Commissioner Bica said some resources could come through Teaching & Learning, the District's Diversity Plan, and charter school grants and what those reviewers look for in terms of diversity. Mr. Johnson said they haven't previously tapped into the DPI's offerings but have had more extensive diversity plans such as in 2014. He said they can check with the Wisconsin Charter School Resource Center for ideas on diversity plans.

Discussion occurred about the restructuring of Montessori's Diversity Committee and other committees, which has delayed the creation of the 2019-2020 Diversity Plan. Ms. Brustad said a task force has proposed Montessori embed diversity work into their Identity Committee as well as develop a tactic or focus for the Mr. Johnson to embed diversity in his work. She said they have a liaison for the Governance Board and an internal metacognition group to ensure they are connecting all the dots to increase diversity in the school. The Governance Board has approved the structure of the new committee but hasn't finalized the committee members. President Torres said the presentation of a diversity plan continues to be an expectation based on the contract.

President Torres noted that Item 11 of the contract gives Montessori the autonomy to have their own calendar. Mr. Johnson said the DPI says charter schools should have that ability, but they want to be efficient with bussing and food service and therefore haven't strayed from the District's calendar. Discussion ensued that approving the language would cause a major disruption to the District's calendar if Montessori ever chose to utilize the ability. Mr. Johnson said Montessori has utilized their autonomy in non-disruptive ways, such as offering different professional development on PD

days. Ms. Brustad said they want to be good partners and do not wish to stray from the District's calendar.

President Torres said Page 3 Section F gives Montessori the ability to determine their class sizes which is inconsistent with the rest of the District. Mr. Johnson said the contract also refers to staffing and Montessori cannot be staffed differently than any other elementary school. Their class sizes might look different depending on how they utilize staff, but they do not receive additional staff or determine their staff size.

President Torres questioned allowing teachers four years to obtain Montessori certification, rather than two years. Mr. Johnson said it's very difficult to hire teachers who are Montessori trained, but with a grant they are building a "bank" of teachers in the District who are Montessori certified. There is a shortage of Montessori trained teachers nation-wide and the program he used to recommend teachers go through no longer exists. A new program in River Falls has opened, but as it's a Master's program they wished to give teachers four years to complete. President Torres asked to what extent the Montessori program is viable if there are not enough trained teachers. Mr. Johnson said they work to bring in teachers and help them get through the training.

President Torres said he doesn't think the District can afford 4K bussing. Students who need transportation should attend Prairie Ridge as that's what the District can afford and Montessori as a community-site should recruit in its neighborhood community. If the District offered bussing, they would need to offer it for all other community sites. Mr. Johnson said he considers Montessori's 4K the same as all the other schools in ECASD just like Prairie Ridge. Discussion occurred about whether Montessori's 4K has historically been considered an ECASD school or a community site. It was stated that Prairie Ridge is the ECASD's only 4K site. Mr. Johnson said Montessori is part of the ECASD, and 4K is a pillar of the Montessori program with multi-age classrooms; it's his duty to ask, but he recognizes budget limitations and will move on if bussing cannot be funded.

Discussion ensued about destination schools and programs requiring additional bus costs, such as Dual Immersion. Discussion occurred regarding charter school priorities. It was stated that a charter school replacing a neighborhood school must choose to give priority to the neighborhood or be open to all, and the choice is final. Montessori chose to be open to all when it opened and therefore cannot give priority to the neighborhood.

President Torres said the Board will have an attorney review the contract,



share any proposed changes with the Montessori Governance Board, and hope to be ready to discuss again on January 6.

### **Discussion and Possible First Reading of Proposed Changes to Policy 454 - Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect/Trafficking**

A Board member read the language changes to the policy. There were no questions about the proposed language. The policy will be placed on the January 6 Consent Resolution Agenda.

### **12.3 Discussion and Possible First Reading of Proposed Changes to Policy 331 - Charter School Guidelines**

A Board member read the language changes to the policy.

A Board Member asked what was meant by a fully formed and coherent plan in line #8. President Torres explained when a charter school initiative comes from outside the District, the proposal needs to be a full proposal with background, strategies, and supporting data before the Board will consider. Discussion ensued about how to determine a proposal is sufficient and that the intent is to avoid situations where the Board or District is asked to complete a project. It was agreed that the policy should be accompanied by an Administrative Rule defining the process to propose a charter school.

The policy will be placed on the January 6 Consent Resolution Agenda.

### **Discussion and Possible First Reading of Proposed Changes to Policy 830 - Use of School Facilities**

A Board member read the language changes to the policy. President Torres said a suggestion was received from an attorney late today that it may be better to be generic about the event type to include any large events requiring security by police officers. The Board agreed the policy would return to Policy & Governance for those changes.

### **Discussion and Possible First Reading of Proposed Changes to Policy 370 - Extracurricular Activities**

Board members took turns reading the proposed policy changes.

It was noted that in the last sentence, the word "of" was missing and would be corrected to "monitoring *of* student data."

A Board member questioned the background checks including independent contractors and if the District has the wherewithal to impose a background check on those persons. The idea is that if a person has access to minor students, they must comply with the background check for the safety of students. It gives the District the authority to not contract with a non-profit

that chooses not to comply with conducting background checks. It was also stated the District would request evidence of background check completion.

The policy will be placed on the January 6 Consent Resolution Agenda.

**REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

No requests were made.

**ADJOURN**

Motion by Aaron Harder, second by Charles Vue to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried

Yes: Lori Bica, Aaron Harder, Phil Lyons, Eric D Torres, Charles Vue, Tim Nordin

Meeting adjourned at 8:34pm.