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December 28, 1992
9:30 a.m.

LEADERSHIP TEAM
MEETING

Commissioners'
Conference Room

Chair Ellie Dumdi presided with Marie Frazier, Steve Cornacchia and Jack Roberts, present. Jerry Rust submitted written comments (see material on file).

Also present were Jim Johnson, County Administrator; Bill Van Vactor, County Counsel; Jim Gangle, Assessor; Douglass Harclerod, District Attorney; Steve Carmichael, Director, Youth Services; Rob Rockstroh, Director, Health and Human Services; Chuck Forster, Director, SWPIC; John Goodson, Director, Public Works; Arlene Marshall, Management Services Supervisor; David Suchart, Performance Auditor; Robert McManus, Sheriff; Dave Wilde, Commissioner Aide to Jerry Rust. George Russell, Human Resource and Management Services Director, submitted written comments (see material on file). Beth McAllister, Recording Secretary.

I. DOES LANE COUNTY NEED THE POSITION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR?

Steve Cornacchia stated that there are a variety of approaches to administration around the state and he cited the example of Douglas County, which has three commissioners and no County Administrator. Cornacchia suggested that one possible approach might be to divide the duties of County Administrator between Bill Van Vactor and Arlene Marshall. Recalling his experience of six years, Cornacchia commented that it has been valuable to have a County Administrator and that he would be hesitant to eliminate the position unless there was a firm consensus on the division of duties. Cornacchia stated he was not advocating elimination of the position.

Marie Frazier opined that the County could function without a County Administrator, but the success of that change would depend upon the model drawn up as an alternative. Frazier expressed concern for the timing of this decision, noting that this may not be the opportune moment to adopt a different process. Frazier also said she wants the opinions of the department heads before she makes a final decision.

John Goodson spoke in favor of having a County Administrator, because productivity will be adversely affected if the position is eliminated.

Chuck Forster stated that there is a need for a County Administrator and that the leadership team has to determine the kind of role that person will assume. Forster stated that the County Administrator position has been particularly useful to him.

Rob Rockstroh said the County needs the County Administrator position. Citing his experience with county governments which did not have an administrator, he is in favor of maintaining the status quo. Rockstroh expressed deep reservations about an embarking on a search for a replacement during the budget setting process, noting that the position sets the tone and leadership role of County management.

Steve Carmichael agreed with Rockstroh and added that in his experience in working in two other counties where there was no County Administrator, it was much more difficult and there was no focal point to provide continuity of policy. Carmichael emphasized that this position should emphasize leadership over facilitation.

Doug Harclerod opined that the Commissioners need an administrator who reports to them on the implementation of policy issues and is capable of building consensus.

Jim Gangle agreed with the previous speakers' comments. Gangle expressed a need for a leader who can serve as a catalyst for providing direction in County policy matters.

Bill Hoyt, Director Regional Information System, concurred with the previous speakers.

Bill Van Vactor concurred with the previous speakers. Van Vactor added that the administrator must coordinate the activities of the elected departments, set direction of the administrative department, support the Board's administrative and legislative duties as mandated by state law and the Lane County Charter and make the necessary personnel decisions and budget recommendations. In analyzing what sort of person is required for the job, Van Vactor advocating hiring someone similar to Johnson.

Jim Johnson stated he had nothing to add beyond what the department directors have advocated, other than the importance of having an administrator whose temperament matches the Board.

Jack Roberts noted that the Douglas County Board of Commissioners was elected partially on the basis of their administrative skills, and thus operate under a different set of assumptions. Roberts stated that modeling Lane County's system after Douglas County would be cumbersome and difficult. Roberts voiced support for continuance of Lane County's current system.

Bob McManus concurred with the previous speakers. McManus felt that a generalist with good administrative skills would best serve the County's needs.

Ellie Dumdi does not want to see a repeat of the problems facing Lane County in the 70's when there was no County Administrator. Dumdi emphasized the importance of having an interim administrator who does not desire to occupy the position on a permanent basis.

Arlene Marshall emphasized the need for a strong leader in the County Administrator position, especially in light of the current budget predictions.

David Suchart stated the need to make an honest assessment of what is desired for this position and then stick with that choice once the new administrator is hired.

Dumdi voiced her agreement with written comments submitted by Rust (see material on file) on avoiding mistakes made in the past; adding that a nationwide search for candidates should be undertaken. Dumdi stated that the answer to question I. as expressed by the attendees was affirmative.

II. WITH AN AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER TO I., WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE WE NEED IN AN ADMINISTRATOR?

McManus agreed with the written comments of Russell (see material on file) adding the trait of "generalist."

Roberts agreed with Van Vactor's statement that the best candidate would be someone like Johnson, although it should not preclude candidates with different personalities and methods. Regarding job duties, Roberts opined that duties should remain pretty much as they are now.

Johnson affirmed Roberts's sentiments. Johnson stated that there were many managers in the job market who could do as well as, or better than, himself. Johnson noted that this was an opportunity to bring in a manager with a fresh perspective. He also recommended developing a profile for the most desirable candidate before beginning the recruiting process.

Hoyt highlighted Johnson's characteristic of coordinating the work of the diverse departments as very valuable. Hoyt said that it was important that the Board decide how much authority they wanted the County Administrator to have.

Gangle said that hiring an individual with a high degree of leadership skills versus managerial skills was essential. Gangle added that an individual who had dealt with the same kind of financial issues facing the County would be most valuable.

Hacleroad emphasized that the selected candidate must possess a strong ability to work with diverse groups with competing interests.

Carmichael warned against defining the profile for this position so that a wide range of candidates will not apply. Carmichael expressed the wish that the Board had allowed Johnson to be more challenging of the Board.

Rockstroh stressed that a balance of traits was the important issue and that an administrator must have good common sense. Rockstroh added that the newly-hired administrator should be dismissed immediately if there is not an immediate fit in style and substance.

Forster emphasized that relationships make organizations work and agreed with Hacleroad that the most important attribute should be an ability to maintain good relationships within the organization.

Goodson affirmed the comments of the previous speakers and said the Board should provide greater authority to the administrator.

Frazier expressed agreement with Rockstroh's comments on common sense and risk taking and stated that she will be looking for a motivator with a very strong fiscal background who can make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions.

Cornacchia stated that in Lane County, the County Administrator is not a CEO. Continuing, Cornacchia said there are examples in the state and locally of administrators who have tremendous amounts of authority, but may not be working in the best interests of the people. Cornacchia took to task bureaucracies which are not responsive to the public's interest. Cornacchia stated he does not agree that the Commissioners should set policy only, because he cannot set policy in a vacuum. Cornacchia stated that the only way to know what was going on was to be involved in administration. Cornacchia asked for a definition of authority, as it relates to the County Administrator. Cornacchia stated he was very satisfied and comfortable with current definition of the position. On the subject of change, Cornacchia declared that the salaries of the Commissioners should be eliminated, if all they will do is sit in an office and talk, but that the people of Lane County are getting a good deal for what they currently pay the Commissioners. Cornacchia stated that it was really important that everyone has a clear understanding of what the job entails. Cornacchia declared that he will never turn the reins of government over to non-elected officials. During the period of an interim administrator, Cornacchia stated the County should arrive at a set of expectations for the incoming candidates.

Roberts agreed with Cornacchia that a clear set of expectations should be drawn up.

Dumdi agreed that a clone of Johnson was not desirable, adding that a "risk-taker" should be sought for the position.

Marshall cited a need for an honest administrator like Johnson who is capable of working with diverse groups. Marshall echoed sentiments about hiring a "risk-taker."

Suchart stated that qualities he would be looking for in a candidate would be a vivid imagination, flexibility and high ethical standards.

III. WHAT TO DO IN THE INTERIM (PRIOR TO FINAL SELECTION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR)?

Harcleroad stated an interim administrator will have to begin work on assembling the budget, therefore an individual should be chosen who does not have a personal stake in the process. Harcleroad suggested Bill Van Vactor, County Counsel, as a possible choice.

Gangle agreed that the interim administrator should not be a candidate. Gangle suggested that some of duties may be distributed to the department heads during the interim period.

Hoyt stated that Van Vactor would be a good choice as interim director and that Margo Drivas, Director, Finance Operations should provide Van Vactor with help on the budget.

Van Vactor stated that since the County is in the budget process, there is very little time for a new administrator hired from outside the organization to become acclimated. Van Vactor said he is willing to serve as an interim administrator and has no interest in taking a permanent position. Regarding his duration in that position, Van Vactor stated that the County Counsel office could accommodate a 90-day period, but that a lengthier time may possibly require putting some cases out on contract. Cornacchia asked Van Vactor if he felt the current County Counsel relationship with the Board can be maintained while he is acting as interim administrator. In reply, Van Vactor stated that although the jobs are fundamentally different, he hoped that his personal working relationship with the Board would not change. Van Vactor added that Margo Drivas is also qualified to act as interim County Administrator.

Johnson agreed that the acting administrator should not be a candidate for the job. Johnson strongly recommended Van Vactor, stating he was the only person who was qualified that could do the job. Johnson said it was important that the Leadership Team meet more often and that more resources should be provided for Van Vactor. Johnson suggested assigning Marshall or borrowing staff to help Van Vactor during the interim period.

Roberts opined that there are several people in the organization who could do the job, although he had not interviewed any possible candidates. Roberts stated Drivas would make an excellent interim administrator, but that her focus should remain on the budget process. Roberts expressed reservations about utilizing a department director during the budget process, although he felt there were several good candidates.

McManus stated that Van Vactor was his first choice as interim administrator. McManus cautioned about the loss of efficiency in the affected department, no matter who was chosen.

Dumdi agreed with previous comments precluding an interim administrator from applying for a permanent position. On Van Vactor's qualifications as interim administrator, Dumdi said he was the best candidate.

Cornacchia stated he would be very comfortable with Van Vactor in the interim position and that he has a high level of trust for Van Vactor.

Frazier agreed that Drivas would be a likely interim candidate if she is not applying for the job. Frazier added that, if Drivas is applying, Van Vactor would be the best choice.

Goodson stated that he favored Van Vactor for the interim position.

Forster agreed with Goodson.

Rockstroh agreed that Van Vactor would be the best candidate, but cautioned that Margo Drivas is best equipped to handle the technical details of preparing the budget.

Carmichael stated that Van Vactor would be a great choice for the position.

On the subject of Johnson's contract status, Johnson noted that he has requested a release from his 60 day notification, thus allowing him to vacate the position on January 15. Roberts asked if Johnson would be available in his new position to provide limited assistance to the County on problems or questions that may arise. Johnson replied affirmatively.

Regarding a salary change to accommodate Van Vactor's and/or Teresa Wilson's new duties, Cornacchia asked what procedures would be followed. Johnson replied that to his knowledge a five percent increase was in order. Queried on his position of a salary increase, Van Vactor replied he had no interest in an increase, stating that, in view of the deficit, it would be inappropriate. In regard to Wilson's salary, Van Vactor stated that under the rules outlined by Lane Manual, a person designated as acting County Counsel is entitled to a five percent salary increase.

Johnson asked for a consensus on his proposal to vacate the position by January 15. Dumdi, Cornacchia, Roberts and Frazier agreed to his request.

IV. HOW DO WE GO ABOUT SELECTING A PERMANENT ADMINISTRATOR?

Cornacchia suggested that discussion of this question be postponed until next week, in view of the request for more a detailed discussion of budget issues.

The Leadership Team agreed to meet January 7 at 9:00 a.m. The agenda will be item IV. -- the selection process.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.


Beth McAllister
Recording Secretary