

**VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF
January 7, 2021**

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, and Moment of Reflection
The Special Meeting of the Ventura County Board of Education, Agenda 21-01, was called to order by Michael Teasdale, Board President, at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 7, 2021, via ZOOM. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Mr. Teasdale and followed by a moment of reflection.

Roll Call

Trustees Present:

Mike Teasdale, Area 2

Rachel Ulrich, Area 1

Dr. Mark Lisagor, Area 3

Rob Collins, Area 4

Dr. Ramon Flores, Area 5

VCOE Personnel Present:

Dr. Cesar Morales, Deputy Superintendent, Student Services

Dr. Antonio Castro, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services

Misty Key, Associate Superintendent, Fiscal & Administrative Services

Emily Mostovoy-Luna, Assistant Superintendent, SELPA

Dr. Julie Judd, Executive Director, Technology Services

Nancy Akkerman, Senior Executive Assistant

3. Approval of Agenda
Mr. Collins moved that agenda be approved. Dr. Lisagor seconded the motion, and the motion carried upon a unanimous vote (5:0).

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

President Teasdale announced the procedure for accepting Public Comments via electronic meetings. Mr. Teasdale reported that the following members of the public submitted written comments prior to the meeting. These comments will be added to the electronic record of the meeting, found on BoardDocs.

Heidi Martinez, Jackie Mendez, Mary Campos, Vanessa Gonzalez, Tracey Hendrick, Adam Underberger, Nathan Dybvig, Susan Levi, Kayla Wilde, Rebecca Roberts, Lorraine Caron, Kathy Jonokuchi, Jennifer Wilson, Tasha Salas, Leslie Gould, Maria Gutierrez, Kathie Levin, Kaley Haney, Victoria Murphy, Laura Carasco, Julie Song, Jim Gaynor, Carolyn Masson, Melissa O'Hara-Shelley, Sandra Waterbury Katherine Double, Jackie Mountain, Anglique Gonzalez, Kelli Zaehring, Nicole Carr, Bridget Driscoll, Kaylah Yi, Melisande Kinser, Taylor McNellis, Julia Najera-Roque, Sarah Harney, Saraswathi Nambi, Laura Wilson, Megan Muscarella,

Isabel Crowningshield, Laura Iglesias-Para, John Paul Abraham, Jill McGranahan, Alicia Reyes, Cindy Van Wagner, Lisa Neidenfuhr, Jackie Mendez, Aubrey Alexander, Victoria Palmer. Lee Young,

The following members of the public addressed the Board:

Cathy Harris for Jeff Prada, Lauren Garcia, Mike Cogan, Vanessa, Sandy Waterbury, Dana Methane, Paraeducator; Local 4434 Public Speaker, Erik Gutiespi; Julie Song, John Paul Abraham, Stephanie Hodge, Nicole Carr, Kathi Sasse, Tanya Wright

President Teasdale thanked the public for the comments and noted that the Board may not discuss, deliberate, or take action on items that are not on the agenda.

C. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION/ACTION

1. Board Subcommittee Report on Process to be Used to Appoint a County Superintendent of Schools

On December 14, 2020, Stan Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools since 2008, announced his retirement effective February 2, 2021. Per Education Code 1042(e), the County Board may fill by appointment any vacancy that occurs during the term of office of the County Superintendent of Schools. Board President Teasdale and Dr. Lisagor serve on a Board Subcommittee to determine the process to be used to appoint a County Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Lisagor reviewed the three options available for appointing a County Superintendent of Schools.

- The Board may appoint someone immediately or with minimal process or research.
- The Board may not appoint anyone, but instead have the Deputy Superintendent who has been delegated the responsibility to carry out the duties of the office until the next election continue.
- The Board may use an outside professional search firm to conduct a search for a County Superintendent to serve until the next general election. The Board could also conduct a similar search done by VCOE. VCOE has done this for school districts in the past; but VCOE staff is already carrying a huge workload in dealing with the pandemic.

The Board Subcommittee strongly recommends the third option.

Ms. Ulrich thanked the Board Subcommittee for their efforts. She added that she agrees that the third option is the correct choice. This is a critical time with many issues ahead and it is prudent to perform due diligence to find the best leader for VCOE. Whoever is appointed will have a leg up in the coming election. The third option allows the community and teachers to have the most input.

Ms. Ulrich moved the Board use an outside professional search firm to conduct a search for a County Superintendent to serve until the next general election. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Collins stated that outside firms are expensive and expressed his belief that it is better to hire from within. Mr. Mantooth's prior position as Associate Superintendent gave him excellent training for the position. There are excellent staff within VCOE and he would ask that Mr. Mantooth recommend someone.

Dr. Lisagor stated that the Board should show the utmost transparency and fairness in this process. There have been instances where the outgoing County Superintendent retires prior to the end of the term and appoints his successor. A person who applies for the position should have the right to be evaluated along with other candidates. There is no real good answer.

Ms. Ulrich expressed that teacher, community and parental input are very important. VCOE staff is already overburdened with work and to add a search on top of their work would be unfair. Alternative opinions and input are important as well. For those reasons, she supports the use of a professional search.

Dr. Flores noted that he has talked to community members who shared concerns. Under normal conditions, he would absolutely agree with option three, but these are not normal times - these are times of COVID. Under COVID, academic lack is occurring for students. Strong leadership is needed and it is needed now. He is also a fan for promoting from within. Growing your successor is a hallmark of a good agency. There may be great candidates outside of VCOE, but we need leadership that truly understands our communities and our schools. These are not normal times and this is not a good time for a learning curve to take place.

Ms. Ulrich noted that appointing from within does not allow for input from stakeholders. She doesn't feel making this appointment without input from stakeholders is inappropriate. She understands the issues at stake. The excellent staff in place now can continue to lead VCOE while the Board goes through the process. She further encouraged staff to apply. She is confident of their abilities during the transition.

President Teasdale noted that this is an elected role and the Board needs to have the community involved in the selection process. The selected person will serve for approximately 18 months. That is a long time without input from the community. Having transparent discussions within the community is very important. He urged anyone within the organization to apply. He urged the Board to accept the third option.

Dr. Lisagor seconded the motion to use an outside professional search firm to conduct a search for a County Superintendent.

Mr. Collins indicated that he does not support this motion. Simi Valley Unified used a search firm and had to fire their selected candidate after two months. In this role, the Board cannot fire a candidate. Whoever the Board appoints will have an advantage when they run for election. If the selected person is a lemon, this Board has given a lemon a leg up in the subsequent election.

Dr. Flores noted that the County Superintendent is elected and reports to the community. A local district superintendent is hired and fired by the Board. That is not the case with a County Superintendent.

Dr. Lisagor noted that the proposed search firm's track record is excellent and in most cases, the successful candidate remains in that position for long periods of time.

President Teasdale stated that he feels it is important to go through the process. Certainly, a candidate who is currently in house would have a leg up due to their familiarity with the office.

President Teasdale called for the vote on the motion to use an outside professional search firm to conduct a search for a County Superintendent to serve until the next general election. The motion passed upon a 4:1 vote, with Dr. Flores, Ms. Ulrich, Dr. Lisagor and Mr. Teasdale voting aye, and Trustee Collins voting nay.

Dr. Lisagor moved the Board meeting be extended to 4:00 p.m. Dr. Flores seconded the motion, and the motion passed upon a unanimous roll call vote (5:0).

President Teasdale reviewed the roll of the Board in the search process: to find the best candidate with transparency and community input while maintaining confidentiality of the applicants as much as possible.

The first step would be a full Board meeting to identify characteristics desired, identify strengths and challenges, determine process to gather community/staff input, develop a job description, and finalize the search timeline. With this information, the search firm would begin gathering community and staff input, develop a position description, advertise, recruit and begin reference checks with the intention of determining possible candidates. The Board Subcommittee would then work with the search firm to develop a list of 5-6 identified candidates. This work would be done by the Sub Committee in Closed Session in order to preserve the confidentiality of the candidates. The search firm would also review community input with the full Board in Open Session. Interviews, and selection would occur in open session and the community would be involved.

Dr. Flores asked how community input would be gathered? There need to be representatives from stakeholders countywide and during the time of pandemic focus groups can be more problematic. The consultants are willing to gather input via zoom or individually. The community could also take part in the interviews.

Dr. Lisagor explained that the Board subcommittee contacted people at CCBE and elsewhere for guidance and recommendations on search firms. Mr. Mantooth provided names of three search firms as well. The Subcommittee contacted three search firms who provided a detailed proposal and interviews were held with each firm.

The Subcommittee is recommending the services of Leadership Associates which has done over 500 searches. The Leadership Associates team is composed of four people. Leadership Associates has a good understanding of County Boards and Superintendents, and the team leader is a retired COE Superintendent who has been a mentor and trainer of new Superintendents all over the state. One of the Leadership Associates team members is an Executive Assistant. This would take a tremendous amount of work off our support staff – Ms. Akkerman.

Leadership Associates is very well known and has completed 70% of searches done in California. They have a massive network of applicants. They will review references and do the legwork. Their pride is their track record. They don't want to place people who won't last in the position. The selection would likely be finalized by April. The next step in the process would be for Leadership Associates to participate with the Board in the meeting on January 25th.

Ms. Ulrich thanked the subcommittee for their work.

Dr. Flores asked for a shortened timeline, especially due to the current situation with the pandemic. Dr. Lisagor noted that there is a chance to move forward more quickly although it will likely mean additional special board meetings. He reminded the Board that current VCOE leadership will do an excellent job.

President Teasdale said that the timeline can be discussed more thoroughly with the Board at their meeting with the search firm.

Dr. Flores noted that with the departure of Mr. Mantooth, staff will be taking on additional duties at a time when they are already very busy due to the pandemic.

Mr. Collins thanked the Subcommittee for their work and indicated his respectful disagreement with this process. He noted that asking a candidate to serve for 18 months and then run for election will limit the number of candidates. He also noted the proposed cost is \$28,000. Ms. Key reported that the Office is currently in deficit spending. This expenditure will be included in the 2nd budget revision.

Dr. Lisagor noted that there will be no Superintendent salary for 2-3 months while the position is taking place.

Ms. Ulrich expressed her support based on the importance of community input.

President Teasdale noted that this is one of the most important decisions the Board will make. Even an internal candidate will benefit from going through this process. The Board needs to ensure that it gets the best candidate while maintaining the process. If the Board does go through the process, it will be a service to anyone within the organization that chooses to apply.

Ms. Ulrich moved the Board approve the contract for County Superintendent search services with Leadership Associates. Dr. Flores seconded the motion, and the motion passed upon a 4:1 vote, with Dr. Flores, Ms. Ulrich, Dr. Lisagor and Mr. Teasdale voting aye, and Trustee Collins voting nay.

D. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

1. Dr. Lisagor expressed his respect for Mr. Collins' point of view. Dr. Lisagor also reminded the Board that we are unable to address issues that are not on the agenda; however, he requested an agenda item on this Board's role in shared governance in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of staff, parents and students.
2. Ms. Ulrich thanked the Subcommittee for their work. She expressed that the Board is committed to making sure this process is expedited as quickly and appropriately as possible.
3. Mr. Collins agreed with the concerns of staff. He also asked if Board Trustees will receive an early vaccine as educators.
4. Dr. Flores noted that he takes his oath of office very seriously. The words to defend the constitution against all enemies both foreign and domestic have great meaning.
5. President Teasdale thanked everyone for participating in this special meeting. He was touched by the public comments and he will research the requested agenda item.

President Teasdale also made note of the frightening aspect of people attacking the Capitol and how it highlights how important education is. The ability to think critically, to determine what is true; education is the barrier against fascism and autocrats and the support for democracy. Educators must create good citizens who can think critically.

E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Process to Appoint a County Superintendent of Schools – Ongoing
2. Charter School Programmatic Audit and Renewals:
Ventura Charter School – February / March, 2021

3. Charter School Annual Programmatic Audits:
River Oaks Academy – January 25, 2021
Bridges Charter School – March 15, 2021
MATES – April 26, 2021
Vista Real Charter High School – May 24, 2021
4. Board's role in shared governance in regards to re-opening schools.

F. FUTURE MEETINGS

Date: Monday, January 25, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, February 22, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

Date: Monday, March 15, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: ZOOM or 5100 Adolfo Road, Board Room, Camarillo
Purpose: Regular Meeting of the Board

G. ADJOURNMENT

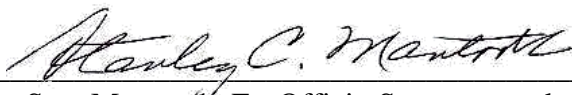
Mr. Teasdale adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

January 25, 2021
Date



Michael Teasdale, Board President

January 25, 2021
Date



Stan Mantooth, Ex-Officio Secretary and
Executive Officer of the Board

*Board meetings are recorded by audio tape pursuant to Government Code Section 54953.5(b).
Copies of these audio tapes are available by request to this office at (805) 383-1900.*