

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
- OPEN SESSION -
OF THE SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY
HELD ON DECEMBER 12, 2017

The members of the Springfield Housing Authority met in Open Session at the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress St., Springfield, Massachusetts at 1:40 PM on December 12, 2017.

A copy of the Notice of Meeting, pursuant to Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Certificate as to Service of the Notice, was ordered spread upon the minutes of the meeting and filed for records.

NOTICE OF MEETING

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 23B of Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts Laws, as amended, that a special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Springfield Housing Authority will be held at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, December 12, 2017 in the Conference Room of the Springfield Housing Authority at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

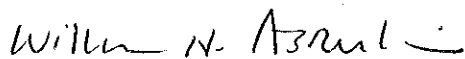
/s/William H. Abrashkin, Executive Director

December 7, 2017

CERTIFICATE AS TO SERVICE OF THE NOTICE OF MEETING

I, William H. Abrashkin, the duly appointed and qualified Secretary of the Springfield Housing Authority, do hereby certify that on December 7, 2017 I filed in the manner provided by Section 23B, Chapter 39 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, with the Clerk of the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, a Notice of Meeting of which the foregoing is a true and correct copy.

Attest:



William H. Abrashkin/Executive Director/
Secretary to the Board

Chairman Thomas called the meeting to order at 1:40 PM, and those present upon roll call were as follows:

PRESENT

Thomas Labonte
Jessica Quinonez (arrived at 1:50 pm)
Angela Robles
Willie Thomas
Raymond Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Priscilla Chesky, Lyon & Fitzpatrick
Leo Dauwer, Dauwer & Associates (arrived at 1:59 pm)
Fidan Gousseynoff
Kathy Hardy
John Healy
Richard Kobayashi, Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management,
UMass Boston (arrived at 1:59 pm)

Jay MacRitchie, Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management, UMass Boston (arrived at 1:59 pm).

Chairman Thomas thanked all the Commissioners for their input into creating a list of questions for the consultants. The Board briefly reviewed and revised the list by combining, rephrasing, eliminating and editing some questions. It was decided that the Chairman will be asking all the questions from the list. Attorney Chesky emphasized the importance that both candidates are asked same questions unless any follow-up questions arise in the course of interviews.

In response to Chairman Thomas's question John Healy confirmed that the SHA met all the requirements for procurement. He explained that there are no special procurement terms to hire a consultant for executive director search so the agency only had to follow the requirements of Chapter 30 [of the Massachusetts General Laws]. Chairman Thomas inquired if the Board would be rating each answer of the candidates or would only have general discussion after the interview. Mr. Healy and Attorney Chesky explained that since the scoring system was not specified in the proposal, no rating is allowed and the Commissioners will have to enter into a general discussion, express their opinion on why they prefer one candidate over another and take a vote.

Commissioner Warren suggested starting the interviews by asking the candidates to provide brief information about their background and experience in executive recruitment.

Commissioner Quinonez entered the Conference Room at 1:50 pm. Chairman Thomas updated Ms. Quinonez on what has been discussed and how the list of questions has been amended.

John Healy and Priscilla Chesky left the Conference Room at 1:57 pm.

Leo Dauwer entered the Conference Room at 1:59 pm. Chairman Thomas introduced the Board members. John Healy and Priscilla Chesky returned to the Conference Room at 2:01 pm.

Answering the 1st question Mr. Dauwer provided brief information about himself and his experience. He indicated that he grew up in a project in Boston (one of the 1st ones in the United States), then worked for many years as a high school teacher, then a principal and retired as a superintendent in Plymouth. After his retirement he started writing manuals and handbooks for commissioners for New Jersey, Massachusetts and other states in New England and then started his career as a consultant.

Mr. Dauwer continued by providing information about his experience in conducting local, regional and national executive director searches. He indicated that he has done hundreds of searches all around the country (including as far as in Washington, California, and most recently, in Utah) and assisted many housing authorities in New England so he personally knows most of local HA directors. Mr. Dauwer explained that many candidates come to interviews prepared as they had been asked the same questions at many other interviews they had attended and it is important to distinguish good candidates who might be doing worse at interviews but have a good potential.

Answering next question Mr. Dauwer provided information about his knowledge of DHCD and HUD guidelines for local housing authority hiring of executive director. He assured the Board that if he is hired he will make sure the

agency meets all the requirements that DHCD has put in place, starting from posting of the classified ads, preparing reports, ensuring residents' involvement, and working on the salary schedule. He commented that Massachusetts is the only state that has such a controlling bureaucratic structure with regards to hiring executive directors however the Board still has its legal right to stand up to them.

In response to the question about how Mr. Dauwer intends to get a good picture of the needs and priorities of the SHA and what are the qualities the Board is looking for in a new executive director, he emphasized the importance of amending the job description in order to reflect a demand for new skills like entrepreneurial skills, ability to demonstrate reasonable risk taking, knowledge of programs like RAD as well as an ability to manage a big agency with state and federal programs. Mr. Dauwer stated that he would be glad to help with updating the job description and he has written a lot of curriculum for agencies like PHADA and NAHRO.

Answering next question Mr. Dauwer stated that he does not recommend using a screening committee in the process of selecting candidates. He indicated that, if hired, he will be doing all the screenings, reviewing all the resumes, making a spreadsheet where information about candidates' educational and professional background, years of experience in supervision will be entered and each candidate will be ranked as qualified, somewhat qualified, or not qualified. The Board will know the candidates before they come for final interviews. After that, the interviews will be conducted and a second screening will take place. Mr. Dauwer stated he will be sending out a proof of resume letter request to each candidate, reviewing their certificates, letters of references and conducting cross-referencing, including checking personal contacts. The Board members will have access to each application and resume and if they choose to conduct interviews themselves, Mr. Dauwer will provide a list of questions and will be available to assist with the interviews. He stated that even though he is ready to provide all kinds of assistance he will not be advising to the Board what candidate(s) shall be chosen.

The next question was about an assessment the consultant would undertake on applicants and what is the product the board will receive to help them evaluate prospects, and Chairman Thomas commented that Mr. Dauwer has already answered this question.

Mr. Dauwer continued by answering the question about what in his opinion is the best way to inform potential prospective candidates about the prospective job. He explained that he will be providing brief information about the agency in the invitation letters he will be mailing out, referring to the web-site, sending out some brochures and will be ready to answer whatever questions candidates might have.

In response to the question on how to find candidates who may not be actively looking, Mr. Dauwer stated that he has an extensive list of professionals who might be interested in working in Massachusetts even though due to DHCD regulations there are might not be too many people. He assured that he won't be "stealing" any good employees from other Housing Authorities.

Answering the next question about his involvement in a recruitment effort that went off the rails, Mr. Dauwer stated that he has conducted two or three

searches that ended up with not hiring anybody but this usually happens with small housing authorities in distant places and, to his opinion, it should not happen with an agency like Springfield Housing Authority. He told that one of the searches in upstate New York ended up with hiring new director who quit soon. He assured that if the recruitment effort he has been involved in goes off the rails due to his fault, he will conduct another search and will not charge for his services. If someone gets hired and decides to quit, he will conduct another search and will charge only 50%.

The next question was "if for some reason candidates reverse themselves will you continue until appointment of Executive Director?" Chairman Thomas stated that Mr. Dauwer has already answered this question and Mr. Dauwer confirmed he would gladly help and will work with the legal counsel.

Answering the question about political influence in the ED selection process Leo Dauwer indicated that usually if there is any political pressure, it is on the Commissioners and he rarely has to deal with it. If somebody asks Mr. Dauwer to give preference to a particular candidate, that request will not affect his job and he will ask the requestor to put his request in writing to protocol it and if the requestor fails to do it, the Board will be informed.

In conclusion, Mr. Dauwer explained why he thinks the Board should contract his services for the executive director search. He assured the Board that thanks to his extensive experience and knowledge he will be providing the best quality services. He also stated that he knows a little bit about the history of the Springfield Housing Authority, has been observing the progress the agency has achieved in recent years, knows what is the potential of a public housing agency like SHA and understands what challenges a big city like Springfield has to face.

Commissioner Warren commented that the Springfield Housing Authority has been in a pretty good shape with a great Board and a great team and the goal is to get the best executive director possible. He emphasized the importance of looking not for a bureaucrat but for a good leader, who is able to ensure stability. Mr. Dauwer agreed that apart from having good qualifications the best candidate will be the one who will be respectful to the staff and will set the right tone for the organization.

The Board thanked Leo Dauwer for his time. Mr. Dauwer left the Conference Room at 2:52 pm.

Richard Kobayashi & Jay MacRitchie entered the Conference Room at 2:55 pm.

Richard Kobayashi explained that the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management was established in 2008 by the legislature as a vehicle to provide consulting services to local housing authorities, municipalities and state agencies. In 2009 it was decided that one of the practice areas will be executive recruitment, and since that time the Center has done almost 60 recruitments in Massachusetts, mostly for Municipalities, as well as for Pension systems, the Mass State Fire Academy, the City of Cambridge. In 2011 the Center assisted Medford Housing Authority to hire a new director and conducted another search in 2017 after he retired. The Center is currently working with the Falls River Housing Authority to hire its new Executive Director.

Jay MacRitchie told that he joined the Center at Umass six months ago and he has some experience in the housing industry as he was the Executive Director of the Quincy Housing Authority for 8 years and during his tenure the QHA was able to close the audit findings and reduce vacancies. He also served as interim executive director for the Medford Housing Authority in 2017 while Umass was searching for its new director. Mr. MacRitchie stated he has an extensive experience in dealing with DHCD and HUD.

In response to Chairman Thomas's question regarding the Center's experience conducting local, regional and national executive director searches, its pros and cons, Mr. Kobayashi indicated that in the current environment virtually all recruitment tends to be national. Besides, since the Center deals with recruitment for a public job anybody can apply and sometimes it produces more interesting and diverse pool of candidates. When the Center was conducting recent searches, the ads were published at Mass NAHRO, NERC NAHRO and PHADA. Mr. Kobayashi stated that the Center will be working with the Board to get an understanding on what the Board wants to see in a candidate and depending on the Board's preferences a custom recruitment strategy will be developed.

Answering next question about the candidate's knowledge of DHCD and HUD guidelines for local housing authority hiring of executive director, Mr. MacRitchie stated that under the DHCD guidelines Board of Commissioners have a much diminished role in hiring of an executive director and this is not in the best interests of housing authorities. Under the DHCD regulations a selection committee gets established, they rank the candidates based on a scoring mechanism and come out with a final list of candidates however there is a provision in the new guidelines about a preliminary screening committee that allows the screening committee to recommend a number of candidates to the board for interviews. Mr. MacRitchie stated that the Center recommends using a screening committee model versus a selection committee model because it protects the confidentiality of the candidates.

In response to Chairman Thomas's question on how does the Center intend to get a good picture of the needs and priorities of the SHA and the qualities the Board is looking for in a new executive director, Mr. Kobayashi explained that they spend at least an hour with each commissioner, asking their opinion about what are the most serious challenges the agency will be facing in the next 3-5 years and, given the particular set of challenges and knowledge of the culture of the organization, what kind of background and skills a candidate must have in order to meet the challenges. The next step will be drafting the SHA profile describing its brief history, the portfolio, the challenges and the vision on what kind of skills a candidate should have. The draft will be distributed to each Board member for their comments and once the Board votes on the language, the profile will be published. Mr. Kobayashi stated that the profile will become a marketing piece for the SHA and for the position and candidates can evaluate themselves against it. Mr. Kobayashi assured that the Center will do their best to know the Board's needs and represent its interests. He added that apart from working with the Board it is also important to talk to senior staff to get their vision.

The next question on the list was about the process from point of position announcement to presenting candidates to the Board and whether a screening committee is recommended and what is the Board's role. Chairman Thomas stated that this question has been answered.

Mr. Kobayashi added that the Center has a methodology it is trying to use in each recruitment where Board is involved and they consider that it is very important that their client organizations have access to all applications and applicants. Under the Massachusetts Open Law the only way to maintain the applications confidentiality is for the board to create a screening meeting consisting of two commissioners and other knowledgeable people (an employee, a tenant, a local community leader). The Center's staff will work with the screening committee to review the applications and to conduct preliminary interviews. The screening committee, not the consultants, will be advising which candidates shall be invited for interviews and the Center's task is to ensure that the member of the screening committee and the Board know about the candidates as much as possible and that the Board has good choices. After preliminary interviews are finished, 3-4 candidates will be selected and sent to the board for final interviews and only at that time their names will become public.

Mr. Kobayashi and Mr. MacRitchie continued by describing the assessment the Center would be undertaken on applicants and what product the Board will receive to help them evaluate prospects. Mr. Kobayashi explained that starting from advertisement and conducting their own outreach they will be looking to see whether the candidates meet the standards defined by the Board, and all the resumes that meet those standards will be shared with the screening committee. Then they will help the screening committee to prepare for interviews and make a list of suggested questions, will do preliminary interviews, and will be presenting advanced candidates to the full Board. Mr. Kobayashi stated from previous experience that the Center does not find it is particularly helpful to use assessment documents and score sheets for interviews since it is hard to reflect leadership and interpersonal skills in assessment sheets. Mr. MacRitchie added that having the profile and up-to-date job description is a very necessary tool for a successful recruitment.

In response to next question Mr. MacRitchie explained his vision on how best to inform potential prospects about the position and the agency. He indicated that apart from using the profile they will be referring candidates to the 2017 Annual Report of the Executive Director, the most recent financial statements and other documents and information published on the SHA web-site.

Answering next question Mr. Kobayashi responded that the Center has been involved in a recruitment effort that did not work as planned, for example a Town Manager was selected to be hired but the Board's composition changed dramatically and the new Board had a different perspective on who shall be the new manager. Mr. Kobayashi indicated that what he learned from these situations is that when working on a profile for each organization, the Umass Center staff must get a very clear picture about that organization, including its future and, if there is a possibility of some instability or big change, the applicants shall be informed about it.

Mr. Kobayashi confirmed that they will continue working with the SHA if for some reason candidates reverse themselves. He indicated the importance of having a solid pool of good candidates in case someone refuses to take the position.

John Healy left the Conference Room at 3:40 pm.

In response to the question whether it is recommended that the consultant is involved in interviews and developing interview scripts, Mr. Kobayashi stated

that they typically are involved in assisting the screening committee through getting ready for preliminary interviews and preparing suggested questions for first interviews and final interviews. He stated that the Center staff will not be sharing opinions on the candidates or recommending who shall be chosen.

Mr. Kobayashi continued by providing information about how they address political influence in the executive director selection process. He explained that the issue often comes up with the screening committee and if there is a call recommending a candidate and the candidate has all the qualifications for the position, it might be helpful to be inclusive rather than exclusive. In general the Center is not a part of the City or the Housing Authority and the Board will have better understanding about local political culture and will know how to deal with this issue.

In response to the next question Mr. Kobayashi explained how the Center finds candidates who may not be actively looking for a job. He stated that they do a lot of networking and use resources within organization like NAHRO.

Answering the final question about why the Board shall choose the Center to be its consultant Mr. Kobayashi stated that his organization has conducted 60 successful searches, never failed their job, have a good track record and great experience, including in the city of Springfield, where they helped to hire the 1st administrative and financial officer in 2010.

In response to Commissioner Warren's request Mr. MacRitchie clarified how the screening committee will be working. He explained that the Center will be conducting preliminary interviews since it might be a burdensome process for the Board to review each application as well as due to the Open Meeting Law requirements.

In response to Commissioner Warren's question about how the Center will be assisting the screening committee to sift through the resumes, Kobayashi explained that they will meet with the members of the committee, explain how the profile was developed and what assistance they will be providing. After that when the resumes are received, they will prepare a booklet containing information on all qualified candidates and send it to each screening committee home. They will also prepare a comprehensive table with the candidates' names and background. After that they will meet with the members of the screening committee to discuss who they want to interview and will support by drafting questions and providing coaching before interviews.

Commissioner Warren inquired about the verification process and Mr. Kobayashi explained that it is usually done after the screening committee's interviews and some leading candidates are identified. At that point these candidates' work history and references will be verified and their criminal background checked, and only after that recommendations will be made to the Board. Mr. Kobayashi emphasized the importance of being careful before making candidates' names public.

Jay MacRitchie asked to confirm the number of state and federal units and vouchers in the SHA portfolio.

Chairman Thomas thanked Richard Kobayashi and Jay MacRictchie for their time. Mr. Kobayashi assured that if the Board hires the Center for Public Management, they will get a first class job.

Richard Kobayashi and Jay MacRictchie left the Conference Room at 4:03 pm.

The Board entered into a discussion regarding hiring a consultant for the executive director's recruitment. Chairman Thomas commented that the Board interviewed two good candidates and asked the Commissioners to share their opinion about who shall be selected for the job.

Commissioner Warren noted that Leo Dauwer exceeded his expectations and he will be supporting the Board's decision if they decide to hire him but he believes that the Umass will do a stronger job with identifying and presenting the agency needs to potential candidates. Mr. Warren commented on two different models suggested by the consultants and two different visions on the DHCD's regulations with Umass considering using a selection committee and Mr. Dauwer's intention to conduct all preliminary interviews himself. Mr. Warren stated that his preference would be Umass because of the way they will analyze, portrait and communicate the SHA's needs however it is hard to overlook Mr. Dauwer's experience in working with housing authorities.

Commissioner Quinonez stated that she is leaning towards choosing Leo Dauwer because of his experience. She stated that, in her opinion, Mr. Dauwer will be able to provide better evaluation of applicants than the screening committee.

Commissioner Robles stated that she really liked Umass's idea about the profile and that they did their homework for the interview but she was very impressed with Leo Dauwer. Ms. Robles asked Attorney Chesky to share her opinion about both candidates.

Commissioner Labonte commented that he is giving his preference to Leo Dauwer who was a great training instructor at classes he attended and has great recruitment experience. Mr. Labonte stated that he liked Mr. Dauwer's response to the question about finding candidates who may not be actively looking for a job more than the Umass's answer and he believes that due to his experience and extensive knowledge of people in the industry Mr. Dauwer will be able to reach out to more candidates. Mr. Labonte added that he favors the idea of Mr. Dauwer conducting all the screenings rather than using the screening committee.

Attorney Chesky shared her experience on working with Leo Dauwer several years ago when he was a search consultant for the Holyoke Housing Authority and he did a great job. Ms. Chesky praised the Umass's idea about the profile that would give applicants the best vision of the agency's needs.

Chairman Thomas praised both candidates but indicated that he is giving his preference to Leo Dauwer.

Kathy Hardy shared her thoughts about Leo Dauwer whom she found to be a very dynamic person who has great experience working with housing authorities. To her opinion, he would understand the SHA's needs better, will do more prep work and with him the process will be moving a little bit quicker. Ms. Hardy also told that she liked Mr. Dauwer's statement that a good candidate does not necessarily need to have a great experience working in the public housing

but needs to have some skills that would allow the SHA to move forward. She also praised his statement that respecting employees is a necessary trait he will be looking for when searching for a new executive director.

John Healy expressed his opinion that the Umass Center is fairly new in the industry and has had more experience with hiring for municipalities than for housing authorities while Leo Dauwer has been assisting housing authorities for so many years. Mr. Healy stated that he thinks that Mr. Dauwer will be able to provide better guidance in the recruitment process and knows more people in the industry.

Commissioner Warren added that if the Boards votes in favor of hiring Leo Dauwer, who is planning to go from working on the job description to publishing the ad and screening and it would be helpful to add one more step to the process so that each Commissioner could meet with Mr. Dauwer and express his/her vision of a new executive director.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte seconded by Commissioner Robles it was unanimously

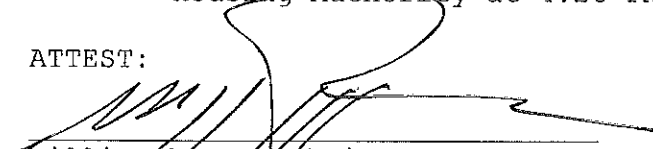
VOTED: to choose Leo Dauwer Associates as a search consultant for the Executive Director.


Kathy Hardy indicated that she will notify both candidates about the Board's decision.

There being no further business to come before the members of the Springfield Housing Authority Board, upon a motion made by Commissioner Labonte, seconded by Commissioner Warren, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the Open Session of a Special Meeting of the Springfield Housing Authority at 4:26 PM.

ATTEST:


Willie Thomas, Chairman


Jessica Quinonez, Assistant Secretary

