

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING
LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION

Thursday, May 7, 2015

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on May 4, 2015, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, the Board of Directors of the Lane Transit District held a special meeting/work session on Thursday, May 7, 2015, beginning at 3:00 p.m., at the LTD Board Room, 3500 E. 17th Avenue, Eugene, Oregon.

Present: Gary Wildish, President
Carl Yeh, Vice President
Julie Grossman, Secretary
Ed Necker, Treasurer
Gary Gillespie
Angelynn Pierce

Ron Kilcoyne, General Manager
Jeanne Schapper, Clerk of the Board
Lynn Taylor, Minutes Recorder

Vacant: Position 3

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Mr. Wildish convened the meeting and called the roll at 3:07 p.m.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS BY BOARD PRESIDENT: Mr. Wildish welcomed those present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: None.

WORK SESSION:

Request for Proposals (RFP) Status Update: Mr. Gillespie reported that the Human Relations (HR) Committee had reviewed RFP responses, two of which were complete. He said that the two responses were thoroughly evaluated and ranked very close to one another. He said that the Committee determined that the responses were sufficient to proceed with interviews of the two recruiting firms, and a list of questions was developed. He said that interviews of the two firms were scheduled for May 18, 2015, after which the HR Committee would make a recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Necker asked if the issue of hiring a recruitment firm as opposed to internal advancement had been discussed.

Director of Administrative Services Roland Hoskins said that the recruitment firm would follow the Board's direction on the general manager search. The Board was responsible for hiring and supervising the general manager through a contractual relationship. He said that it also was the Board's decision to seek a new general manager internally or to conduct an external search. He said that legal counsel had been asked to determine if the Board was required to accept internal applicants.

Mr. Necker asked if internal candidates would apply through the recruitment firm. Mr. Hoskins said that was the intent. He said that the Board needed to understand the pros and cons of the various recruitment and hiring options in order to make the most informed decision. He emphasized that until a recruitment firm was actually hired, the Board would have time to consider all of the options and identify leadership characteristics that candidates should possess. He said that the Board also would need to determine how to proceed in the event that Mr. Kilcoyne was no longer available before a new general manager was hired. He said that the Board was not obligated to hire anyone if the search process did not produce a viable candidate.

Mr. Gillespie suggested sharing with the full Board the questions that the HR Committee developed for interviewing recruitment firms and asking members to suggest any other questions that should be posed to the firms. Mr. Hoskins said that the questions, along with the two RFP responses deemed acceptable by the HR Committee, would be provided to the Board.

Leadership Characteristics: Mr. Hoskins asked Board members to think about and identify the leadership characteristics of a general manager that they felt were important for the organization.

Mr. Necker said that the general manager should have transit and community involvement experience. He said that public transit experience was important for a general manager to have in order to understand what worked well, the advantages of public transit, and the importance of public opinion. He felt that a candidate should have worked in the field of public transit, although not necessarily at the director level.

Mr. Hoskins observed that someone could be very technically competent in the field of public transit but lack the requisite leadership skills. He asked that the Board consider leadership characteristics that would help the person translate that experience into the ability to move this organization forward.

Mr. Gillespie said that the ability to critically analyze the system and propose change was important, in addition to familiarity with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). He said that he wanted to see the District move from a hub-and-spoke design to having better connectivity throughout the community. He hoped that the general manager would be "hands on" and work with planners on routes and departure times, location of stations, etc.

Mr. Necker said that he felt that the hub-and-spoke design was acceptable for the fixed-route service, and the EmX system would provide more direct connections.

Ms. Grossman said that she wanted the general manager to understand that perception is everything, and relationships drive the community in a unique way that set it apart from other communities. The ability to nurture relationships and obtain the support of other leaders was critical, as was a focus on how the general manager and organization could serve the community. The general manager should understand how relationships and service could change the perceptions of LTD in the community. She said that a general manager should also recognize that transit and LTD were an intricate component of a community's vision to grow and be a vibrant, livable place. Transit needs to fit into that broader community vision, and the general manager should be able to mobilize LTD to be a part of that vision.

Ms. Pierce agreed with Ms. Grossman's remarks regarding the importance of perceptions. She said that the new general manager would be LTD's leader and face in the community. She said that she wanted to see a charismatic, well-spoken, politically savvy leader who could gain community support while listening to what the community wants. A leader should be able to inspire greatness in the staff. She said that technical experience was good, but it could be learned; charisma was an innate quality. She said that LTD was an established organization poised for greatness and needed a leader who could realize this potential.

Mr. Yeh questioned if LTD was ready for a leader who was the face of LTD in the community. Ms. Pierce said that LTD was seen in many different ways in the community by users of its various services; a leader could be a focal point for the community.

Mr. Gillespie said that a general manager should have experience in a collective bargaining environment and be a transit user.

Mr. Yeh agreed with the importance of charisma, community involvement, and other qualities mentioned and did not want to see any of those sacrificed in order to hire someone who was technically competent. He said that he wanted to see a seasoned person who had managed a medium- to small-sized agency who could tell the story of the importance of transit and how it supported a healthy community and lifestyle. A general manager should have experience as a transportation advocate and should be able to share the benefits of transit in a way that resonates with the community.

Mr. Wildish said that transit experience is important in order to understand the complexities of operating a transit system. He said that he agreed with the emphasis on community involvement and being the face of LTD to community leaders and transit funding sources. A general manager should be able to communicate the long-range vision of transit in an interesting, relevant way.

Mr. Hoskins asked Board members why LTD seemed to have a poor image in the community.

Mr. Necker said that negative impressions stemmed from the build-out of the bus rapid transit (BRT) system. He said that most people could not visualize the entire system; they only saw the section that affected them. He said that there also was a perception that decisions were made before public input was requested.

Ms. Pierce said that it was not so much the building of the BRT system as a lack of communication surrounding it. She said that a better job could be done of communicating the BRT vision and how it would serve the community now and in the future.

Ms. Grossman said that LTD's reputation had been tarnished by the perception among some in the community that LTD knew what was best for the community and just did it without consultation. She said that was why the ability to listen and nurture community relationships was so important in a leader.

Mr. Gillespie felt that LTD generally enjoyed a good reputation in the community, particularly with users of its services. He said that negative opinions for the most part came from a tax-averse group that did not believe in public spending for public need. He said that LTD could do a better job of attracting choice users.

Mr. Hoskins shared information obtained during interviews with community leaders regarding the qualities of an effective leader. He said that these stories highlighted the importance of listening, taking a soft approach and speaking from the heart, even when faced with an angry or hostile audience. He said that type of leadership fit well with Eugene's community values and was an important characteristic for the general manager. He noted that the people interviewed did not use the pronoun "I," preferring to use "we" and "us" instead.

Ms. Grossman commented that the community valued leaders who were able to show their humanity and vulnerability.

Mr. Wildish agreed that a leader should be able to listen, pay attention, and not be defensive.

Mr. Hoskins said that those qualities were important for leaders in Eugene because of polarity in the community and the value placed on inclusiveness. A leader should be able to unite people around a common goal and do the right thing, even if it was risky.

Mr. Gillespie said that candidates should be asked to give an example of their biggest accomplishment and their biggest failure and describe what they had learned in each instance.

Mr. Hoskins asked how the general manager should influence the Board.

Ms. Pierce said that the ability to build and maintain relationships, and communicate well, were essential.

Ms. Grossman said that the stories from community leaders highlighted the need to have a clear sense of self and the ability to remain true to that self when establishing relationships in the community.

Mr. Necker felt that the traits of humility and compassion were very important.

Mr. Hoskins summarized what he had heard from community interviews:

- Listening was the most important quality for a leader.
- Openness and the ability to create possibilities for humility and trust.
- Nothing could be done without staff support in any organization. LTD, from its general manager to line staff, needed to be good listeners.
- Learning how to understand and work through problems and tolerate dissention should be an organizational value.
- Recognizing the sovereignty of others abilities and thoughts; not assuming you (CEO/GM) are always right; honor what others say and find common ground.
- Do not be a political broker; be astute and able to implement the direction of boards, councils, etc.
- Do not lose sense of self.
- Understand the landscape through listening and learning.
- Less telling and more listening.

Mr. Hoskins said that it was clear that successful leaders in Eugene were nurturing rather than dominating and possessed the ability to learn and listen. He said that LTD had a good reputation at the organizational level; its employees were respected and partnerships valued. The breakdown appeared to be at the political level.

Mr. Wildish pointed out that the general manager had two audiences: internal to the organization and external in the community.

Ms. Grossman said that LTD should be asking community members to share their experiences with its services. She referred to the video of feedback from focus groups that demonstrated how attitudes could be changed when the public was educated about LTD and its services. She said that she hoped to see the District build on that momentum.

Mr. Gillespie said that LTD was now seeing support from other jurisdictions in the region for the projects it was proposing for state funding.


Ms. Pierce reiterated that it was important to hire the right person; and if that person was not among the initial group of candidates, it was acceptable to keep looking.

Ms. Grossman asked how LTD staff would be kept informed about progress in the search for a general manager and if that information should come from the Board. Mr. Hoskins said that he would schedule open meetings where he could discuss progress with interested employees, and written communications also would be used to keep the organization informed. He said that it would be beneficial for staff to hear that the Board was vested in the process, recognized the importance of this hire, and was providing policy guidance and direction. He said that Board members were welcome to participate in any meetings related to hiring a general manager.

Mr. Hoskins said that information on recruitment firm applications and proposed interview questions would be sent to Board members. He said that phone interviews with the two candidate firms would be conducted on May 18, and recommendations would be presented to the Board at its May 20, 2015, meeting. He said that he hoped to have a firm hired by June 8, but that could be extended if additional time was needed to vet applicants.


ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Wildish adjourned the meeting at 4:31 p.m.

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT:



Julie Grossman
Board Secretary

ATTEST:



Jeanne Schapper
Clerk of the Board

Approved: June 17, 2015