

MINUTES OF DIRECTORS MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT

SPECIAL MEETING/WORK SESSION

Wednesday, June 23, 1999

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on June 21, 1999, 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 Wednesday, June 23, 1999, at 5:30 p.m. at the Waterfront Restaurant at 2210 Centennial Blvd., Eugene.

Present: Kirk Bailey, President, presiding
Rob Bennett, Vice President
Patricia Hocken
Dave Kleger, Treasurer
Dean Kortge
Hillary Wylie, Secretary
Dave Dickman, Human Resources Manager
Jo Sullivan, Recording Secretary

Absent: Virginia Lauritsen

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m. by Board President Kirk Bailey.

RESPONSE TO GLENWOOD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION REGARDING BUS RAPID TRANSIT: Mr. Bailey noted that as an addition to the agenda, General Manager Phyllis Loobey was present to discuss a response to a letter received from the Glenwood Business Association and an Op-Ed article by the Glenwood Business Association (GBA) that had appeared that day in the *Springfield News*. Board members concurred that it would be valuable for all or some of the Board members to meet with the GBA to discuss the Association's issues regarding the Glenwood segment of bus rapid transit (BRT). The GBA's main issue seemed to be a perception that LTD was unwilling to negotiate in good faith, which the Board members thought was important to dispel based on more factual information. There was some discussion about the proposed alignment of the Glenwood segment of BRT, and Board members asked for a briefing on the current status of the project before meeting with the GBA.

Ms. Loobey left the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

APPOINTMENT TO BOARD EXECUTIVE SEARCH COMMITTEE: Board President Kirk Bailey asked Dean Kortge to replace him on the Board's Executive Search Committee as of July 1999. Mr. Kortge agreed.

BREAK: The Board members took a brief break and reconvened at 6:06 p.m.

WORK SESSION—GENERAL MANAGER SUCCESSION PLAN—RETIREMENT AND REPLACEMENT DISCUSSION:

Mr. Dickman introduced the work session discussion and explained that the Board Executive Search Committee had been meeting with members of the community to gather input on the community members' desired skills and leadership attributes for a new general manager. The Executive Search Committee was at the initial stages of implementing the Board's adopted Executive Search Plan in order to replace Ms. Loobey when she retired in June of 2000. The Board members were being asked to discuss the four questions that the community representatives had discussed.

Leadership Qualities: It was noted that one community member had said that it would be important for the Board to identify its shared values about this leader. Some important leadership qualities expressed by the Board included the ability to hear important messages without driving away the messenger; the ability to hear bad news as well as good; to be open to information from all sources; to be principled (living life acknowledging and following some deep principles); having the ability to listen and understand what is being said; smart enough to think on his/her feet; the ability to interact with people; having a broad base rather than a narrow range; and being knowledgeable about transit but also having varied experiences, rather than being a "transit junkie." Other desirable attributes included being a good manager of the District's employees; being able to accept information from staff and work collaboratively; having a management style to get the most out of the District's employees. Also mentioned was the ability to communicate his/her vision to inspire people and motivate them to strive to achieve, including the ability to conceptualize an issue and relate it to current events and the social milieu. The leader also needed to be able to deliver bad news in a way that would not turn people off or destroy his/her own credibility. Another desirable trait was to be "street smart," with a direct approach that was not mean, vicious, or vindictive in delivering a message.

Mr. Bailey offered observations on what he thought the current Board's values were and that he hoped the new general manager would share. This included doing the job right the first time and making sure it was a quality job; valuing people, including their needs and the working environment; valuing mistakes for what they teach and being willing to make a few mistakes, learn from them, and still go forward.

Ms. Wylie said the leader should not waffle, or try to please everyone with each decision. She offered the following list of traits: integrity; openness; honesty; flexibility; vision; support and collaboration with staff and the Board; ability to work with staff, the Board, the union, and the community; and wisdom. Mr. Kleger added that the leader should be able to adjust the form of delivery to each audience's needs.

The Board members briefly discussed LTD's future, which Ms. Hocken thought would be challenging for the near term.

Mr. Kortge used the term "compassionate passion," which he thought was a significant near-term value. He thought that staying to the vision with flexibility would take passion, and how the vision was carried out could be a delicate matter.

Mr. Bailey agreed with Mr. Kortge and added that moving from a bus company to a transportation entity would take someone who was patient and steadfast, who did not waver from the core belief, and who found a way to bring out that belief in others.

Ms. Hocken reminded the Board that the general manager's relationship with the Board was a very high priority. This would include the ability to understand the direction of the Board and carry it out. Mr. Kortge added that the general manager would have to believe in the role of the Board and not have conflicts with role definition. Mr. Bailey thought that the Board had been discussing values, and that everything described reflected what the Board hoped for its relationship with the general manager.

Vision: Mr. Kleger thought that if the candidate had the character traits the Board had been discussing and was successful in other areas, he/she should be able to develop a vision through forward thinking and being able to think outside the box. Mr. Kortge cautioned against a visionary empire builder or a caretaker manager.

Mr. Bailey said that vision was paramount to the endeavor and that he could not imagine LTD being successful without it. He added that the current general manager did a good job of hiring people who were good stewards of the public resources so that she could be free to do the visionary thinking. Ms. Wylie thought it would be important for the Board to hire a general manager who shared the Board's vision. Mr. Bennett agreed, or the general manager should be able to show the Board why its vision should change.

Ms. Hocken reported that she had told one group that the Board was leading the general manager and staff on BRT, not the other way around. Mr. Bailey agreed that the Board had been driving the BRT vision, and needed a meeting of the minds with a new general manager. Mr. Dickman suggested considering how well a new general manager would do if a future Board went back to a more passive role.

Community Fit: The Board discussed the skills and attributes needed to work well within the community and what the Board could do to help a new general manager assimilate into the community. Ms. Hocken said that the Executive Search Committee heard two messages from the community participants: a person is considered successful until he/she "screws up," and it is hard to break into this community.

Mr. Bennett thought that the Committee would need to listen to candidates present themselves. He suggested that the Board could make introductions for the new general manager, and that person would begin to make contacts. Mr. Bennett thought that involvement with the business community—people who were directly or indirectly paying for transit—would be important. He thought it would not take an extrovert, just someone who was able to make and maintain those contacts effectively. This would include knowing that he/she did not have all the answers, and understanding that there is more than one effective way to accomplish something. He thought the new general manager would need to know how to listen to the Board, use good timing in making a case for something, and making carefully thought out presentations.

Mr. Kortge suggested that someone with passion was more important than being an extrovert. Additionally, he or she would need to be able to fit into a wide variety of groups, from the opera to the loggers' convention.

Ms. Wylie thought the new general manager should be capable of interacting comfortably and with confidence.

Mr. Bailey suggested self-assurance that allowed the person to not worry about pleasing everyone in the community but being able to participate at a fairly extensive level—confidence but not arrogance. Other traits suggested were humility and personal strength.

Mr. Bailey said that it was incumbent on the Board to help the new general manager fit in, to give him or her the best start possible.

Mr. Kortge thought that a new person who rubbed staff the wrong way could make things very difficult.

Mr. Bailey raised the issue of bringing in someone new or looking at internal candidates. He said the Committee had heard from two groups that the Board should look strongly at internal candidates, and Ms. Wylie had heard that from people who called her. One caller said that LTD should meet internal candidates' needs to make it work. A comment at a Committee meeting was that LTD should perform a search so the community and the internal candidate would know that if an internal candidate were selected, he/she was the best for the job. Ms. Hocken thought that the process was harder on internal candidates because the Board would know their foibles as well as their strengths. Mr. Kortge said he believed strongly in internal promotions, but at this level, the Board also needed to look at all options. Mr. Bennett thought the search was extremely important, and said he hoped the Committee would consider that carefully.

Mr. Kleger thought that someone with a personality that had to change things right away would not fare well in the community; that would offend people even if the changes were good. He did not want someone who would want to change things just to prove he/she was the boss.

Mr. Kortge left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Warnings/Risks:

Ms. Hocken said that it would be important to do a thorough check on results, relationships, etc., in other places, and understand the candidate's relationship to his/her community.

Ms. Wylie reported that several people told the Committee to go to the candidate's town and talk to people he/she worked with, friends and neighbors, people in the community, etc., and find out what the candidate had accomplished. The relationship with staff was seen as important, also.

Mr. Bailey said that trouble with staff would be a red flag. The candidate needed to appreciate staff as well as have the management skills to work with a large and skilled staff, and to not be threatened by a highly skilled staff. Mr. Kleger thought the candidate should be one who could hire staff to fill the gaps in his/her own abilities. Mr. Bailey wanted to know that the candidate had a good understanding of the role of the general manager and the Board. He also wanted to find someone the Board and the District's employees would enjoy working with. The staff and the general manager would need to respect each other.

Mr. Kleger suggested checking local news stories in the area to see what the person had been working on for the past five years.

Ms. Hocken said that the Committee had been told by community members that the Board needed to prioritize what it wanted, because it wouldn't get everything it wanted, and that sometimes a failed search was okay.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Bailey said that the Committee would meet again to discuss the input received from community members and prepare a summary for discussion by the Board. The Committee also would be discussing the results of the Request for Proposals for executive search firms.

Board members thanked the Committee members and Mr. Dickman for a good process and well-facilitated sessions.

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Board Secretary

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