

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

Work Session

MINUTES

April 6, 2015

President Haas called the work session to order at 6:17 p.m. in the board room of the FNSBSD Administrative Center at 520 Fifth Avenue. The work session was called to discuss human resources' structure, processes, and procedures.

President Haas read the district's mission statement: *"Our mission is to provide an excellent and equitable education in a safe, supportive environment so all students can become productive members of a diverse and changing society."*

Present:

Heidi Haas, President
Wendy Dominique, Vice President
Allyson Lambert, Treasurer
Lisa Gentry, Clerk
Sue Hull, Member
Michael O'Brien, Member
Sean Rice, Member

Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Dr. Karen Gaborik, Superintendent
Lisa Pearce, Chief Financial Officer
Sandra Kowalski, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Instruction
Shaun Kraska, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Instruction
Traci Gatewood, Executive Director of Human Resources
Janet Cobb, Executive Director of Technology
Dave Norum, Executive Director of Facilities Management
Johanna Carson, Director of Community and Public Relations
Helen Clark, Director of Federal Programs
Elizabeth Schaffhauser, Director of Employment and Educational Opportunity
Mario Gatto, Principal on Special Assignment
Claire Morton, Recruiting Staff Coordinator
Krista Lord, Director of Compliance and Training
Sharon Tuttle, Executive Assistant to the Board of Education

Others:

Jill Dolan, Assistant Borough Attorney

Human Resources [0:00:35]

Traci Gatewood, executive director of human resources, reminded the board the human resources department had been in disarray and understaffed for many years and it would take many years to rebuild it. Ms. Gatewood reviewed the human resources department's staffing, focusing on the four positions added in the current year: investigation specialist, training specialist, exempt secretary, and a senior technician. The department did not have the capacity to meet compliance requirements in many areas or perform all the duties required of a human resources department.

Krista Lord, director of compliance and training, reviewed her duties and the state of the district in regards to training. Upon coming to the district, Ms. Lord found the district lacking in many training areas and compliance reporting requirements.

Human Resources (continued)

Mrs. Gatewood reiterated that without the human resources department having the capacity to oversee training needs and compliance requirements, the district was at risk.

Claire Morton, recruiting staff coordinator, spoke to the district's hiring and recruiting needs. Even with the district reducing positions, there would still be turnover and position vacancies. Job classifications, recruiting, and compensation were critical areas and the district had made some progress in these areas.

Mrs. Gatewood had focused on the department's customer service and worked on some cross training. Without capacity within the department, customer service was difficult to provide and improve, but the staff was working very hard. Mrs. Gatewood reviewed the customer service statistics for the department.

Mrs. Gatewood spoke to the labor relations director position and the need for the position. In a district with three negotiated agreements, it was critical to have a person who was an expert with the agreements. Every district staff member was required to have a performance evaluation and the labor relations director position was key to the evaluation process.

BOARD QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Mrs. Dominique clarified the HR audit was no longer a confidential document. Mrs. Gatewood stated the document was provided to the district as a confidential report from HR Answers, Inc., but the district provided the report as a public document.

There was considerable conversation regarding the comments circulating through the district regarding the process and the perceived heavy hand of investigations. Mrs. Gatewood noted the administration did not go out looking for issues. Prior to the current year, the district did not have a process for outlining and/or conducting an investigation. The district now had a clearly outlined process for investigations and subsequent decisions. Board members asked about a decision making rubric; the makeup of the investigation team; how staff members were notified of investigations; the number of complaints and investigations; the location of investigation interviews; investigation and complaint timeframes; the time assistant superintendents spent with investigations; and the appeal process.

Mrs. Gatewood noted building principals appreciated the consistency and support they now received from human resources and the investigation team in regards to complaints and investigations. As the process was implemented, it was anticipated less time would be required by the investigation team.

The subject of how staff members were escorted out of a building was brought up. Mrs. Gatewood stated she did not know of people being escorted out of their buildings, but if it was done, it would be with the utmost dignity – as allegations were just that and people were innocent until proven otherwise.

Board member and administration discussion included questions and comments on the district's application process, job descriptions, background checks for staff and volunteers, and collaborating with other districts regarding their human resources and investigation processes.

Board members expressed their appreciation to Mrs. Gatewood and her staff for their work. It was good for the board to hear an update on human resources and the investigation process. It was important for the board to make sure what happened last spring did not happen again.

Mrs. Gatewood encouraged board members to contact her anytime with concerns or comments. She met with the Big 5 districts quarterly, where they shared processes, procedures, best practices, and more. She was taking advantage of relationships with other districts.

Human Resources (continued)

President Haas noted the administration wanted clear direction from the board regarding human resources. The board had come together last spring and provided direction to human resources based on the investigation and input it received from borough legal. President Haas stated the board's action to reduce funding in human resources could be construed the board did not support human resources moving forward on the board's direction. She asked if there were any objections to the restructuring of human resources moving forward, noting the board would determine final department allocations and funding when the budget was approved.

Board members generally supported the restructuring of human resources, but in the end, it would be a budget decision when the final budget was approved in May or June. Mrs. Gatewood understood the budget issues facing the district. The information she presented for the work session provided the board with information on where the district was presently and where it needed to go – emphasizing it would take a long time to get where it needed to be. The employees in human resources were committed to excellence. She and her staff would work with whatever the budget provided for the department.

President Haas asked if there were any objections to the process Mrs. Gatewood presented, as it related to the direction the board provided in the spring. There were no objections raised. The department was doing what needed to be done, but board members suggested human resources getting out in front of things and explaining the processes. Some of the issues were due to miscommunication or lack of communication – some of the issues might be resolved with a PR push.

Mrs. Gatewood agreed about the importance of getting out in front of issues. She had been working with the associations and others to improve communication. A board member suggested the board could help with the communications.

Board members thanked Mrs. Gatewood, Ms. Lord, and Ms. Morton for the report. They asked that their appreciation be shared with the rest of the human resource department. The board recognized they were all working to keep students safe.

Board Comments/Announcements [1:42:43]

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted by Sharon Tuttle, executive assistant to the Board of Education