

District updates on bond, new superintendent

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The Lancaster County school board divided in half to simultaneously tackle the superintendent search process and the proposed bond referendum. No votes can take place at their meetings, but recommendations for board meeting votes can be drafted.

Board members Melvin Stroble, Eddie Boykin and Margaret Gamble are on the bond committee and members Courtney Green, Tyrom Faulkner and Casey Cato are on the superintendent search committee. Board chair Brad Small oversees both.

Bond

The committee plans to recommend a March 26, 2024, special election date for the bond referendum election, with April 2, 2024, as an alternate date.

The board will also vote on a bond counsel to oversee and facilitate the process. There are currently three bond counsel options — Frannie Heizer with Burr and Foreman (presented at two board meetings), Theodore DuBose with Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd (2015 bond counsel) and John K. DuBose III with Smith Robinson (Lancaster County general counsel, working on county bonds).

Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Phipps said it is “imperative” for the board to vote on a bond counsel as soon as possible, to avoid any missteps during the draft process.

The committee also shared its proposed timeline for drafting the bond, compiled by Stroble. Key dates include voting on recommendations at the June 13 and July 18 board meetings, publicizing facility needs to the public July 19-Aug. 2 and voting on the final proposed referendum Sept. 19.

The election cost, estimated at \$70,000, has not been officially determined, and the totality of facility needs have not been compiled into a formal list.

Gamble suggested the committee look at ways to let community members share their facility needs for consideration.

The bond will not be officially voted on until fully drafted, and discussed in public session.

The next bond subcommittee meeting is June 7 via Zoom, at a time to be announced.

Superintendent

As of May 30, five applications had been submitted for the position, and several more are in the process of submitting. The process is being facilitated by the S.C. School Board Association (SCSBA) and will remain confidential until the three finalists have been determined.

Judy LeGrand with SCSBA is in charge of managing candidate applications.

The notice of vacancy was published May 1 and the application window will close June 5. The application was sent through the national superintendent portal, which includes candidates from over 40 states. SCSBA Executive Director Scott Price said applications were also sent to southern region states. It was also sent to candidates who previously applied for the position.

Community input sessions were held May 22 and May 23 at four different locations at Indian Land, Buford, Andrew Jackson and Lancaster high schools.

Administrators, teachers and staff were given additional time slots they could provide in-person input during. Community members also had two hours they could schedule appointments with Phipps.

Faulkner said attendance was low at all sessions, likely due to time conflicts with school functions and graduations. The search committee has added additional sessions at two different locations — 6 p.m. June 7 at the Harrisburg Elementary media center and the Lancaster Multipurpose Building gym. Teachers and principals will have a focus group Zoom meeting the morning of June 7.

More than 1,600 community members have taken the survey circulated by Lancaster County School District, and it will remain open until June 12. It is a four-question anonymous survey that is processed and organized by SCSBA.

The school board and SCSBA will meet June 20 to discuss survey and community input session results. The board will also see the pool of applicants.

Price said the timeline for choosing a new superintendent is not available yet, as the process is still in the beginning stages.

The committee will provide another public update at the June 13 board meeting.