

SC Campaign Finance Board Meeting Agenda
May 5, 2020 - 9:30 AM
via Conference Call

Participants on call: Lisa Scott-Chair, Honorable John Toomey, Adrian Fasset, Dan Dubois, Steve Randazzo, Gina Popovich

- 1. Call to Order: 9:30AM**
- 2. Public Comments: None**
- 3. Review/approve April 21, 2020 meeting minutes:**
Motion by **Honorable John Toomey**; Seconded by **Adrian Fasset and Lisa Scott**
- 4. Discussion:**

Lisa Scott: So, what we did Steve and Gina, and when Dan gets on I'll try to remember to tell him too, Adrian and Jack and I had a quick chat, I think it was Friday, right? Friday morning on the phone, it wasn't a formal meeting, and we realized that to go into executive session you have to be at the meeting and move to go into executive session, so we didn't do any official act, but we talked about the process of contacting candidates that we thought might be worth pursuing. I did speak to Patty later in the day on Friday just to clarify a few things with the draft and to touch base on the candidates we thought would be the ones we thought we might be interested in pursuing because Patty urged us to keep doing that and get on it. So, I did speak to her, she liked the draft we had, three sentences basically, to the candidates and encouraged us to send it out. She also clarified that in fact Civil Service is quite busy right now, there is no hiatus for them, she's getting lots of responses from various kinds of postings that are out there, so we shouldn't feel that the lack of numbers of candidates suggests people aren't responding because of the virus and that nature of the times, but in fact people seem to be a out there, if you're looking you're looking, or at least you're interested. We don't have to pay extra; I just clarified also, once she's made that initial contact, then Civil Service is charged for that particular person or candidate search, as a record I guess, and so we're fine. So, I ended up doing the spread sheet, we categorized levels of interest in candidates and I sent out six emails yesterday, we kind of made them A-B-C-D, so, A and B people got the emails. There were six of them and three have responded as of this morning, that their interested in pursuing the conversation. A fourth one said that because of the virus they've decided to relocate upstate so unfortunately, they weren't going to pursue it. Adrian, Jack, do you want to add to that at all?

Honorable John Toomey: That was an accurate recap of what happened.

Lisa Scott: Okay, thank you. Steve and Dan, you're on now?

Dan Dubois: Yeah, I'm here.

Lisa Scott: - Okay. Do you have any questions or comments?

Dan Dubois: No, I think that all sounds great, has there been any discussion or beginnings about doing a video interview, or anything like that?

Lisa Scott: Not at this point, because we've got to get to that point where we are going to communicate with them a little bit more via email, and there's two we haven't heard from yet, and Patty is still getting some whether it's from Indeed or from Civil Service postings, so it's not like we've closed the door on it, but Jack, Adrian, I think what we talked about on Friday was maybe in another two, three weeks we might want to interview. But again, the Zoom interviews are a lot less desirable, I mean we got to do it at some point, the in person, I think we all three agree, the in person is absolutely the requirement, so we are going to have to play that by ear and we are going to do that. I personally would not just hire somebody because they had a Zoom interview.

Honorable John Toomey: I agree with you Lisa, I think it's extremely difficult and it would lose so much on the Zoom compared to really meeting the person.

Adrian Fassett: I agree.

Lisa Scott: There's questions you can ask, their CV, and everybody knows how to write a super selling resume now, there is no downside, references, at least coming from the private industry my background, you can't say anything bad ever so you are just non-committal, so it's going to take a while to really drill around, I think, what makes this person tick? How would they react if it seemed like they weren't getting a lot of support, or if they're not getting the answers they need, how do you forge ahead, how do you work for, for all appearances, a department with twenty people when there's you and the person that ends up being the clerk or the assistant? You know, it's a huge job, and without a lot of pathways already set up, so that 2nd or 3rd layer of interviewing and figuring out how to get to the root of the person...because just I think just asking a person "What's the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome?" pretty much everybody knows you have to have an answer to that in the seat of your pants, and it tends to be "oh, I had this challenge that I worked too hard and I got to learn delegate more..." there's no down side to anybody conversationally, so I think the challenge for the three of us is to really try to come up with questions and methodology to try to get to the root of the person that we are talking to our interviewing. Again, Jack, Adrian?

Adrian Fassett: I agree.

Honorable John Toomey: Yeah, I mean, for me I just have to talk to them and look at their resumes, and it's just a feeling, but it's not exact science, I mean how do you do it, you know?

Dan Dubois: Right. Lisa, I don't disagree with anything that you're saying, that all makes sense, I mean in a perfect world that's the way you do it, but I think that there should be a discussion of how long should this go on for? Because we don't know how long it is going to be until we can reasonably bring someone in interview and go through the whole normal process or when things are going to be open again, where we say okay, it's been too long and something has to happen.

Honorable John Toomey: And every day it seems to be more of a reality, we just have to wait the next couple of weeks and see where we are, start interviewing and we'll have to come up with a decision, you know? Maybe we can find a final candidate, if we can bring him in or we're going to have to do what we don't want to do and make a decision based on Zoom or some other meeting.

Adrian Fassett: Yeah, we're going to have to make a decision in the next couple weeks of what we are going to do because we can't drag this on forever, and Jack you're right, you know the choice we have to make may not be the most optimal one, but the only one that is available to us at this time.

Steve Randazzo: Just throwing this out there to the whole board. When is everyone's target date for really bringing someone on, because, do we have a date?

Honorable John Toomey: We didn't discuss a start date at this point, I mean hopefully in the next week or two we can get a date, but we certainly didn't discuss one up until now.

Adrian Fassett: One of the discussions we had too, Dan was, or you guys too on your side, if we did come up with a candidate or you guys were ready for someone to start as far as an office space, and other mechanics that would have to be put in place.

Steve Randazzo: Yeah, I think that would be a little more on County Executives side, I mean we have office space available so I think once we start getting a little more serious and a little closer I don't think it would be a huge lift to fit an office, but I'll bring that up with the folks who do that for new hires so let me put that on my To Do List.

Lisa Scott: Yeah, so that would be a big issue that we talked about on Friday, just how long does it take for the wheels to turn, the office space, because we're saying to somebody we want to offer you this job but we don't know where it's going to be.

Steve Randazzo: I can get it done in day.

Honorable John Toomey: Okay, that's good to know.

Lisa Scott: And that would be in the general Hauppauge area then?

Steve Randazzo: I mean we have space at the H. Lee Dennison building probably on the 3rd floor, but I'll double check with some folks, but it's just about coordinating with where and then just having IT make sure there is computer space available and we can get people in a day and put in desktops for people and dividers and things like file cabinets, so it's really just a matter of us just giving the folks who do that the green light.

Lisa Scott: And in terms of the Civil Service angle, if we say "yeah, we want to offer you this job" I'm presuming they'll have a bunch of questions, so do we just punt that over to Patty and the Civil Service people? Because I have never worked in Civil Service so I have no idea how it works.

Steve Randazzo: The first thing we would have to do is some intakes, which is pretty standard for any new employee, the person would have to go to orientation on or about the first day of employment, so I think that you as the board have broad discretion of when you want the start date to be and just coordinate that with Patty and pretty much tell Civil Service all of the general information surrounding the person's start date, like what the starting salary is that you determined, so technically, you may have heard of the term "grades" and "steps", I believe the Director for example is a grade 32, correct me if I'm wrong. You as the board can decide what step you would like to start the person at within the grade 32. So that would be a decision you would all have, and then you would communicate that with Civil Service. It's not too involved, it's knowing the start date, knowing the salary, and there really aren't too many negotiation points, there isn't a better benefits package, or more vacation time.

Lisa Scott: Right, but where is that information because that's a normal question someone would ask right off the bat and I don't know what they are. And I don't feel comfortable describing benefits and things like that.

Adrian Fassett: I don't think that's our job really, to be honest with you.

Lisa Scott: Well, put yourself in a candidate's shoes, is there family leave time, is there this or that, these are things that are important to people and you need to have answers to that. And it's not just when you offer them the job, it's part of the process on whether they will accept the job.

Steve Randazzo: I would say the County's health care plan is truly a gem, and is a big selling point for a lot of people with a lot lower salary.

Honorable John Toomey: The two things you have, you have the Cadillac of retirement and of health benefits, I mean those are the two things they'll be most concerned with, family leave I don't know about, they're going to get sick time and vacation time and

personal leave days, I mean there's enough to get them going. If they have specific questions then we will refer them to somebody else, but the benefits will be, we won't be able to sit down and say what the co-pay is and what this is and stuff but you can tell them, there's very little better out there, in the county or the town or the state, that have health and retirement benefits, they can investigate that themselves. Wherever their coming from they may have equal but they're not going to have better health benefits.

Dan Dubois: Steve, I'm sorry you can probably answer this better, but I'm sure it wouldn't be that difficult after the interviewing process just to get them on the phone with Civil Service to walk through that stuff as well.

Steve Randazzo: I think especially because we now have an HR Director that we recently hired, so that conversation can definitely be had and I think you can very broadly explain that to even the perspective candidates but yeah, if you want us to drill down exactly what the co-pay is and the person wants to know, the nitty gritty and all that, we can get someone on the phone who can have that conversation.

Adrian Fassett: Okay.

Lisa Scott: So, Jack and Adrian, do you want to look at targeting some more detailed conversations? Again, right now, we have about three candidates that we ranked really highly, that we didn't reach out to and did respond that they were interested. One of them is the guy in Massachusetts who actually has a wonderful background and one is in Brooklyn and the other is in Northport.

Adrian Fassett: - I thought we were going to give it a little more time before we took the next step.

Lisa Scott: Right, but we should think about what that next step is going to be, as well.

Honorable John Toomey: Well, I think the next step is that we are going to have to do some sort of Zoom or something like that, and just interview all three of them, or five of them, how many we have, and discuss what we see in them.

Lisa Scott: Okay, and the Zoom may be the 1st of two or three Zooms, for each one, you never know.

Honorable John Toomey: Could be. Could be the 1st round of Zooms.

Steve Randazzo: At this point is everyone uncomfortable with doing it in person? I mean, I think that it can be done, we can all sit ten feet apart in a large room with masks and gloves, not ideal, but we do have plenty of people who are meeting in the office in that style, is that something we have particular resistance to at this point? The virus is going to be among us in three weeks, right? It's just a matter of risk, right? We shouldn't be in any

large crowds for some time, but there's going to come a point where more and more county employees come back to work, I think their targeting more like mid-June.

Lisa Scott: Yeah, but we don't have to wait that long to hire somebody. For me personally, as much as for my entire adult career, in person matters, because there is so much you can communicate beyond, and Zoom is a very inefficient tool but better than not having Zoom, so I have no problem doing Zoom, I would not personally, even with masks and gloves on and ten feet apart go because of my husband's health, he's still considered high risk and he is going to be having treatments for the foreseeable, so, I personally have discomfort in hiring someone for what amounts to a really unique type of position in the personal skills, not only the background and the more we can research that, absent the in person, the better and more comfortable I am.

Honorable John Toomey: If like a month and a half from now, if it's mid-June when we are open, there's things we can work out and we can Zoom Lisa into the meeting, if it's okay with Adrian and the candidates to come in and practice social distancing is the best way. I mean but you know, let's first get through the initial stages of that, but we can work something out, six weeks from now for the final. I would do exactly what you're doing and if 2 out of 3 meet with them ten feet away and Zoom you in, why not?

Adrian Fassett: We might want to do the 1st round with Zoom and then get down to our final lists, because you don't want to bring someone down from Boston and he doesn't want to come down right now...

Lisa Scott: I don't want any of you to think that I don't have an urgency about this...

Adrian Fassett and John Toomey: No, Lisa we understand...

Lisa Scott: No, not even just about the in person but to me, it's such an important thing that we need to have our ducks in line in terms of all the prep, because I think it does a disservice to the job if we as the representatives of this can't answer realistic questions that we could have anticipated, you know, so I just think we need to do our homework rapidly and get moving, yes, but to have a person ask something and not be able to even say, you can call this person or whatever, it just seems an odd way to make them think that we have our act together.

Honorable John Toomey: I don't think there's anything they could ask that we couldn't reasonably answer, you know...

Lisa Scott: Okay, but then I'm looking for you, particularly Jack, you need to take the lead in that part.

Honorable John Toomey: I mean that's easy, just not really the questions they ask and the answers we give, but the questions we ask, and the answers we get from them. That's what

I'm more concerned with. During the official meeting and they want to know about family leave and how many vacation days they get, we'll get by that and get to our next question.

Lisa Scott: Yeah, but we need to prep those questions and again I'm stating the obvious, but we've had a lot of water under the bridge already and what I need to personally be comfortable with is that the three of us have spent more time working through what we want to ask and how we want to ask it, and how we are going to manage it, because having three people interview one, sometimes you can fall over each other a bit, you almost have to rehearse it, not officially but, you know, just how you want the flow to go and who's going to pick up on different things.

Adrian Fassett: Well a lot of times in interviews, I look for what the person says will trigger my next response so I can't always script it out, I can come up with basic questions, but based on the flow of the conversation will determine different questions and answers.

Honorable John Toomey: I mean, I've learned you can't script things. Your next question is going to be six pages by their last answer. You don't want to have list of questions that...I think in interviewing them, ask the questions you want to get out, listen to their answers, then go to your next question. But you can't really do your next question until you've heard their answer in a lot of cases

Lisa Scott: Right, but the three of us still need to figure out what our questions are, the jump off questions. It's like when we worked on talking with Amy Loprest, we were in person number one, talking to each other saying "yeah, we have to cover this, we have to cover that" blah blah blah and we haven't really done that in that kind of detail on this yet, the three of us, and we need to do that. So, can we do that in a phone call or is that an executive session? I'm still confused about meeting law.

Honorable John Toomey: I said from the beginning, we should have some insight from Counsel, but I think we can have a three-way conversation like we did the last time and go over questions if you think that's important on what the jump off questions are, and we're not making big decisions or anything. What you think is important I might not think is important, and what you're going to base your decision on, Adrian may not, you know, we're three different people who ask different questions and we can have an outline on what we want to get out of them but, you know, that's about all you can do with it, you know, we can't, I think it's very hard to script.

Adrian Fassett: I agree.

Honorable John Toomey: If you want to have a list of questions, make a list of questions and make sure you ask them and we can go from that.

Lisa Scott: Okay, so what's our target date for the first Zoom for the candidates we care about?

Honorable John Toomey: I thought it would be in two weeks, right?

Lisa Scott: Okay, so what, the 15th? I'm not saying we do it that day, I'm waiting till we have our...

Honorable John Toomey: In mid-May?

Lisa Scott: Today's the 5th so, that's ten days or so? We will at least start talking to a couple of them?

Adrian Fassett: I'm fine with that.

Honorable John Toomey: That's good.

Lisa Scott: Okay. Alright, do we have any other questions about...I guess what we'll do is throw some questions back and forth on email and then have a conference call just three of us talking about that, and if Dan or Steve, if you want to throw questions or things to us, that you think are important, working in the structure of the County, and understanding what the job is, that's always helpful.

Steve Randazzo: I'll get back to you guys.

Lisa Scott: Don't get me wrong, it's just there are different perspectives, I'm not asking you to represent, either of you, you're a part of the county, it's more like in general, these are topics or questions, they may be obvious, but never hurts. And we wouldn't use them in that way it's to feed our growth into questions.

Steve Randazzo: Right. I guess I just want to point out a risk that you may have already thought about individually, but I guess we just want to make sure that among the many other important qualities, this intense start up environment type of developer mindset that we need in this person, especially because it is the first Executive Director, but that paired with, it really has to be somebody who we are reasonably confident and isn't going to jump ship, I mean the worst possible scenario is we hire someone, they start, they work this job for a year, then they find another job, before November of next year, which is probably going to be our really busy season, so maybe age isn't the best proxy for that, but someone who we are reasonably confident with, they are here, they are stable, they're not jumping from job to job, I don't know if that's even like a resume search on the person, if they only seem to stay in a place for a year or two, I mean think New York City. How long did Amy and them, the other one before her, been in the job about 15 years right?

Honorable John Toomey: They've only had two I think, right? Her and her friend. Well, obviously that's a characteristic we definitely need is somebody who, that that's what they

want to do for long time, but the other problem, is hiring someone to start something that isn't there and that person has a very difficult job, no matter who it is. And that's what we are going to have to be mindful of when we are going through this interview process.

What bothers me, and I know it bothers me, is the applicants, or the resumes we are getting in, I don't see that person that Steve just described. That could change talking to them, but in my mind is how long will they stay, and it's not just running this department, it's not just doing the job, it's also starting it. Our challenge is to hire that person, but once we do that, we step back and that person, it's a difficult thing to do. I rather go in and take over New York City than start Suffolk County.

Adrian Fassett: But, it can be challenging and fun.

Honorable John Toomey: Oh yeah, it's a challenging opportunity. I have to go to, believe it or not a prayer service at 10:30, so if there isn't anything else, I'm going to have to jump off.

Lisa Scott: There was just one other thing, which I need clarified for me is, would these people serve at our pleasure right? So, we are not guaranteeing them of anything.

Honorable John Toomey: They serve at our pleasure, they don't have any Civil Service protection.

Lisa Scott: Right.

Honorable John Toomey: As far as their contract, I guess, I mean I don't know about that. But they would serve at our pleasure. Then we can get rid of them. Or when we are replaced, or resign, or leave, another board could replace them.

Lisa Scott: Gina, the sooner you can get this to us, the notes, the better, and can you send me the recording?

Gina- Sure.

Lisa Scott: Because I think we need to consult among the three of us and get the ball rolling now.

Gina: Okay.

Lisa Scott: Dan and Steve, thank you.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 12th at 9:30am

Meeting was adjourned at 10:02AM