



CAMPAIGN FINANCE BOARD

SC Campaign Finance Board Meeting Summary March 4, 2020 - 9:30 AM

1. **Call to Order:** 9:30 AM
2. **Public Comments:** None
3. **Review and Approve February 27, 2020 Meeting Summary:**
Motion by Adrian **Fassett**; Seconded by Honorable John **Toomey**
4. **Discussion:**

The Board compared **Amy Loprest's** bio to that of **Nicole Gordon's**, in regards to the waiver committee and ethics job description.

10 a.m. Conference Call with **Amy Loprest**; hope to discuss candidates backgrounds (legal, accounting, and administrative)

Honorable John Toomey believes candidates should have either legal, accountant, administrative backgrounds. Believes a strong administrative-management background is most important for a candidate to have.

Adrian Fassett believes a strong legal and administrative background is most important for a candidate, accountant background can always be supplemented later.

Lisa Scott mentioned that **Nicole Gordon** and **Amy Loprest** went to law school and have background in public interest law. States that most candidate backgrounds include public interest law and they should have some knowledge of election law.

Lisa Scott: Should a candidate be selected from Suffolk County, or if it can be someone from outside of Suffolk County?

Dan Dubois: If someone from outside of Suffolk County is hired, there needs to be a waiver because there is a residency requirement.

Adrian Fassett: If the individual is not from Suffolk County, he or she needs to have some understanding of Suffolk County's local politics, and realistically speaking, Suffolk County does not have a ton of money to recruit the type of individual to do the job sufficiently.

Honorable John Toomey: There needs to be a pool of people to interview, preferably individuals with experience running for public office or administrative experience.

Dan Dubois: One of the things that an Executive Director should probably do at the beginning is to go to campaigns and sell the program. They need to be able to present well.

Honorable John Toomey states there are 104 city council members; 96 city council members would use 95% of the funds that was available.

Lisa Scott refers to the NYC Campaign Finance Board website for information regarding history of the Campaign Finance Board in 1989. At that time, the Board disbursed \$4.5

million in public matching funds, matching contribution from NYC residents at a rate of 1:1, to 36 candidates in elections.

Dan Dubois mentions that case studies have been done regarding how individuals perform relative to their requirements. Study found that several candidates easily passed the threshold or have come close to it.

Honorable John Toomey: How can candidates be reached and educated that this opportunity is available, and the trade-off for the challenge presented is well worth it?

Lisa Scott: Specialists (IT) create websites that could possibly help clearly define goals of what is needed.

Dan Dubois: Is the statement of need different for those that live in Nassau or the city?

Lisa Scott: Civil Service could address the statement of need by checking for candidates (post job posting on Indeed account with requirements such as legal or managements backgrounds).

Steve Randazzo: Civil Service could help with drafting requirements with specs.

Lisa Scott: Are there professional networks that they could tap into, such as COGEL. Is there a dividing line between the Ethics Board and Campaign Finance?

Steve Randazzo: In the County, there is always the ability to request an opinion from the Ethics Board and then there can also be a request for an investigation retroactive to the occurrence or for future consultation.

John Toomey: When does the ethics board step in if they receive something Campaign Finance related, such as who investigate complaints against other candidates?

Dan Dubois: The Board of Elections may investigate campaign violations.

- ***10 a.m. Conference Call with Amy Loprest (Audio Starts @ 00:26:55)***

Amy Loprest briefly provides background of her time on the Board; She worked on the Board for 2 years (Fall of 1990- Fall of 1992) after 1989 elections

Lisa Scott states that there needs to be definitions of terms of executive director and development

Amy Loprest offers to lend software (a disclosure web-based system) to help with campaigns and that would report all of their finances.

Steve Randazzo: Is the software designed in-house?

Amy Loprest: It is built in-house.

Honorable John Toomey: What are the Director's greatest challenges?

Amy Loprest: Some people are supportive of this idea and not. The first thing to do would to build a Trust, possibly through audit programs which can be a way to see that public money is being spent the right way. Secondly, make the system as simple as possible by determining what are the most important things to audit for.

Honorable John Toomey: Is there a specific outreach for candidates?

Amy Loprest: Yes. Suggest getting someone that can speak to candidates, not specifically a lawyer, but someone who understands the law and can speak on the level of campaigns. Also suggests using community programs to advertise or social media to market candidates and working with BOE to figure out candidates.

Honorable John Toomey: Is there a handbook with rules and regulations for candidates?

Amy Loprest: There is a handbook online for guidance and examples of forms. Such handbooks are printed for candidates for training sessions.

Honorable John Toomey: Who drafted the Handbook?

Amy Loprest: The handbook was originally drafted by Candidate Services by one (1) person regarding rules and regulations, while I wrote it from a Treasurer's standpoint.

Honorable John Toomey: What are the number of employees?

Amy Loprest: There are 130 employees total; 5 employees work on the Campaign Finance Board.

Honorable John Toomey: Are complaints handled in-house, and then sent out if need be?

Amy Loprest: Most complaints are handled in-house; formal and informal complaints can be investigated by staff that is outside, but adjacent to our audit unit that does investigations into contracts or to report on expenditures.

Honorable John Toomey: Are there training schedules set for candidates?

Amy Loprest: There are training sessions, and it is mandated that all candidates attend training. Staff keeps records of all questions from candidates. Guidance in writing can be relied upon completely.

Adrian Fassett: How important is it for Executive Directors to be involved in the development process?

Amy Loprest: It is very helpful for Executive Directors to be involved in the process. Everyone can be on the same page by seeing what candidates and staff should do.

Steve Randazzo: Are there specific qualifications an Executive Director should have?

Amy Loprest: In a lot of jurisdictions, the Executive Director is also General Counsel or has legal background. They should understand government operations of the legislature, be able to multitask (audits, legal issues, managing staff), and be able to communicate clearly to others.

Adrian Fassett: Is understanding Suffolk County politics important for candidates?

Amy Loprest: An understanding will certainly help, more specifically the structure, and the operations of Suffolk County.

Lisa Scott: Should we consider reaching out to younger candidates?

Amy Loprest: Yes, but the individual needs to be dedicated and have passion to want to work for it and run as a candidate.

Lisa Scott: Opinions on bipartisanship in organizations?

Amy Loprest: There is value in hiring people with campaign experience, but the Executive Director should not as they should be non-partisan.

Lisa Scott finds that it is hard for individuals who are completely bi-partisan to adjust to non-partisan.

Lisa Scott: Have there been more primaries happening in the last couple of years?

Amy Loprest: The goal is to allow more people to run. The city always has more competition. The city also has an 8-year term limit.

Adrian Fassett: Are other Municipalities in development stages?

Amy Loprest: Several; Denver, CO, Montgomery, MD, Washington D.C., Portland, OR.

Dan Dubois: What interaction do you have with the state BOE?

Amy Loprest: Had software created for state filing program; law passed that states if BOE agrees, candidates do not have to file with both state and city-they just file in one place.

Adrian Fassett: Best Advice?

Amy Loprest: Finding an individual who is even-keeled, trustworthy and a good communicator.

Steve Randazzo: Are there audit folks on staff and is there a yearly audit?

Amy Loprest: The audit unit is the biggest (30 people). Audits occur before, during and after elections. Audits are peer-reviewed every three (3) years.

Steve Randazzo: What happens if the Board makes a mistake?

Amy Loprest: There is a process in the public finance rules where candidates can challenge the Board regarding fund amounts.

Honorable John Toomey: What happens if a candidate is overpaid?

Amy Loprest: There is a mechanism to reclaim money.

Lisa Scott: Who puts Charter together?

Amy Loprest: The legal staff puts that together and advises members to look through the rules and use them.

Dan Dubois: Is it appropriate for an Executive Director to audit for a small staff environment, or should there be a separate director to handle disclosures?

Amy Loprest: Suggest getting a second person to avoid mistakes, or complaints of favoritism.

Honorable John Toomey: Are there outside auditors and a General Counsel?

Amy Loprest: Staff is used; General Counsel has their own legal staff.

Amy Loprest concludes conversation by stating she will post a link for job through the Council of Governmental Ethics Laws website.

5. **Call Summary Discussion** (Audio Starts @ 01:16:15)

Action - *get audio cut for members*

Steve Randazzo suggests changing requisites to account clerk for secretary (can fill some of the auditor role). Executive Directors should have a CPA in management or accounting background. Ask Presiding Officer to redefine secretary position.

Action - *to come up with a paragraph for job description for Executive Director. First hire them and then focus on secretary position and account clerk.*

Lisa Scott: How do we come up with specs?

Honorable John Toomey: Each member comes up with a spec and then collectively put them together.

Dan Dubois states that if **Nicole Gordon** was to be brought in, they will need to go through waiver process-you would present the contract to the waiver committee.

Steve Randazzo suggests bringing in staff from IT/ Civil Service to write specs, coding a program, or developing a web-based disclosure system.

Adrian Fasset asked if they can make it a rule to have the candidates go through training?

Action - *to require a rule for mandatory training*

Honorable John Toomey commented that the last cycle started last November, new cycle can start now.

6. **Schedule Upcoming Meetings**

Next Meeting Scheduled: March 11th at 9 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

7. **Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m. by Lisa Scott

In addition to Board Members Toomey, Fassett & Scott, the following individuals were also in attendance at the meeting:

Dan Dubois, Legislative Aide, Legislator Robert Calarco
Amy Ellis, Chief Deputy Clerk
Christina Mirabella, Intern, Clerk of the Legislator
Steve Randazzo, County Executive Assistant