

**Altadena Library District
Executive Search Committee Report 2/25/19
Betsy Kahn, Chair**

Committee Formation and Charge

At the December meeting of the Altadena Library District, an ad hoc Executive Search Committee was formed consisting of Trustee Terry Andrues, and myself as Chair. At our January meeting, we were given the charge to research best practices for the hiring of a permanent Library Director.

Process

Over the past month I have had phone, email, or in-person discussions with 13 individuals, including library special district directors and trustees, a trustee of a special cemetery district, a K-12 school board member, community college trustees, a retired library director, our legal counsel, and our own current Interim Director. The following chart outlines those contacts.

Name	Institution Name	Institution Type	Position
Cindy Cleary	Altadena Library District	Special Library District	Interim Director
Luren Dickinson	Beaumont Library District	Special Library District	Library Director
Cynthia Carr	Beaumont Library District	Special Library District	President, Board of Trustees
Ruben Duran	Best Best & Krieger	Law Firm	Attorney
Pat Ganer	Buena Park Library District/ Cypress College	Special Library District/ CC District	Trustee/Trustee
Ryan Roy	Palos Verdes Library District	Special Library District	Assistant Director
Jim Osterling	Pasadena City College	Community College District	Trustee
Robert Karatsu	Pasadena/Rancho Cucamonga Libraries	Municipal Public Library Systems	Former Interim/ Former Director
Gayle Carline	Placentia Library District	Special Library District	President, Board of Trustees
Jeannette Contreras	Placentia Library District	Special Library District	Library Director
Al Shkoler	Placentia Library District	Special Library District	Trustee
Michele Kipke	South Pasadena USD	School District	Board Member
Geneva Philpot	Visalia Public Cemetery District	Cemetery District	Trustee

Best Practices

Composition of Search Committee

Special district and school district search committees consisted solely of members of the Board, or the entire Board as a whole. In a few cases staff members were also included, either the current Director, or an HR staff person, or both. No special district library search committees included members of the public. The two community college trustees I interviewed described a very large committee structure that is specific to that type of academic institution because of the requirement to include stakeholder groups such as faculty senate members, union representatives, community members, etc. The community college model is unique and not analogous to a special district library.

Use of a Search Firm

Seven of the 13 respondents recommend the use of a search firm. Those who didn't usually had strong internal candidates. One estimate puts the cost at approximately 25% of first year starting salary, which according to our salary schedule would range from approximately \$29-35K. PVL D spent \$24,500 in its recent director search.

Public/Staff Input

Identifying key stakeholders in the search and hiring process is important. In special district libraries such as ours, public and/or staff input generally happened after finalists had been identified by the search committee/search firm, although several had no public or staff input at all. In Palos Verdes, the search firm held sessions with the staff (with no Board members present) to solicit their ideas on ideal characteristics in a Director. Another model was a series of different interview panels for finalists, comprising separate groups such as library directors from the area, management level staff, and community members.

Library staff should have a strong voice in the new Director selection, as they have been through several leadership changes in the last year and will appreciate a return of stable management. The general public has also voiced an interest in the new Library Director and could be polled in focus groups as to which characteristics they would like to see in a new Director.

To avoid duplication of effort, some of this information could be gathered at public input sessions that may have already been scheduled by other committees (e.g., Strategic Planning), in questionnaires or conversations about the desired qualities and experience of the future

permanent Director. Likewise, staff could be polled at an upcoming event for team-building that is proposed by Cindy Cleary in the coming weeks.

Confidentiality for Applicants

Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of a tightly confidential application process, especially in the beginning stages. Some models allowed for the public identification of the final few candidates, but others kept the process confidential until the job offer to the selected candidate was finalized.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Board authorize the Executive Search Committee and staff to work together to write and distribute a Request for Proposal for the selection of an executive search firm. Criteria will include estimated fees, openness to community input, publicity plan, examples of recent hires, and references from recent clients, along with any other criteria that Trustees direct the Committee to consider. While we recognize the necessity to be prudent with our financial resources, some advantages to using a search firm instead of a “do-it-yourself” approach include:

- A more robust pool of applicants, with a national scope
- A higher level of confidence in the process on the part of potential applicants
- An additional level of applicant vetting through the search firm’s network of contacts
- Expert guidance throughout our process
- A more efficient time frame to complete hiring
- Assurance that our application, interview, and hiring process will be equitable and legal
- A worthwhile investment of District resources in order to ensure the best possible outcome

Additionally, the Committee recommends that we retain our current composition of two Trustees, with the proviso that should we eventually hire a search firm, we will use their expertise to explore and implement the best ways to solicit public and staff input as our process moves forward. We will report those proposals back to the Board for approval.