

Ohio Rail Development Commission
Special Meeting
April 6, 2007
Vern Riffe Center, Board Room
31st Floor

The special meeting of the Ohio Rail Development Commission was called to order by Chairman James Betts at 9:10 a.m. for the purpose of conducting interviews for ORDC's Executive Director. Members present included Chairman Betts, Kimberly Gibson, Solomon Jackson, Tom McOwen, Howard Wood and Daniel Roberts. Roll call was taken. Barbara Bennett arrived at 9:12 a.m. Seven voting members were present.

Members absent included: Larry Sowers, Jim Hartung, Herk Wolfe, Representatives Robert Hagan and Larry Flowers, and Senators Larry Mumper and Capri Cafaro.

MOTION TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Betts made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing candidates for the Executive Director position. Once interviews are complete Chairman Betts will adjourn Executive Session to reconvene the special meeting of the Ohio Rail Development Commission for the purpose of discussing the candidates and/or adjourning the special meeting. Commissioner McOwen seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with seven votes in the affirmative.

Commissioners adjourned to Executive Session at 9:15 a.m. to conduct the interviews.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION OVER LUNCH

The ORDC was in executive session on April 6th to interview candidates for the executive director's position. At 12:00 p.m., the Commission adjourned executive session from lunch and entered open session to have lunch and discuss the candidates. Commissioners present were James E. Betts, Chairman, Thomas B. McOwen, Solomon Jackson, Kimberly Gibson, Daniel Roberts, Howard Wood and Barbara Hammontree Bennett.

Commissioner Bennett motioned to adjourn executive session and enter open session. Commissioner Jackson seconded. Chairman Betts asked all in favor to indicate by voice vote, which was unanimous.

Chairman Betts asked for comments on any or all candidates. Commissioners Jackson and Roberts made general comments about the question pertaining to "program experience," and while all agreed the question was somewhat ambiguous, all agreed that the question must remain.

Commissioner McOwen commented that Don Yerks made a favorable impression on him during the interview process; that he had good management experience and some experience with the political process as well. Commissioner Gibson noted that he was very engaging, and Commissioner Bennett noted that he had a very strong presence in the interview. All commissioners generally shared this favorable impression.

Commissioner Bennett shared her opinion of David Shull, noting that while he had a very impressive business background, his lack of experience with railroads and rail transportation issues made him a less-than-ideal candidate. All commissioners generally shared this opinion.

Commissioner Gibson commented about Norman Braughton, noting that he gave very good, sometimes textbook answers to every interview question. On the other hand, some commissioners felt he was not extremely engaging, or did not express a visionary attribute that is considered important to the position. On the other hand, Commissioner Jackson thought his even temper might be beneficial in contentious negotiating sessions or heated public meetings. A final comment was that his background did not indicate a wealth of experience with grassroots political constituency-building.

Regarding Jeff Armbruster, Commissioner Jackson noted that he did much better in this interview than in the last. Other commissioners thought he still didn't address the questions, or stay on topic very well. Chairman Betts noted that he worked well with the minority party when he was senator, an attribute that would serve him well as ORDC executive director.

Commissioner Gibson made general closing remarks about the skills needed for the position, noting that we need someone who will get along well with the staff of the ORDC, and that the ORDC staff is made up of dedicated and true believers. All agreed. Other commissioners noted that there is currently friction between the ORDC staff and acting executive director, which must be addressed. Chairman Betts noted that he has addressed this issue, but agrees that staff relationship-building is an important quality of the executive director.

The discussion concluded and Chairman Betts asked for a motion to adjourn to executive session for the purpose of interviewing the remaining candidates. Commissioner Bennett moved to approve the motion and Commissioner Gibson seconded. The Chairman called the roll with seven votes in the affirmative.

There being an affirmative vote of the commission with enough members present for a quorum, the meeting was adjourned into executive session at 12:55 p.m.

RECONVENE FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION TO SPECIAL MEETING

Chairman Betts asked for a motion to adjourn Executive Session and reconvene to the special meeting to discuss the candidates in open forum. Commissioner Bennett moved to approve the motion and Commissioner Jackson seconded. Roll call was taken with seven votes in the affirmative. Commissioners adjourned from Executive Session to the special meeting at 3:53 p.m.

Chairman Betts asked Commissioners to review the list of candidates and decide who should be given further consideration. Chairman Betts read the names of each candidate and discussion regarding their qualifications proceeded. Nathan Fling, the Assistant Attorney General's representative, asked that if any candidate was to be removed from the list that it state for the record why that candidate was being removed from consideration.

It was decided that David Shull, due to lack of transportation experience; Gary Holben, due to experience not relevant to the position; and Joseph Dunn, due to lack of political/leadership skills, would be removed from further consideration.

Further discussion took place regarding the remaining candidates. Chairman Betts asked the commissioners if it was their desire to have a recommendation to come before the full commission at the next meeting scheduled in May. The commissioners all agreed it was their desire so discussion took place to consider the remaining candidates and who would be a "top three choice." The commissioners agreed upon four final candidates for further consideration: Matthew Dietrich, Donald Yerks, William Knight and Michael Bradley. The remaining candidates whom were eliminated were discussed and the conclusion was the qualifications of the four selected were superior in each case to those eliminated.

ADJOURN FROM SPECIAL MEETING

Chairman Betts asked for a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Ohio Rail Development Commission. Commissioner Wood moved to approve the motion and Commissioner Gibson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.