School board finalizes superintendent evaluation process

By Debbie Bruell
Sopris Sun Correspondent

The RE-1 school board's recent statement outlining three mechanisms for soliciting input on district leadership "was made with the full support of the whole board," board president Matt Hamilton told the Sun early this week.

Since the statement's release, the board worked quickly to hammer out the details of the plan.

The first mechanism for input is a "360-degree review" of Superintendent Judy Haptonstall. The term "360 degree review" refers to the 360 degrees of circle. In contrast to a traditional performance review in which a supervisor provides all the feedback for a person's review (in the case of the school district, the school board acts as Haptonstall's supervisor), feedback in a 360-degree review is provided by people who work around that person – subordinates, peers and supervisors.

The idea of a 360-degree review of Haptonstall dates back to last spring when a group of parents proposed that her contract be renewed for one year, rather than two, and that her continued employment be contingent upon a 360-degree review. In a 3-1 vote, the board rejected the proposal, approving Haptonstall's two-year contract without a 360-degree review. However, in Haptonstall's subsequent evaluation the previous school board listed development of a 360-review process for the district as a future goal.

According to school board vice-president Richard Stettner, he and newly elected board member Daniel Biggs have been working closely together, "driving the whole process" of researching and selecting a firm to conduct the 360-degree review. The rest of the board agreed with Stettner and Biggs' final recommendation to use DecisionWise, a management consulting firm in Utah to conduct the review through a comprehensive and anonymous survey of all teachers, non-certified staff, administrators and board members – about 700 people in total.

The RE-1 School Board elected newcomer Matt Hamilton as its president during its first meeting in early November. One of the board's first actions is to conduct a 360-degree review of Superintendent Judy Haptonstall. Photo by Jane Bachrach

The board reviewed sample surveys from DecisionWise and unanimously agreed upon one to use for the district's 360-degree review of Haptonstall. According to Stettner, the board agreed not to make any changes to the questions recommended by DecisionWise because "they (DecisionWise) are the experts" and the board wanted to avoid any concerns about questions being biased one way or the other.

The survey will include about 65 questions in which respondents will be asked to rate the superintendent's leadership capabilities, ranging from "very poor" to "outstanding," and three open-ended questions. The board has not decided whether the questions themselves will be available to the public.

Hamilton explained the survey will not ask questions relating to the district's academic initiatives or strategies; it will be "solely focused on leadership skills of our chief executive and perceptions of leadership by our staff."

The board planned to release a statement to district staff early this week outlining the process and timeline for completing the survey. The survey will be sent to staff on Nov. 29 and must be completed by Dec. 9. It will be conducted from start to finish by DecisionWise in order to guarantee its complete confidentiality. As Hamilton described the process, "We give DecisionWise a list of names and email addresses, and DecisionWise takes it from there."

The cost of DecisionWise's services – including providing the survey questions, conducting the survey, analyzing the results and consulting with the board as it discusses the results – will be $2,750. The board has not made a decision about whether any of the results of the survey will be released to the public.

Other mechanisms

The second feedback mechanism related to Haptonstall noted in the school board's recent statement is the board's willingness to hear from all stakeholders through e-mails and office hours. Each board member's e-mail address, as well as the time and location of his or her office hours, will be listed on the district's Web site. (The only office hours listed so far are Hamilton's and Stettner's).

The third review mechanism listed in the board's statement is the opportunity for people to share their thoughts publicly at any of the three upcoming board meetings: Nov. 29 at 5:30 p.m. at the district office in Glenwood Springs; Dec. 14 at 4 p.m. at the district office; and Dec. 16 at 8 a.m. at the Third Street Center in Carbondale.

Between the anonymous surveys given to about 700 staff members, board members' availability through e-mail and office hours, and public forum sessions in three board meetings, Stettner said that the board will be receiving "an immense amount of data to digest and review." According to the board's statement on Nov. 14, board members "hope to make decisions about future direction at (the) retreat on Dec. 16."

When asked if all five members of the school board support the specifics for the staff survey and the evaluation process as a whole, Stettner responded, "Absolutely. Everyone is in agreement."

Next steps:

The RE-1 School Board will take input at upcoming meetings on Nov. 29, Dec. 14 and Dec. 16.

Office hours for the two Carbondale/Basalt area school board members are as follows: Matt Hamilton, Nov. 23 and 28, and Dec. 5 and 12, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Third Street Center (starting in January his office hours will be the second Tuesday of the month from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.); Richard Stettner's office hours are Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 7 and March 6 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at Basalt Elementary School.

DOE recognizes Clean Energy Collective for solar projects

Sopris Sun Staff Report

The Department of Energy announced it has selected Carbondale-based Clean Energy Collective to receive its "Innovative Green Power Program of the Year" award as part of the DOE's Green Power Leadership Awards.

"We are honored and very appreciative to receive such an outstanding accolade in our industry," said Clean Energy Collective founder and president Paul Spencer. "Our model is proving to be a game changer for renewable energy adoption, and significantly expands what's possible for our new energy economy."

Clean Energy Collective (CEC) develops affordable, community-owned renewable energy facilities, according to a press release. The company partnered with Holy Cross Energy, a rural electric cooperative in western Colorado, to offer the nation's first customer-owned community solar program, with nearly 1 megawatt of solar capacity already installed and 2.5 MW approved for development. CEC is actively building 1.5 MW of additional community solar with other utilities and working on more than 33 MW of community solar opportunities throughout the nation.

Clean Energy Collective created an innovative business and tax structure that enables any utility customer to purchase solar panels in a community solar farm and receive credits for the power the panels produce directly on their monthly utility bill. "This makes solar ownership accessible and cost-effective to literally anyone with a utility bill," Spencer said.

CEC's program broadens the access to solar ownership to nearly seven times as many utility customers as are able to access traditional on-site solar today. "Compared to the few existing community solar programs, CEC customers actually own their solar panels as opposed to lease them from the utility, which provides the maximum benefit for the customer," Spencer continued.

A DOE representative said "the Clean Energy Collective model has the potential to vastly expand the marketplace for clean energy ownership and production by providing utilities and customers with a low risk, financially advantageous way to procure local renewable energy."

Perhaps the most visible CEC solar array is located on the north side of Highway 82 near Blue Lake.

The Green Power Leadership awards are made annually to recognize organizations that distinguish themselves among U.S. green power market participants. The Innovative Green Power Program of the Year award recognizes the top organization that is advancing green power markets through innovative approaches to delivering green power to the marketplace.

This is Clean Energy Collective's 858kW community array in Rifle. It was constructed earlier this year. One of the company's other solar arrays is located on Highway 82 in El Jebel. Courtesy photo

The Clean Energy Collective has pioneered the model of delivering clean power-generation through large-scale facilities that are collectively owned by participating utility customers. CEC's proprietary RemoteMeter® system automatically calculates monthly credits and integrates with existing utility billing systems, enabling utility customers to easily have clean, renewable power credited directly on their monthly utility bills, without modifying their home or office.