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**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority
AD-HOC SUBCOMMITTEE FOR EXEC DIRECTOR SEARCH
AGENDA**

Thursday, March 9, 2023

2:00 p.m.

Prior to entering the meeting, please turn all electronic devices (cell phones, pagers, etc.) to a silent, vibrate or off position.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Overture Walker (Richland County) – Committee Chair

John V. Furgess, Sr., Vice Chair (RCLD)

Lill Mood (Lexington County)

Tina Herbert (City of Columbia)

Andy Smith (Forest Acres)

- 1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
- 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA PAGE 1
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES PAGES 2- 11
- 4. EXECUTIVE SESSION
 - A. LEGAL/CONTRACTUAL/PERSONNEL
 - Discussion of contractual matter relating to the hiring of a search firm – TRANSPRO (PAM BAKER/OVERTURE WALKER)

5. ADJOURN

All items on this agenda are subject to action being taken by the Board of Directors. Agenda order is subject to change.

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The COMET Finance Committee Meeting minutes are prepared and presented in **summary form**. Audio recordings of the meetings are on file at The COMET and are part of the approved minutes. If you would like to hear the recording from the meeting, please contact pbynoe-reed@thecometsc.gov.

Per SC Code of Laws, Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 30-4-80 - All public bodies shall notify persons or organizations, local news media, or such other news media as may request notification of the times, dates, places, and agenda of all public meetings, whether scheduled, rescheduled, or called, and the efforts made to comply with this requirement must be noted in the minutes of the meetings. **The COMET complied with the notification of this meeting on February 1, 2023.**

Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority
AD-HOC SUBCOMMITTEE FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH MEETING
Thursday, February 9, 2023 12:00 P.M.
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201
Conference Room A (Large) – 2nd Floor

Members Present:

Overture Walker, Chair
John Furgess
Lill Mood
Andy Smith, Treasurer
Tina Herbert

COMET Staff Present:

LeRoy DesChamps, COO
Pamela Bynoe-Reed, Director of Marketing and Community Affairs
Rosalyn Andrews, Director of Finance and Accounting
Jackie Bowers, Director of Operations
Dr. Arlene Prince, Compliance and Civil Rights Officer

Members Absent:

Guests Present:

Dr. Robert Morris, Board of Directors
John Lewis, Principal Executor, Transpro Consulting

1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mr. Walker called the meeting to order at 12:04 P.M.

A quorum was present at the opening of the meeting.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Walker called for any changes, additions, or deletions to the agenda. None were heard.

Page 1

Motion:

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith
Motion passed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 8, 2022

Pages 2-12

Motion:





A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Furgess to adopt the minutes from the December 8, 2022 Executive Director Search Committee meeting.

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith

Motion passed.

4. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

A. REVIEW OF PRESENT JOB DESCRIPTION FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pages 13-19

Mr. Walker asked for input from the committee.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. DesChamps whether the pay grade is internal or federal. Mr. DesChamps stated that it is internal.

Ms. Mood asked Mr. DesChamps whether this lengthy job description is sufficiently thorough. Mr. DesChamps said it may not be inclusive of everything, but it's captured a lot. He stated that that Board may need to highlight the Penny referendum, and how we approach the multi-modal center. Ms. Mood concurred.

Mr. Furgess stated that the entire job description is mainly boilerplate for an executive director. He said that under distinguishing characteristics, we should add intermodal experience and some type of statement requesting some PR experience, dealing with city and county officials. He said that the current description of distinguishing characteristics covers only the governmental parts such as FDA, City, Title VI, etc.

Mr. DesChamps concurred with Mr. Furgess and added that a search firm should be able to look at this job description and give some input on how to make it more appealing to candidates.

Mr. Walker asked whether we're taking action today on altering the job description ourselves, or whether the search firm will be making these revisions.

Mr. DesChamps said that just presenting the current job description and then working through these revisions with the firm would be more efficient than trying to alter the job description now on our own. Mr. Walker concurred.

Ms. Mood stated that we need to emphasize the ED's role in collaboration with the contractor, because that's a unique feature of this system, and it requires an additional set of skills. She also stated that we need to emphasize how the ED will delegate responsibilities to staff.

Mr. Furgess stated that the relationship between the contractor and the ED doesn't fit into what we're doing now, because we determine that relationship during the contract. He said the contractor responds to what we decide to put in the contract. He reiterated the importance of



PR skills in an ED.

Ms. Mood stated that we need to keep the roles clear, regarding the contractor expectations versus ED expectations, because it's easy to stumble or have gaps, if that's not managed well.

Mr. Walker called for further discussion. None was heard.

B. TRANSIT SEARCH FIRMS PRESENTATION

Mr. Walker stated that we have only one search firm presenting today. Ms. Bynoe-Reed stated that she contacted all four search firms which were identified in the last meeting. She invited them all to present today regarding this contract, but only one firm responded.

Mr. Walker and Dr. Morris emphasized that we want to be transparent with the public, that every possible step was taken to try evaluate multiple search firms regarding this ED position.

1. Transpro Consulting

Mr. Lewis introduced himself and said he's excited to introduce Transpro Consulting and its executive placement practice to The COMET, and to engage in a conversation that will hopefully lead to a potential partnership.

Mr. Lewis said he'd begin with an introduction to Transpro's executive placement arm, an overview of the approach to sourcing for executives, a schedule of a potential partnership between Transpro and The COMET, and then answer questions.

Mr. Lewis stated that he leads the executive placement team as the managing partner for executive placement, which is one of four business arms of Transpro Consulting. They have two recruiters. Chanel Nicholas is the executive recruiter, and Miranda Walters is the senior recruiter. Mr. Lewis said he serves as the client interface.

Mr. Lewis explained that Transpro Consulting, through its four business arms, has had relationships and partnerships with many of the largest transit agencies in North America, as well as rural and smaller agencies, and they deliver exceptional customer satisfaction to their partners.

Mr. Lewis said that in the two years that Transpro has been doing executive recruitment, they have seen exceptional growth in the practice because of how they really engage with potential partners, to understand what their needs are and then source specific kinds of candidates, not just collect as many resumes as possible for the partner to evaluate.

Mr. Lewis said Transpro's approach is unique because they divide it into three phases. The first phase is the most important, which is the time spent with the partner, understanding the agency priorities. He said they bring a unique PI tool for understanding the kinds of characteristics the agency is seeking in an executive. It's a personality test that the agency





can go through to help identify what the perfect traits are and give Transpro an idea of what the core competencies and credentials are, and that's how they develop a recruitment strategy.

The second phase is where Transpro goes through the process of screening candidates, submitting finalists, and setting up interviews with the interview panel.

The third phase is an optional plan where Transpro provides guidance on executive compensation, and if requested, help in transitioning the new executive into the position. Mr. Lewis said that, having been an executive himself in three different transit agencies on the East Coast, he remembers his first days in office, going through a rigorous interview process, developing a plan, and beginning to wonder what's next. That is why Transpro Consulting brings the capability of helping the new executive to develop a 100-day plan, in conjunction with the Board.

Mr. Lewis stated the goal is to have this entire process take about 90 days, from notice to proceed, to the time interviews begin.

Mr. Lewis said that what makes Transpro Consulting different is, they approach project management in a very collaborative way. They don't just come in, get a contract, and disappear for two or three months, then throw a bunch of resumes at you. They plan to be a partner in this engagement, with bi-weekly meetings and updates with The COMET, to discuss how the process is progressing, the kinds of candidates being sought, and any challenges along the way.

Mr. Lewis reiterated that it's a 90-day plan. The first two weeks is establishing the core priorities, competencies, and credentials. The next two weeks is establishing the recruitment strategy. It will take four weeks to screen candidates, and by the seventh week, they should be ready to submit 10 to 15 finalists for consideration.

Mr. Lewis explained that Transpro Consulting brings national public transit experience, and the practice is led by transit executives in all arms of the business. He's led three transit agencies during his public service career, as CEO of the Charlotte Area Transit System, most recently. Prior to that, he led the Central Florida Regional Transit Authority in Orlando. His first executive posting was in Richmond, VA, leading the Greater Richmond Transit Company.

Mr. Lewis reiterated that Transpro Consulting understands public transit and the public sector. He said that in the beginning phase, they will gain an understanding of The COMET and the Columbia region, which will inform the development of the recruitment strategy.

Mr. Lewis and Mr. Walker called for questions.



Mr. Furgess asked if Transpro Consulting is seeing many requests for transit managers with experience in intermodal, mixed-use development. Mr. Lewis said that they are.

Mr. Lewis stated that he knows it's not just about counting vehicles and riders, and that transit is often an integral factor in reaching the economic goals of a region. He said that across the country, Transpro is seeing a high priority placed on understanding the role that intermodal transit plays in the overall success of a community.

Ms. Mood stated that the Charlotte, NC area has been ahead of the curve, regionally, regarding rail transit. She asked Mr. Lewis to describe that intermodal approach, and how he coordinated his bus duties there with rail transit.

Mr. Lewis stated that CATS, the Charlotte Area Transit System, is a unique organization, being a department of city government, and so he was an employee of the City of Charlotte. He said his Board of Directors was a regional board, consisting of the mayors and elected officials of the towns served in Mecklenburg County, the Boards of Commissioners from Mecklenburg County, and also an NCDOT representative. He noted that he had bus, rail, and paratransit services underneath his purview of operations.

Mr. Lewis stated that one thing Charlotte got right from the beginning, prior to when he came there, was that they understood the role that transportation plays in the quality of life in the Mecklenburg County region. This began in the early 1990s. The half-cent sales tax that was passed by Mecklenburg County was established in 1998. He said this was more about the growth of the City of Charlotte and the surrounding region, and the transportation side of it was just a means to that end.

Mr. Lewis said that at that time, this began with a land-use plan that was based on centers, corridors, and wedges. The centers are where jobs are, in the center city, which was downtown Charlotte as well as the University area, the airport area, and the Ballantyne area, which all had high concentrations of job growth. The corridors were how those centers were connected. Wedges were areas with housing growth.

Mr. Lewis explained that the Charlotte region first understood how it wanted to grow and then overlaid that with a land-use transit plan of centers, corridors, and wedges. The corridors eventually had rail, high-frequency buses, and bus rapid transit.

Mr. Lewis concluded his report by stating that the nexus between providing transportation options cannot be in a vacuum. It must be consistent with other plans of the city and region.

Dr. Morris asked what Mr. Lewis does during the 90-day period.

Mr. Lewis stated that the first 30 days will be spent working with the designated staff and





Board members here, to understand what The COMET needs, and what the strategic and operational goals are. He will ask the designees, Board members, employees, community members, etc. to take the predictive index. This will help determine whether The COMET wants a visionary, an operational, or a detailed leader, so that he can begin to source accordingly through Transpro's network of colleagues at the C-suite level as well as emerging leaders in the industry. He will then reach out to this network, to explain the opportunity at The COMET, the type of leadership desired, and then start to cultivate that group of candidates to present to this Board.

Dr. Morris asked what the market is currently like for quality candidates.

Mr. Lewis said it depends on the region. Some cities want to see more candidates than others, but 10-15 is the average number desired. He said it has not been a challenge to find qualified candidates, as more experienced leaders in the transit industry are currently moving on to other chapters in life, so there is cultivation of new leadership. He said he doesn't think he'll have a problem filling this position with The COMET.

Mr. Smith asked what opportunity Mr. Lewis sees here.

Mr. Lewis explained that he's familiar with Columbia because he's lived in Charlotte for seven years, and he's met The COMET's former executive director, John Andoh, so he has an understanding of the path that The COMET would like to take and the leadership challenges being faced. Mr. Lewis reiterated that the first 30 days would be his opportunity to get a real understanding of what The COMET is seeking. He noted that since he lives so close by, that will make it easier to spend a lot of time having face-to-face interactions instead of virtual meetings.

Mr. Furgess noted that Mr. Lewis addressed the concerns about intermodal transit very well. Mr. Furgess asked Mr. Lewis if he has experience with mixed-use development such as hotels, student housing, and health facilities.

Mr. Lewis stated that, regarding the role of public transit in economic development, he's experienced widely, particularly in Charlotte, that with rail investments, there are all kinds of development along the way, because the development community sees that investment. Charlotte has had incredibly explosive growth in general, but the fastest growth has been along rail lines, with both corporate towers and housing. Regarding the land-use plan, all of Charlotte's corridors serve major universities, and the streetcar serves not just the city center but the community college and the Historically Black College, Johnson C. Smith University. He said that in Charlotte, partnerships were created that allowed students and faculty unlimited use of public transit. He said he understands the type of role that transit plays not just in moving people but in spurring economic development across the board, and the type of executive needed to foster that kind of growth.



Ms. Mood noted to Mr. Lewis that we utilize a contractor for operations, and also that we have an upcoming referendum to renew our Penny sales tax. She said she'd like to hear Mr. Lewis' ideas for those two items.

Mr. Walker asked about the likelihood of finding someone with experience dealing with sales tax referenda.

Mr. Lewis said that utilizing the contractor actually makes it easier to find the right executive. He said there was a similar arrangement for the bus service in Charlotte with RATP Dev, while rail service was run by city employees. He said that he didn't have to spend so much time worrying about daily operations of the buses, which allowed him to be more externally focused, dealing with the community and understanding the needs, including gearing up for sales tax referenda. He said Charlotte has been having the same conversation over the past year and a half.

Mr. DesChamps inquired about how the personality index is utilized in the search process.

Mr. Lewis explained that the PI tool helps us understand the type of executive needed, which is based on many factors such as the operating environment and the culture of the agency and the community. For example, if funding were not an issue, that predictive index could be very different.

Mr. DesChamps asked Mr. Lewis to give more detail on the process and asked whether the committee will be using Mr. Lewis' tools to assess individual candidates, or whether that is left up to the agency. Mr. Lewis said he's had clients who have asked to participate more in the interview process. He said he's provided questions and scenarios for candidates during interviews. He's also had clients who simply want to be provided with candidates and take it from there on their own. He said it depends on the preferences of the Board.

Mr. DesChamps asked whether Transpro Consulting gives feedback regarding salary. Mr. Lewis said that it is a value-added service. He said some clients have a lot of questions and want a lot of input regarding salary, and others simply determine on their own, what amount they're offering, and both ways have worked fine.

Ms. Mood stated that we've had a hard time filling our planning position and asked if it would be reasonable to build those responsibilities into the ED role.

Mr. Lewis gave an example regarding his time in Richmond. When he was the director of bus operations at the Maryland Transit Administration, he wanted an opportunity to lead an organization, so he took what was considered a step back in his career. In Baltimore, he had 1,600 buses and 4,000 employees, then he went to a city with 115 buses and 300 employees,





but it was the most important decision he made as a young executive, because it gave him experience beyond just administrative duties, such as with scheduling, finance, dispatching. He said that with The COMET, we'll look to bring an executive that brings a little bit of everything, and we may have the opportunity to bring someone who has worked as a planner.

Ms. Mood noted that this committee's primary task is to determine the job description and required skill set. Mr. Lewis concurred.

Dr. Morris asked if the planner has to be someone local.

Mr. Lewis said it does not. He said he's always joked with his planners that they're all magical unicorns, because it is a very spec skillset which is very different from anything else, but it's one that transfers. If you have a planning background, you can do planning activity anywhere. But he said it does help if it is someone local.

Mr. Furgess stated that he hopes we don't conflate the planner and ED positions. He said we're looking for an ED, and if we find the appropriate skills for that, everything will fall into place.

Mr. DesChamps asked Mr. Lewis to describe a challenge that he's faced in placing candidates.

Mr. Lewis said he's only been with Transpro Consulting for three months, and his last day with CATS was on December 1st, but he has a California client who has been searching for a labor manager for over a year, while our plan is 90 days. He said he's provided many, many candidates, and nothing fits. He said it's really about understanding what you're seeking.

Dr. Prince asked Mr. Lewis what resources he utilizes for recruitment.

Mr. Lewis said they post on their own website, and they have relationships with multiple transit industry organizations. Job openings are also posted on websites for American Public Transit Association, the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials Website, and the Women's Transportation Seminar, as well as in multiple industry magazines. He noted that it depends on the type of candidate desired. He emphasized that the best resource is Transpro Consulting's own personal network.

Mr. Walker thanked Mr. Lewis and recommended going into executive session.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Smith to enter executive session.

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith

Motion passed.



The meeting went into executive session at 1:08 P.M.

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Herbert and seconded by Ms. Mood to return to open session.

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith

Motion passed.

The meeting returned to open session at 1:43 P.M.

Mr. Walker stated that in executive session, this committee discussed Item 4B, which is Transit Search Firms Presentations, specific to Transpro, which is a contractual matter, and no action was taken.

Motion:

A motion was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Mood to recommend to the full Board, entering into a contract, as discussed in executive session.

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith

Motion passed.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Furgess to adjourn.

Approved: Walker, Furgess, Herbert, Mood, Smith

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 P.M.

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this _____, 2023.

Prepared by:

Frances Von Korff

Reviewed by:

Pamela Bynoe-Reed, Director of Marketing & Community Affairs/PIO

Approved by:





Christopher Lawson, Secretary

DRAFT

