



Buncombe County Government

George Wood
Interim County Manager

July 2, 2018

Memo to: Board of Commissioners

From: George Wood, Interim County Manager *GW*

Re: County Manager Search Process

This booklet from the UNC School of Government gives an excellent overview of the search process for a county manager. I highly recommend that each of you read it before our meeting next Tuesday. At that meeting David Nicholson and I will review this process with you.

The first key decision that needs to be made is whether to employ an executive search firm for this process. The alternative is to use David and I to conduct that process. Please note that on their Timetable on page 21, they do not include the time to prepare and issue a Request for Proposals from executive search firms, narrowing the replies to about four, interviewing them, selecting one to contract with, and negotiating the contract. That will add about 45 days. I can prepare the RFQ for this and lead this process.

The reason I am sending you this information a week ahead of the meeting is so that you might be ready to make this key decision at the July 10th meeting. I am very concerned that if you don't we will lose an entire month as we don't meet again until August 7th. You will note that their Timeline is from best case (four months) to worst case (seven months) without time for the RFQ for the consultant. After you have read the booklet, I would be happy to talk with each of you either directly or by phone to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

The one advantage to using David and I is that we are both free. However, this would eat into the time I could be helping with other issues. You will note that at the bottom of page 23, the cost of an executive search firm could be as high as 1/3 of the annual salary of the county manager. That would be in the \$80,000 range. I have frozen last week an open Program Analyst position in the Intergovernmental Project Management area. That position would have been about \$65,000, plus benefits. So, that would offset most if not all of the cost of this search if you chose that option.

There are several advantages to using an executive search firm. You and the community can have a high degree of confidence in the process being conducted by a firm that specializes in recruiting local government executives, and do a number of these annually. In addition, they may be aware of managers that may not actively be looking for a position that they could recruit. And, they will be responsible for all the steps in the process to provide you the information to make your decisions on semi-finalists, then finalists, then the final candidate.

I do think it is critical, and I have heard several of you express as well, that we get input from the public and from our department heads on what attributes they would like in their next county manager. I would recommend that we hold district public input sessions in the three election districts; and then an input session with our department heads, while we are waiting on the RFQ responses. That way we could gather that information before selecting the search firm, and save that time. They and you would then take that information and incorporate it into your development of a county manager profile. That profile will then be the basis for our advertisements for the position.

Given the advantages cited above, and the fact that you previously have not conducted an executive search for a county manager, I am recommending that you select the executive search firm option.

Again, please call me if you have any questions or comments on this matter.

