
Victor Valley College trustees fill final 4 community spots on presidential search committee

By Martin Estacio / For the Daily Press

Posted at 8:47 AM

Updated at 8:47 AM

VICTORVILLE — Four volunteer community representatives will take part in helping select Victor Valley College's next top official. The Board of Trustees filled in the spots on the 20-member search committee at Tuesday evening's board meeting, noting it was a tough decision because of all the "exceedingly qualified" applicants.

Referring to sifting through the applications, Board President Dr. Marianne Tortorici said: "Each and every one of these, when you read them, you go: 'Well, how do you choose? Throw a dice?'"

Rather than leave it to random chance, or the futility of choosing one person from each geographical location which would still leave one area unrepresented due to the presence of five voting districts, the Board decided the most fair process was for each trustee to write their six favorites on a piece of paper, tally the names and pick from the ones that received the most support.

Teacher and military veteran Robert Read and Hesperia City Councilman Jeremiah Brosowske received the most at five each and were voted in unanimously.

There was a three-way tie at four between Stephen Muir, Excelsior Charter School Assistant Superintendent Dr. Derek King, and Helendale School District Superintendent Ross Swearingen. The Board used the same process to pare it down to two.

Ultimately, Muir and King survived this last round of tallying.

According to the list of applicants, Muir, of Adelanto, works at General Atomics and his qualifications include being an advisor to the VVC Aviation Maintenance Technology program.

Tortorici made sure to thank the nine applicants who weren't selected, and to let them know it had nothing to do with them not being "qualified."

"It was because it was a hard process, and we made a concerted effort to be as equitable as possible," she said.

The need to supplement the search committee comes after Superintendent and President Dr. Roger Wagner announced that he would retire Jan. 1 after serving since 2014.

He's been credited with helping pull the college out of a messy situation when it was experiencing a \$3.5 million structural deficit, and possible loss of accreditation.

The search committee will work in conjunction with search firm PPL to find potential candidates and conduct interviews, and is expected to recommend finalists to the Board during the first week of October.

According to VVC's President Search website, the Board of Trustees is "[seeking] a visionary and transformational leader to strategically position the College and District to meet the emerging and future needs of students and (the) communities it serves while protecting the long-term health of organization."

In addition to voting for the search committee members, the Board awarded multiple construction contracts, totaling more than \$12.6 million, for the One Stop Student Service Center.

Bid as a multiple prime project, the splitting of the construction into 20 different packages — four of which have not received bids — allows the district to receive the best value bid on different phases such as flooring, windows, and concrete, according to college officials.

This will save the district an estimated \$700,000 when compared to using a general contractor, said Facilities Executive Director Steve Garcia.

He acknowledged that although the district is taking on a “little more risk” because without a general contractor it will be responsible for holding and administering the contracts, but Garcia believes the financial value outweighs the risk.

The total cost of the project is expected to be around \$14 million with construction beginning next week.

For more information on the President Search, visit www.vvc.edu/president-search/.