

Trustee in line for \$85k job

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By Mitch Hotts, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A longtime Roseville Community Schools board member is the leading candidate for a high-paying job with the district if he first resigns as an elected official.

Robert Eineicher, a 22-year school board veteran, is the superintendent's choice to become bond coordinator for the district, a job that is expected to pay at least \$80,000 a year without benefits.

"I think he is the best candidate," said Superintendent John Kment.

Kment said he did not conduct any interviews with the five people who applied for the unadvertised position, but based his decision on submitted resumes.

Roseville school board members are expected to vote Monday on the recommendation, but Eineicher must step down from the board prior to the vote in order to qualify for the position.

Eineicher, 61, did not return phone calls from The Macomb Daily seeking comment Wednesday.

He would replace Jere Diebold, the current bond coordinator, who is leaving to become chief of staff for state Rep. Harold Haugh, D-Roseville. Diebold is currently paid in the mid-\$90,000 range, Kment said.

School trustees are paid \$30 per meeting.

Kment said Eineicher is a retired construction trade supervi

sor who is familiar with the bid specifications for projects remaining in a \$110 million bond program approved by voters in 2006. The district is about halfway done with the improvements to be financed by bond money.

While the job of a bond coordinator is relatively rare in Macomb County, Kment said the position — which is paid for by bond funds, not the school's budget — saves the district health care and pension costs.

"The coordinator serves as the owner's representative working with the construction manager, vendors and architect," Kment said. "We were looking for someone who would be watching out for Roseville dollars and who is competent for the job."

The superintendent said he was supplied the names of five candidates by the outgoing bond coordinator and did not post the job for outside applications.

The topic was briefly discussed at this past Monday's board meeting after board members went into a short closed session with their attorney.

Trustee Brent White asked why the superintendent had not conducted interviews with any of the candidates.

"We had the superintendent review the resumes and make a recommendation. Whether he talked to everybody is his purview," said board President Joseph Steenland.

It is not illegal or unethical for a sitting elected board member to apply for a job in his own district, according to Robert Ebersole, assistant legal counsel for the Michigan Association of School Boards.

"It's up to the individual school community to set policy so as long as they don't have a policy prohibiting an elected official from applying, there's nothing wrong with it," he said.

Many local school communities use in-house administrators such as facilities directors to serve in the capacity of a bond coordinator, although the job is not unheard of.

"We do not hire someone for that role because we have regular staff to oversee bond work," said Utica Community Schools spokeswoman Hildy Corbett. "We would rather spend the money on facilities and equipment."

The position is viewed somewhat as a luxury for administrators who wear several hats due to downsizing, said Karen Donahue, finance director for Mount Clemens Community Schools.

"I am our representative, but I also oversee transportation, food services and other duties," she said. "If your district can afford it, it does make some sense to alleviate the stress on the business office."

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Critic claims cronyism in school board pick for job

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By Mitch Hotts, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

In a move one critic labeled cronyism, a Roseville school board member was appointed to a high-paying job in the district within minutes of resigning from his elected position Monday night.

Robert Eineicher, a 22-year school board veteran, is expected to earn at least \$80,000 in his new position as a bond coordinator for Roseville Community Schools. He resigned from his \$30-per-meeting post at Monday's school board meeting.

School board President Joseph Steenland said the district was following past practice of "promoting from within" by not formally advertising the position to the public.

"Very seldom do we go outside when we have a qualified internal candidate," Steenland said.

The board voted 4-1 in favor of the appointment with Trustee Brent White casting the vote against. At the board table White said he would support Eineicher going forward, but refused to say why he voted against the appointment.

Eineicher, 62, who retired as a construction trade supervisor after 34 years with AT&T, replaces Jere Diebold as bond coordinator. Diebold was being paid in the mid-\$90,000 range with bond money, according to school officials.

Although bond funds generally can only go to "bricks and mortar," school officials wrote in the bond coordinator position when they submitted the application to the state, so the salary coming from bond proceeds is legal.

Eineicher was one of five people who applied for the unadvertised position and was recommended by Superintendent John Kment. The superintendent said although he did not conduct interviews with any of the candidates, he felt Eineicher was the best candidate based on his resume.

Unlike some school districts, Roseville Community Schools has no policy that forces an elected official to wait out a period before becoming an employee of the district.

In neighboring East Detroit Public Schools, for example, trustees must wait two years after leaving office before they can be considered for district employment.

Eineicher said he could better contribute to the community as a watchdog for the district's \$110 million bond program as a coordinator. As a school board member, he became familiar with the proposed projects and the needs of the school buildings.

"I feel a responsibility to the Roseville taxpayers and the kids," Eineicher told The Macomb Daily prior to his appointment. "Plus I'm retired and I enjoy working. I need the challenge."

The bond coordinator is relatively rare for local school districts. Most school communities use in-house officials to serve in that role along with their other duties.

Lynn Hutchinson, assistant superintendent for business affairs, said it would be "overwhelming" for him to be the coordinator due to recent modifications in his job.

Minutes after accepting Eineicher's resignation and appointing him to bond coordinator, the school board voted unanimously to appoint Matt McCartney to replace him. McCartney was then sworn in and sat at the board table.

But a former candidate for the school board called the episode a case of cronyism.

Meriam Mirza, 21, who came in third place for two school board seats in the last election, said it was "absurd" for the board to make an appointment when the general public wasn't aware of a vacancy on the board.

"I think this is ridiculous," said Mirza, a Roseville High School graduate who is attending Wayne State University. She also accused school officials of cronyism, noting the superintendent's wife and the board president's son are both employees of the district.

Board members said they appointed McCartney, who had submitted a letter of interest in a previous vacancy, because they needed to fill the job as soon as possible.

Another board member, Mina Frank, has missed several meetings and is expected to soon announce her resignation

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Favoritism sets a bad example at school district

Cronyism: favoritism shown to close friends, especially political appointments to office.

We assume John Kment, the superintendent of Roseville Community Schools, and his newest hire, Robert Eineicher, know the meaning of cronyism.

Yet, their actions earlier this week show disrespect to the taxpayers who live in the school district and expect educators to set examples for others, particularly the students.

Eineicher, a member of the Board of Education for 22 years, resigned his elected part-time post and was immediately hired as bond coordinator for the district, a job that will likely pay in excess of \$80,000.

Many school districts and municipalities establish time limits on elected officials being hired. The reason is that the public — and we mean the taxpayers — will assume jobs are being handed out to friends and/or associates.

Unlike neighboring East Detroit Public Schools, which bans trustees from taking district jobs until two years after leaving office, Roseville schools has no policy banning the practice.

Thus, the hiring of Eineicher is not illegal. But we think the circumstances make it **unethical**.

Eineicher, 62, is a retired construction trade supervisor from AT&T. That, we assume, qualifies him for the job as bond coordinator.

But many school districts, when seeking voter approval for bond projects, do not include the highly paid position and pass those duties on to current administrators working for the school system.

Couple that with the fact that Superintendent Kment did not interview any of the other four candidates for the job and **it's easy to conclude that favoritism was at play here**.

And that sets a bad example.