

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

Why Dist. 15 chief is retiring

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With a new teachers contract recently settled, the budget balanced and a solid administration team in place, Palatine Township Elementary District 15 Superintendent Robert McKanna decided the end of the 2007-2008 school year is the right time to retire.

McKanna, 64, said he wanted to give the board plenty of time to find a replacement.

"I think timing-wise it is good," McKanna said. "It looks like there will be a good amount of time to do the search (for a replacement) in a proper way."

School board President Nancy Lee Carlson said knowing McKanna's age, the announcement this week did not come as a shock.

"We knew it was likely he would not finish out his contract," Carlson said. "This was not a big surprise."

McKanna has been the district's superintendent since 2003. His current contract runs through the 2008-2009 school year.

McKanna's base salary this year is \$218,487. Carlson said that as a way to avoid paying McKanna for the final year of the contract, the school board amended the deal so it ends after the 2007-08 school year. Included in the amendment are about \$36,000 in salary increases, which will be factored in when figuring out McKanna's annual retirement pension.

"Because he is not staying that extra year, this amendment is going to save the district money," Carlson said.

School board member Tim Millar, however, was against the extra incentives given to McKanna.

"I didn't feel it was a good deal," Millar said.

School employee retirement pension is based on the consecutive four years during the last decade of employment when the employee's pay was highest.

The average of those four years is determined, and the employee can then draw a certain percentage of that average salary, based on how long he or she has worked in the state. Seventy-five percent is the highest allowed in Illinois.

Since he spent nearly a decade of his career working in New York, McKanna said he will not be eligible to receive the full 75 percent.

Carlson said the district will now begin the process of trying to find a search firm to help the board find a new leader.

"We want a good match that fits in with all of the district," Carlson said on what she will be looking for in the new superintendent.

Millar said he will be looking for someone who has a vision for the future and a strong fiscal sense.

"We are really hoping to find someone that is able to bring everyone together," Millar said.

Carlson praised McKanna for helping bring the district numerous awards and accolades.

"Dr. McKanna really helped bring us the Malcolm Baldrige Award," Carlson said of the nation's highest honor for quality and performance excellence, which the district received in 2003.

McKanna said it will be hard to leave a district with so many great employees.

"The people are really what I will miss," McKanna said.

Before being named superintendent in District 15, McKanna served as superintendent of Warren Township High School District 121 in Gurnee; Rush-Henrietta Central School District in Henrietta, N.Y.; Longmeadow Public Schools in Longmeadow, Mass.; and Stevenson High School District 125 in Lincolnshire.

McKanna said he has enjoyed his nearly four decades of working with students.

"We are really molding the future," McKanna said on why he has stuck with education for so long.

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