


Local

GRADD narrows down candidates in executive director search

 By Jacob Mulliken Messenger-Inquirer

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The search for a new Green River Area Development District executive director has been narrowed down to two candidates.

In December, current GRADD Executive Director Jiten Shah announced that he would retire on Apr. 30 after 32 years heading the organization.

Shortly after Shah's announcement, Ohio County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Chair David Johnston appointed a search committee with Henderson County Judge-Executive and GRADD Vice Chairman Brad Schneider at its helm.

"We posted the opening for 21 days per state law," Schneider said. "We received 10 applications total from around the region as well as internally and we have narrowed it down to two. We have interviewed one and will interview the other on Wednesday. We should have a nominee to present to the board on Feb. 12."

Aside from Schneider, the committee consists of Daviess County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Secretary Al Mattingly, Webster County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Treasurer Steve Henry, Union County Judge-Executive Adam O'Nan, Henderson Mayor Steve Austin and Beaver Dam Mayor Paul Sandefur. For the committee, an "expeditious" approach was necessary for hiring a new executive director, Schneider said.

"One of our main goals was to allow whoever we hire to spend as much time with Jiten as possible," he said. "GRADD offers a lot of services and is involved in a great deal of programs and the new executive director will have big shoes to fill."

From dealing with government officials on the local, state and federal level to coordinating grant funding and social services, the executive director wears many hats, Schneider said.

"Area development districts are the Swiss Army knives of quasi-governmental organizations," he said. "It is easy to misunderstand what they do, but they are vital to local governmental agencies as well as local service organizations. Many of these organizations' successes are in large part due to development district's aid. It is a diverse job and we wanted someone with that diversity."

Shah started at GRADD as an environmental engineer in 1973 and began his role as executive director in 1987. In all, he has been with the organization for 46 years and while he is "leaving big shoes to fill," Schneider feels confident that the board will vote to approve the hire on Feb. 12, he said.

"We will be making our recommendation at the upcoming meeting," he said. "They should vote during that meeting, unless they wish to take time to review, which they have a right to do. However, we will be confident in our choice. ... The new hire will have ample time to spend with the sensei, so to speak, through a prolonged transition period and learn all he can."

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