

**THE OHIO TURNPIKE COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF THE  
SEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE**

**December 9, 2002**

**Note:** On August 12, 2002, the Search Subcommittee was created pursuant to Resolution No. 22-2002 consisting of the following members: Mr. Wilkins, Mr. Dixon, Mr. Strnisha and Senator Armbruster.

Time: 9:15 a.m.

Roll: Mr. Wilkins-here; Mr. Dixon-here; Mr. Strnisha-here.

Also present were: Tim Greenwood, Jack Marchbanks, Tom Amato, Lauren Dehrmann, Kathy Dolbin, Rich Exner, The Plain Dealer and Diane Pring.

Search Subcommittee Chairman Strnisha stated it is my understanding that Senator Armbruster is on his way. We really only have one item of business for the Search Subcommittee and that is to make a recommendation for the employment of a new Executive Director. That recommendation is: Gary Suhadolnik.

I want to speak a little bit from my perspective in terms of the process that we have used here and then obviously let the other Search Members comment. We did go forward with I think we acted very appropriately not only with the appointment of the Interim Executive Director who stepped in with the assistance provided by ODOT and Jack I know you will be thanked later in the meeting, but I'll start with my thanks in terms of the job and service you provided in that role since you stepped in very quickly on short notice after the resignation of Gino Zomparelli. Thank you very much.

We then also started off a process to entertain interest in the employment of a new Executive Director on a permanent basis and this committee met several times to talk about that to monitor the process where we were soliciting interest from in terms of resumes, discuss the kind of characteristics and qualifications that we wanted to look at in an Executive Director. We did receive approximately 200 resumes by the deadline. We had some very good resumes. We had some applications who obviously

brought a lot of different types of experience and qualifications under consideration. One that came to us towards the end of the process was Gary Suhadolnik who is currently the Director of Commerce for the State of Ohio and it also came with a recommendation for strong consideration from Governor Taft. My assessment in terms of the resumes received and they were reviewed primarily by staff but also reviewed in terms of looking through those in terms of which ones were the types of people we might consider relative to this committee.

Gary stood out in my mind as somebody right off the top even minus the recommendation of the Governor as somebody who brought some very strong experience that we ought to consider not only at an administrative level but particularly over the last four years running a large department of the State in terms of the number of employees, number of functions. Again, not specifically transportation-related but a strong administrative background in that regard.

He also brought extensive experience obviously within the State and within this region both on a local and state government level. I think we have all said that having those kind of relationships and understanding Ohio and understanding this region understanding state government and the ability of the Turnpike to work with state government and more specifically, ODOT which is very important – and I think he brings some very unique skills beyond anything any of the other candidates brought to accomplish that and take this agency forward. Working very closely with state government and other state agencies most particularly ODOT.

Obviously, the recommendation of the Governor in terms of the chief executive of the State and the one that this agency obviously has to work very closely with was taken into strong consideration. So the decision has been that we all individually interviewed Gary. I knew Gary from some previous work going back a number of years. We had dealt with each other for a number of years but I worked a little bit with him when I was finance director and some very positive interaction in terms of what he did for this region as a State Senator representing northeast Ohio. We re-acquainted ourselves and talked about his background and what he has been doing over the past couple years. I felt very strongly also given the need to kind of continue to move forward in a deliberative but speedy fashion if you will to get leadership here at the Turnpike. We had a person of very strong character and qualifications put to us and he came to us with the added

benefit of a strong recommendation from the Governor. Again, others can speak to their views and maybe their discussions with Gary that we had somebody who would serve the Turnpike well and that given that there really wasn't the need to kind of draw the process further because we had somebody we knew very well and somebody we had a lot of confidence in to fill this position. So based on that I thought it was appropriate at this time before the end of the year going into a new year to make that decision and to make the recommendation and hopefully also that the full Commission would act on our recommendation at our regular meeting after the Search Committee. I'm going to end there because that kind of summarizes my thinking on this and the basis of the recommendations of either of my colleagues here to comment further.

Mr. Dixon said I know that Gary Suhadolnik is the right person for this job at the right time. In the conversations that I had with him and looking over his resume and his lengthy experience in state politics/state government in Ohio, there is no question that he is a person of high integrity, very organized individual and the person that can lead a cultural change that we want to happen at this Turnpike Commission right now. The Turnpike right now is a well-run organization and I think that Gary will see that when he comes in, but there needs to be that permanent leadership to get us where we want in the cultural change and to continue us on this path of excellence that we have had in the past. There is no doubt in my mind that Gary Suhadolnik is the person to lead us at this time and I would be very happy to recommend his name to a full Commission for consideration as our new Executive Director.

Mr. Wilkins said I agree with what has already been said. We established criteria and we looked at 180 resumes and I think without a question Gary Suhadolnik had the highest score. The two areas where I think the Turnpike can use some assistance are in: relationships with the General Assembly, improving those relationships and relationships with the Administration. I agree that the Turnpike is an extremely well run organization but since the beginning – since the Turnpike was created – there has been a level of friction between the organization and Columbus and I think Gary has the right experience and background to help us improve those relationships in a very positive way. I was very impressed that Gary was an Ethics Professor early in his career. In today's world, that experience as an ethics professor can be very valuable. I have no qualms about supporting and recommending Mr. Suhadolnik to the full Commission.

Chairman Strnisha said we may ask you to repeat this Gary at the full Commission Meeting, but since you are sitting here right in front row – we have said all these nice things about you – would you like to say a few words as well at this time?

Mr. Suhadolnik responded, first of all I am honored that Governor Taft would recommend me and I have very happy that you folks would recommend me. I want to continue to manage the Turnpike in a manner that would continue to be of good value for our customers and I want to manage it with the highest of ethical standards. And ultimately, if my name is the Executive Director, my name is on the line as well. I thank you for that and if all this comes to pass, we can talk a little bit later about specific issues you would like me to address – whether its policies, personnel and any projects. I would be happy to seek your direction as well.

I would add at the very end if all this works out, it's very exciting for me because it will give me the chance after 22 years of commuting to Columbus to spend 7 days a week with my wife – I'm really looking forward to that.

Chairman Strnisha said I would reiterate just what Gary said and also what Bill said – I think we do have a great opportunity here and sometimes not quite clear to me why the tension ought to exist but you are right, Bill, that's probably been something with the Turnpike since it's inception. It has various epps and flows to that. We have the opportunity given Gary's relationships I think to work on that in a very positive way. Also, we have somebody who understands the Turnpike very well being a son of northeastern Ohio and understanding what this agency has been about both by way of his public career and by where he is from. I think that is something that was very relevant. I would also add that one of the things that I took particular note of and that we have taken particular note of as an agency as pride in the Commission is this agency has had a tremendous customer-service ethic from a standpoint of who are customers are from what the third-lane project is all about to our service plazas to the way we try to handle this business, if you will, of moving people from one place to the other in a customer-friendly way and provide the best amenities and service and safety, etc. Gary's department, over the last four years, was all about in many ways as we talked about it, customer-service, the kind of work the Dept. of Commerce does for a variety aspects of the state's economy – from building inspectors to the like. So, I think there is a very direct relationship

from some of the things that he has worked on over the last four years in Commerce that had the same kind of focus to the kind of objectives that we had here from a customer-service standpoint.

Mr. Wilkins said I move we adjourn.

Chairman Strnisha said there he is, come on in. (Senator Armbruster arrived at 9:30 a.m.) I will wait a minute for the Senator because I think we would like to get him in here have the benefit of the full Committee. We decided that non-voting members of the full Commission could still vote in the committees so we will let him since he has had such a rare opportunity to vote, we will let him vote on this issue. There will be a recommendation to get into executive session after the next meeting. There are some issues – we have had a chance to talk and discuss but I believe we need to have an executive session to talk about some of the specifics of the compensation relative to the Executive Director and we will do that and hopefully –

Mr. Strnisha said we will vote to recommend you and if you leave, we will still do it. So we will be doing that at the end of our regular meeting, we'll make a request to go into executive session to discuss that and firm up some of those questions.

There is a recommendation on the table for the committee to recommend Gary Suhadolnik for appointment as Executive Director and for that recommendation to go to the full Commission in the meeting following this one and we have also spoken to what we have doing the last couple of weeks in our interviews and perspectives on the strengths that Gary brings to that, I'd let Senator Armbruster, if you want to add anything to that as well as our Chairman Tim Greenwood.

Senator Armbruster said I support the recommendation. Tim do you want to add anything?

Chairman Greenwood said no – I just appreciate the work that the Search Committee has done following up and going through on that. I also support the recommendation very strongly.

Chairman Strnisha said, with that, do you have a motion? Senator Armbruster moved and Mr. Wilkins seconded.

Roll: Senator Armbruster-yes; Mr. Wilkins-yes; Mr. Dixon-yes; Mr. Strnisha-yes.

Chairman Strnisha said I think that concludes the Search Committee. I don't think we will be meeting any more. I look for a motion to adjourn the Search Subcommittee. Mr. Wilkins moved and Mr. Dixon seconded. Call the roll, please.

Roll: Mr. Wilkins-yes; Mr. Dixon-yes; Senator Armbruster-yes; and Mr. Strnisha-yes. We are adjourned. (Time: 9:32 a.m.)

/dsp

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