

County Schools Job Attracts Fewer Applicants Than Usual

By SCOTT SHANE
Daily News Staff Writer

Only 21 people have applied for the job of superintendent of the Guilford County school system, less than half the average for recent, similar openings in large North Carolina school systems.

But most school board members say they are impressed with the quality of the 21 candidates and are inclined not to extend the application deadline, which passed Friday.

The board met Tuesday morning in closed session to review the applications with E. Eugene Causby, director of the North Carolina School Boards Association, who is helping in the search.

About 15 of the 21 applicants are from North Carolina, but none works in the Guilford school system, board members said after the meeting. A large majority are currently school superintendents elsewhere and all 21 are male, members said.

Causby declined to comment on the number or quality of the candidates, saying he'd rather leave such judgments to board members.

But Raymond Sarbaugh, director of the N.C. Association of School Administrators, said the average number of applicants for superintendencies in North Carolina in recent years has been "40, 50, 60 and sometimes more in the larger units."

When the Guilford school board hired Douglas Magann as superintendent in 1978, members had about 40 applicants to choose from, according to board member and then-Chairwoman Evon Dean. The Greensboro school system received 125 applications when it hired Kenneth Newbold the same year, according to news stories written at the time.

When the Wake County school system hired a new superintendent last summer, it chose from among 58 applicants, according to Sue N. Byrne, the board member who chaired the search committee. The 50,000-student Wake system, the second largest of the state's 144 school systems, is about twice the size of Guilford, the sixth largest.

Sarbaugh said the timing of the Guilford search may have cut the number of applications, a point also made by several board

members. "Most superintendents have just started a new contract year, and they're not as inclined to be looking around in August as they are in December or January," he said.

But some board members said the feuding between board factions over the past year may have discouraged some school administrators from applying. The feuding culminated last June in the removal of former Superintendent Magann, when board members voted 4-3 to buy up the last year of his four-year contract.

Board member Dot Lambeth, noting that she and three other of the seven members will be up for re-election in November 1982, suggested before Tuesday's closed session that Acting Superintendent T.G. Madison be kept on in the post until after the election. "I can't believe an outstanding person is going to apply because there's been so much upheaval with the board," she said.

Member Carolyn McGee noted that Lambeth's remark was made before the review of applications, saying she did not want any
(See Superintendent: B-3, Col. 3)

Superintendent

From B-1

candidate to be offended by what Lambeth said. Lambeth could not be reached after the meeting for comments on the quality of the applicants.

No action was taken in response to Lambeth's proposal.

Both Dean and Nancy Jo Smith, who with Lambeth were Magann's supporters on the board, said they thought school board divisions and Magann's premature departure were the main reason the job has not attracted more applicants. But both said they think a good superintendent can be hired from the 21 applicants.

Board member Betty Smith said the squabbling over Magann might have discouraged some applicants. But anyone who would be frightened away by such problems "is probably not the candidate we

want anyway," she said, adding that she is "very pleased and impressed with the applicants we've got," particularly by their length of experience as superintendents. "We're going to have a real tough time choosing between the ones we've got," Smith said.

Chairwoman Ann Talbert said the 21 applicants include "a very large number of extraordinarily well-qualified individuals." Vance Pegram similarly called them "a real good group of applicants," saying the group has more impressive qualifications than the applicants in 1978.

McGee could not be reached for comment after the meeting.

Talbert said the board will probably meet again next week to continue to review the applications. The board is hoping to name a

new superintendent by late November.

In another action Tuesday, Talbert announced the appointment of a seven-member committee to review placement and pay of employees in the Guilford school system. The decision to appoint a committee was made last week after the board rejected salary discrimination complaints filed by L. Sam Dockery and Henry C. Walters, two veteran principals.

Chaired by Betty Smith, the committee also includes Lambeth, N. Bennett Boyles Jr., assistant superintendent for personnel; Stokesdale Elementary School Principal Judy Stutts; Eastern High School Assistant Principal James Battle; Allen Jay Middle School teacher Dwight Story; and Jim Mebane, a banker and parent who ran unsuccessfully for the school board last year.