

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
JAN. 27, 2009**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Roberta Dress
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon
Peter Forshay
Gina Fucci
Karen Gartner
Cindy Kilic-Murray
Nicholas Ouelette

Member Absent

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Wil Cunningham
John Rice
Peter Amons
Ellie McGarry
Kristin Francoeur
Bob Johnson
Paula Albro
Bill Olsen
Jay Slenker
Kristen Hubert
Lyle Jepson
Andrea McQuade
Larry Lattanzi
Glenn Olson
Ted Guilmette
Patricia Aigner

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted all Commissioners were present.

CALL TO ORDER

Motion by Book/Fagan to accept the minutes of the Jan. 13, 2009 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

ROLL CALL

**MOTION:
MINUTES
1/13/09
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

**WRITTEN
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

**ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

FY10 Budget Ratification - Chair Mello read a statement from the Vermont School Boards Association Executive Director regarding school budgets. Mr. Mello said he cannot vote on the budget but he introduced the discussion saying the proposal is a budget he can support and defend. The budget is now proposed at \$44,517,978 which represents a 1/3 of 1% increase. The Superintendent has proposed 33 items and their dollar figure, for the Board to consider cutting. Mr. Mello said his proposal is to accept the top ten items which total \$691,644. He said he believes the ten items will have the least impact on students.

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

**FY10
BUDGET
RATIFICA-
TION**

Mr. Mello reviewed the items under consideration. He said the percent increase presumes a tax rate from the state of \$.85, which is the last rate received. He said he would support this budget, even if the tax rate increases. Commissioner Dress said that she feels good schools are necessary but she cannot support any increase in the budget as a matter of principal. She said some cuts are in maintenance and this is worrisome for her. She would like to have seen a reduction in pay or benefits but because of union contracts, that cannot be done. She said she cannot support this.

Commissioner Fucci said she did not want to see an increase but she thinks it should be put to the voters. There is an initiative to let people understand the budget and voters should be able to make those decisions. She thinks this 0.35% budget increase is a very minor increase and that the first ten items on the Superintendent's list will have the least impact. She is worried about maintenance cuts and does not want to see us spiral down in facilities.

Mr. Mello said that if the performance contract ballot item passes, it is a savings, not a cost. He asked if some of the building issues would be addressed through that and Mr. Rice said some building issues addressed in the performance contract are future items. The items in the budget are this year's. Commissioner Kilic-Murray asked if next year would more difficult because this year there is a surplus of +\$900,000. Mr. Amons said next year will be tougher. Ms. Kilic-Murray said to delay maintenance items could make things tougher in the future and things will cost more.

Ms. Kilic-Murray said she disagrees with Commissioner Dress about the principle. She thinks we need to put schools at the top. People are concerned about crime and children getting a good education. Rutland City spends below state average for cost per pupil. Our Administrators are in the lower tier for pay. We need to look at this as our own entity and not where the state says we should be. She said that even taking out the computer technician at \$55,000 is not a big budget savings. She believes we could fix some maintenance items and add back in the computer technician without a big impact. She agrees with the elimination of the drama position. She said she would agree to more than a 0.35% increase. Commissioner Fingon said he agrees the Board should pass the right budget to be fiscally responsible. Any increase at all makes a difference to some people. He feels that a 0.35% increase is not a huge burden and he feels he can defend it as it feels it is the right budget. There are no teacher cuts. He would like to maintain buildings but passing the performance contract could realize a net savings in the future which could be put into future maintenance items.

Commissioner Gartner said she finds it difficult to deal with line items. There is always going to be ebb and flow within a line item and there are unknowns, such as fuel oil. The Administration has to make some of the adjustments as needed. People have strong feelings about one line item over another. She feels the Board needs to end up with a bottom line – a dollar figure the Board can support to give the Administration the ability to run the most cost-effective, fuel-efficient, lean and high quality school system they can. She has a problem philosophically deciding which line item should be cut or kept. She thinks the Administration should be charged with making those best decisions. Board members cannot know what effect the cuts will have. She thinks the Board should decide on a dollar amount and charge the Administration with delivery.

Commissioner Cooke said regarding maintenance, John Rice and Bruce Williams and staff have done a phenomenal job with constraints. He does not think they will let a child be at risk. The performance contract will be on the ballot and will address some shortfalls. There has been a lot of progress in the last few years – renovated schools, updated roofs, etc. The performance contract will need to be understood as a benefit, not a cost. The Administration has been pro-active with moving forward projects with federal stimulus funds, as soon as money is released. That will benefit the schools and provide jobs in the area. He said Administrators always have to make budget decisions depending on circumstances.

Commissioner Fagan said he agrees with Mr. Cooke and he will support the recommendation

from the Chairman. He thinks it is a responsible dollar amount needed to run the schools, educate our children, and continue to make Rutland a wonderful place to live. Commissioner Courcelle said he has had a lot of feedback from the public in the last few weeks. The Board has spent a lot of time building the budget. He has heard over and over from people that they want the Board to be focusing on those things that ensure success of children. People are not as fixated on maintenance. They want to make sure the dollars have the greatest impact on the students. He can support and defend the near-level funded budget. He thinks the Board needs to talk about making sure the Administration has the tools they need. He said he supports the .35% increase. Mr. Fingon said he liked the way the Administration prioritized the potential reductions. Mr. Mello said he does not feel that it is in the best interest of the school district to recommend any cuts beyond number ten. Ms. Moran said the Board gave the Administration great direction looking for reductions which will have the least impact on teaching and learning. She thinks the recommendation is sound with a modest impact on the taxpayer. The Administration will work to make sure it works best for students. Mr. Forshay said he thinks the Board has had a useful discussion and appreciates the responsible proposal. He will personally support the budget of \$44,518,000 in expenditures. At another time, he would be willing to spend a little more.

MOTION:
APPROVE
FY10
BUDGET

Motion by Forshay / Fingon to approve a budget proposal for FY10 in the amount of \$44,518,000 for approval by the voters on town meeting day.

Ruthellen Weston of Rutland City spoke about the budget and said she feels that in poor economic times, we should be spending more on education because we will need intelligent and creative people to get through the economic crises. There needs to be other ways to sacrifice and there should not be compromises.

Ms. Fucci said regarding the Board looking at individual line items, it is important to talk about line items in the vein of transparency. These are struggles the Board makes. The public needs to see what the Board is talking about. It is not a step the Board can avoid. Ms. Gartner said she agrees the Board needs to fully inform the public. Ms. Kilic-Murray said the increase is based on \$.85. Mr. Fagan said both House committees voted for a \$.86 tax rate and it has gone to the Senate. He does not know what they will do. He likes the \$.85 tax rate. Ms. Moran said the Board needs to ratify a budget amount tonight to meet town meeting warrant. Mr. Forshay said the motion was made for a spending level; a dollar amount, not a percent increase. Mr. Fagan said the Board has been working on this for months. Tonight's discussion is the end of the process.

VOTE ON
MOTION

Motion to approve the budget passed with two no votes (Dress, Fucci).

Mr. Mello said approving the budget is the first step. The second step is educating the electorate and helping to inform the public.

DRAFT 2009-
2010
CALENDAR

Draft 2009-2010 Calendar - Ms. Moran explained the regional calendar development process. It is presented as a draft. Mr. Fagan asked that when the graduation date is set, that it not be changed. Ms. Moran said she recommend to set the date later when more is known about how the weather goes.

MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #398

Motion by Fagan/Gartner to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 398 dated Jan. 23, 2009, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

The retirements were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Performance Contract - Mr. Amons said since the last meeting, Johnson Controls checked the RMS windows to make sure there is no lead or asbestos or PCBs. They asked to add an extra cost of \$27,000 in case they run into asbestos. They have tweaked numbers and reissued the memo with new numbers. The savings is estimated at almost \$400,000 over 15 years.

**BUSINESS
REPORT

PERFOR-
MANCE
CONTRACT**

Motion by Fagan/Forshay to accept the recommendation of the Chief Financial Officer to present to Rutland City voters in March 2009 a ballot item giving Rutland City Public Schools authority to enter into an energy performance contract with the goal of saving fuel oil and electricity costs as presented.

**MOTION:
PRESENT
PERFOR-
MANCE
CONTRACT
TO VOTERS**

Ms. Fucci asked that it be very clear that the first words of the ballot item reflect that there be no expense or cost to the taxpayer. Ms. Moran said the wording is being worked on and there will be language to that effect. She said some improvements are items in the capital plan and savings can be reaped immediately as well as making a more comfortable environment for children and staff.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Tuition Rates - Mr. Amons said we are required to announce our tuition rate by Feb. 1. He explained the process.

**TUITION
RATES**

Motion by Cooke/Gartner to accept the recommendation of the Chief Financial Officer and adopt the following school year FY10 tuition rates:

**MOTION:
ACCEPT
TUITION
RATES FY10**

Secondary (9-12)	\$10,710
Secondary (7-8)	\$10,710
Elementary	\$7,300
Success	\$20,000

Mr. Forshay said there is no incentive or opportunity for the district to over- or under-estimate values because we will be audited and adjusted by the State in the future if over or under by more than 3%. These are our best estimates. Mr. Mello said despite the increase, this FY10 rate is less than the state average of two years ago.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Mr. Mello commented on the Governor's recent remarks about education funding. He said he thinks the Governor is well-intentioned but has received poor information and has made decisions that affect us poorly. He said he does not agree with the generalized charge to all school boards. He said the school boards he has been talking to have very low increases and per pupil spending. For example, in Pittsford, the budget went down but due to lower enrollment, their increase was impacted by 7%. He said he disagrees with how the Governor is approaching this although he agrees that it should be approached legislatively. He asked Ms. Moran to share data from a different source that points to state spending status. Ms. Moran explained education spending over the past five years compared to state spending and discussed impacts. She said school enrollment

**SUPERIN-
TENDENT'S
REPORT**

**LEGISLA-
TIVE
UPDATE**

is important and Rutland City is not hurt by this. She reviewed staffing changes and the cost of special education and federal mandates. She said that school costs have not outpaced other increases.

**LEGISLA-
TIVE
UPDATE,
cont**

Federal Legislative update - Ms. Moran gave an update of the stimulus and recovery packages and the potential impacts on education funding. She said Rutland City has some projects ready to move which will provide jobs and serve our communities. She said Mr. Rice has prepared a response to the Potential Economic Stimulus Projects – things which can be moved quickly. They are in the five year capital plan. She reviewed the projects which are primarily energy related.

Announcements

- Progress reports are being sent home late this week in the primary schools.
- Emil Qui is the Geo-Bee winner. He is a fifth grader at RIS.
- The 8th grade open house is being held on Jan. 29.

**ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

**COMM.
REPORTS**

Information Task Force - Ms. Fucci said there was a well-attended meeting last week. They are scheduling events for February and these were reviewed. .

**INFO. TASK
FORCE**

Building Committee - Mr. Cooke said that if people have questions about the performance contract, they should contact Ms. Moran.

**BUILDING
COMM.**

New Business - None

**NEW
BUSINESS**

Old Business - None

**OLD
BUSINESS**

Motion by Book.Fucci at 8:21 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimously passed by those in attendance.

**MOTION:
EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:25 pm.

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

ADJOURN

Motion by Book/Fagan to adjourn at 9:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary