

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
FEB. 10, 2009**

School Board Members Present:

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

Peter Mello

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Wil Cunningham
Peter Amons
John Rice
Lyle Jepson
Bob Johnson
Paula Albro
Bill Olsen

Motion by Gartner/Forshay to convene to executive session at 6:15 pm 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.

**EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

ROLL CALL

The Board came out of executive session at 6:50 pm.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Acting Chair Courcelle noted the absence of Chair Mello.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
1/27/09
MEETING**

Motion by Fingon/Kilic-Murray to accept the minutes of the Jan. 27, 2009 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**WRITTEN
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Written Communication - None

**ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

**VSBA 9 YEARS
SERVICE
AWARDS**

VT School Board Association 9 Years Service Award - Ms. Moran presented the VSBA Nine Years Service Awards to Karen Gartner and Peter Forshay and praised them for their service to the school board. She said they each have been supportive of the school district and each served on many committees. They were thanked for their service.

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

Budget Information Presentation - Mr. Amons reviewed the most recent budget figures and tax implications. Mr. Courcelle said the Board has done a great job with building the budget and the outreach now being done. He said the Board has been very diligent with their fiduciary obligation. They have been very understanding of the current economic climate as well as maintaining the high quality of education. He said the increase implication is 0.02% (or 2 one-hundredths of a percent).

**BUDGET
INFORMATION
PRESENTA-
TION**

Mr. Amons distributed an estimated tax rate sheet. The state has not yet decided if the base tax rate will be \$.85 or \$.86 and that will have an impact on taxes. If the tax rate changes to \$.86, the tax increase will be 1.20%. Mr. Amons explained the taxpayer effects of \$100,000 budget cut. He said there are two ways to look at it - either on an individual basis or as Rutland City taxpayers as a group. He explained that as a group, if the school district spends a dollar, it will result in Rutland City taxpayers as a group, paying \$.23 more in taxes. If the district cuts a dollar, it will result in Rutland City taxpayers, as a group, saving \$.23. Mr. Amons said for individual taxpayers, there are different scenarios depending on income and house values. He presented a variety of scenarios.

Commissioner Fingon said the property tax on education funding is not strictly based on property value but is also based on income. If the state keeps the tax rate at \$.85, someone with the same income and house value as last year will not have their taxes change. If someone is unemployed or had lower income in 2008, the education portion of property taxes will decrease.

Ms. Moran said a detailed grid will be coming out soon from the state portraying incomes / home values for someone to see exactly what they will pay. She also reviewed the items which the Board cut from the budget. She said the focus was on cutting non-personnel items. A priority was to be balanced throughout the district. She said the items cut decreased the original spending plan by \$691,644 which is a cumulative savings of \$159,078 to Rutland City taxpayers. She said she thinks the Board has been very diligent in bringing in a near-zero budget increase.

Budget Meeting Schedules - Mr. Courcelle said Commissioners Dress, Fucci and Kilic-Murray have worked hard to craft meetings for public outreach. Ms. Fucci reviewed the events which have already been held and the upcoming sessions. The school board is putting together an informational brochure to be mailed to all city voters. There also have been informational sessions at athletic events. Ms. Fucci said people have been very supportive and many have been saddened to hear about the cuts made. Ms. Kilic-Murray, Mr. Forshay, Ms. Moran and Ms. Dress reviewed reactions and discussions from some of the other public meetings held. Mr. Courcelle said he is not concerned that low turnout means low interest. Ms. Fucci said there have been neighborhood events held at people's homes. Mr. Courcelle said a lot of people are watching Board meetings on PEG-TV and on-line streaming.

Mr. Courcelle said he has been asked why the school district is not laying off people in line with the private sector. For private companies, if demand for services is lower and sales are off, they may have layoffs to remain profitable. Schools are not in the for-profit business so the model is different. When times are good, the private sector can apply greater resources to its efforts. The school does not necessarily do this. But the Board is very careful with every dollar and embraces the philosophy of careful fiduciary obligation. The school system has not had a reduced demand for service. Ms. Moran urged the public to call board members, call the administration, or check the school's website for more information. Mr. Courcelle said there will be an extra Board meeting on Feb. 25, a warned public informational meeting at the RIS auditorium. That meeting will be dedicated to the two ballot items - the budget and the performance contract.

Motion by Gartner/Forshay to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 399 dated Feb. 6, 2009, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #399**

Licensed Section: Retirement - Paula Albro as Principal at RIS effective 6-30-09. The retirement of Paula Albro was reviewed by Superintendent Moran.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Performance Contract Presentation - Mr. Courcelle introduced Cathy Reynolds of Efficiency VT. Ms. Reynolds explained Efficiency VT, what they do and who they serve. She said it is difficult for many businesses to raise capital to pay for energy improvements. In older facilities, there is just about always room for improvements. She explained the concept of performance contracting, which is borrowing money over a long period and using energy savings to pay back the debt. She said what makes it work is the analysis that goes into the planning and having correct projections. Then it is known how much to borrow, how long to finance it and that the energy savings will cover the debt. At the end of the debt, you own the improvements and the savings will continue for the life of the item. She has a list of successful performance contracts from other school districts. She said Efficiency VT can be an advisor to the district through the process. They can help analyze proposals and it is a free service to the district. She said many performance contracts will guarantee savings. It is important for the Board to have a high level of confidence in the projections. She said it is an excellent way for schools to make energy improvements without having to raise taxes.

**PERFOR-
MANCE
CONTRACT
PRESENTA-
TION**

Mr. Fingon said with our performance contract, there is a guarantee. The contractor will pay us if the savings are not there. Ms. Moran said we had a complete energy audit performed 18 months ago. Ms. Reynolds said the school district is a large electric customer. She will review all the projections for savings and at every measure being proposed in every building. Commissioner Fagan said the projected annual savings in electricity is about 390,000 kw hours and fuel oil is 26,000 gallons. He said we will be able to replace a lot of windows in the schools as well. This is a good way to improve the schools and save money for the city and state taxpayers. Mr. Fingon said we are not borrowing \$1.5 million but making lease payments over a period of time and the guaranteed savings will at least make those payments and more. After 15 years, those savings are the district's to keep. Mr. Amons said there is a net impact of zero on the budget. Ms. Moran said this is question two on the ballot and requires voter approval.

Announcements

- Ms. Moran pointed out the new display at Longfellow by art students in the RHS Basic Design class. It is a colorwheel design project.
- Northeast students will celebrate their 100th day of school this week with an array of activities. P.E. classes with Mr. Lehman will participate in a Jump Rope for Heart activity. The Walking Club is well on its way along the Appalachian Trail. Each Thursday students walk along a quarter mile trail on the fields. To date they have covered a distance equivalent to mid-way along the Appalachian Train, approximately 900 miles. Mrs. Abatiell's first grade class recently debuted "Spaced Out", a musical about our Solar system.

**SUPERIN-
TENDENT'S
REPORT**

**ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

- RIS Spelling Bee winners: Third Place: Allie Peyton, grade 4; Second Place: Kennedy Birdsey, grade 3; and First Place Maricate Mangan, grade 6.
- The RMS Math Team finished in first place on Sat. at the MathCounts South-West Vermont Chapter Competition. All four scoring team members, Renee Cruise, Dylan Conboy, Liam Clark, and Josh Wight, finished in the top nine as individuals; Liam and Josh taking the top two spots. Alternates, Taylor Ampatellos, Anya Smith, and Christina Lovett, also made a strong showing.
- On Feb. 11, RMS 8th grade students will participate in a Web Chat with Senator Patrick Leahy. Students and the Senator will be able see and hear each other through the use of a Web Cam
- The RHS Key Club sponsored a very successful Valentine's Dance on Friday evening to benefit the WISER school for girls in Kenya. We will be sending the foundation \$500 to purchase furniture for the school.
- STC students recently completed their "World Tour" as part of the "Road Show". Students in the Music Technology program, under the direction of Bill Comstock, performed for high school audiences throughout Rutland County. The "Road Show" is a yearly event that combines curriculum based activities including production, performance, marketing and outreach.
- STC first year Hospitality and Entrepreneurship students recently earned a National Professional Certification in Customer Service. All of the seven student passed the assessment: Brianna Allen - Mill River Union High School; Christina Campo - Proctor High School; Christian Doran - Fair Haven Union High School; Meghan Edwards - Rutland High School; Alison McLellan - Proctor High School; Kati Messer - Mill River Union High School; Amanda Miles - Otter Valley Union High School.
- Ms. Moran received a thank you note from Susan Bassett of the Community Cupboard thanking the schools for their generous donations and help.
- Ms. Moran has distributed a variety of editorials for board members in packets

Legislative Update – Ms. Moran said the federal stimulus package has passed the House and Senate. She said in her opinion, there was a disappointing cut in education, especially in school building renovation. She continues to watch the committee work. It should be a driver for economic stimulus. In the Vermont legislature, she said she is concerned about the stimulus. She said there is an effort in the House for a note to be attached to new laws which have a fiscal impact on the schools. She said if the legislature makes new laws which causes schools to expend more funds, it impacts school budgets and taxpayers. There are a number of new bills in the legislature affecting education.

LEGISLA-
TIVE UPDATE

Building Committee - Commissioner Cooke the committee has been working on the Stafford Tech projects. Stafford has outstanding programs but there a number of buildings which need to be updated or renovated. There has been an ongoing effort for at least two years and with the stimulus money possibly coming forward, the committee has moved forward and interviewed architects.

COMMITTEE
REPORTS

BUILDING
COMMITTEE

Policy Committee - Meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

POLICY
COMMITTEE

New Business - Ms. Moran said one of the April board meetings falls over vacation and will be rescheduled.

NEW BUSINESS

Old Business - None

OLD BUSINESS

Motion by Gartner/Fagan at 8:05 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing legal or contractual 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 8:30 pm.

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

Motion by Fagan/Gartner to adjourn at 8:31 pm.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary