

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

School Board Members Present:

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

Member Absent

Collin Fingon

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Jay Slenker
Lyle Jepson
Peter Amons
Ellie McGarry
Larry Lattanzi
Bill Olsen

Motion by Gartner/Fagan 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**

The Board came out of executive session at 6:45 pm.

ROLL CALL

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

**MOTION:
MINUTES
2/24/09
MEETING**

Motion by Gartner/Forshay to accept the minutes of the Feb. 24, 2009 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**WRITTEN
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Written Communication - Clerk Courcelle read a letter from Stacey Chapman, Rutland Town School Board Chair, requesting Rutland City Schools to reduce the allowable tuition by 3%. Mr. Mello asked that the item be tabled until New Business.

**REQUEST
TO REDUCE
ALLOW-
ABLE
TUITION**

Oral Communication - Madeline Sherman thanked the Board and administration for their work in helping get the school budget passed. She said it took a lot of time and effort and it is a credit to the Board and the community that the voters continue to support the schools.

**ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Recognition - Mr. Mello thanked Commissioners Fucci, Kilic-Murray and Dress for their work in informing the community about the budget, which helped it to pass.

**BUDGET
THANKS**

Commissioners Karen Gartner and Gina Fucci - Mr. Mello recognized and thanked Gina Fucci for her work on the Board. He also acknowledged and thanked Karen Gartner, the longest serving Board member, for her service. He said they have both set the bar very high for future board members. Ms. Gartner said it has been an honor to sit at the Board table and serve.

**RECGNI-
TION OF
BOARD
MEMBERS
EDUCATION
REPORT**

Social Studies Presentation - Ms. Moran said Jay Slenker has been working on the Social Studies curriculum since he was a Social Studies teacher. Jen Kravitz is the 7-12 Social Studies Chair. Mr. Slenker said the committee looked at social studies K-6 and 7-12 and the presentation is an overview of the total program. Mr. Slenker reviewed the curriculum broken out by grade level and explained the themes introduced at each level. Many field trips in Grades 3-6 are Social Studies-based. Ms. Kravitz said in grades 7-12, the classes pair content with skills. For example, in grade 7, they are working on research skills. She reviewed some of

**SOCIAL
STUDIES
PRESENTA-
TION**

the high school courses and their content. Mr. Slenker said Mary Cassarino is teaching classes using materials from the National Geographic Society.

Madeline Sherman reviewed some of her concerns with the Social Studies curriculum.

- She said that it has been reported that Social Studies was not being taught the way the CAP curriculum intended it to be taught. How exactly is it being taught and where?
- Is the CAP curriculum abandoned?
- In grade 8, the GLEs (Grade Level Expectations) end with the Civil War. Why is the 1960s in the curriculum? It is not in the GLEs. When this is aligned to the GLEs, how is that justified?
- If World History I is no longer a required course, can a student graduate from RHS without learning about the Renaissance and Reformation?
- US History is a semester course and covers from Columbus to 1850 and modern America. The GLEs say you only have to begin with the Civil war. Since History and English are not necessarily taught in the same semester, they can not always be tied.
- If there is going to be a new focus on research, have students not been doing research since the mid-1990s? It was part of CAP. Students used to evaluate periodicals and now it is websites. Has there been a gap in research?
- In times of high-stakes testing, Social Studies is a “frill.” There is no state test. Students need the foundations and Mrs. Sherman said she would like to see it reflected in the GLEs.

Mr. Mello said he will work with Mr. Bliss, Ms. Moran and the Social Studies teachers to get answers for Mrs. Sherman.

Commissioner Kilic-Murray asked the age of our Social Studies textbooks. She also asked what is being taught in the younger grades regarding Pilgrims. Mr. Slenker reviewed the age of some of the textbooks and said he can get her all the information. Textbooks are heavily supplemented with other materials. With regards to Pilgrims, a kindergartner will learn different content than older children. There is a replacement schedule for all the books. Commissioner Cooke asked what determines if a freshman takes World History I, if it is not required. Ms. Kravitz said almost every student takes World History I. It is heavily recommended. Ms. Moran said when Civics and Economics were added as a requirement, there was not a change in the required graduation credits for Social Studies. That still needs to be adjusted. Almost every student takes World History I. Economics is generally a junior / senior elective. This is the last year it is not a requirement. Nick Ouelette reviewed the Social Studies courses he has taken at Rutland High. Ms. Kravitz said the current junior class is the first class that is required to take Economics. The change was made a few years ago and the students knew it was part of the requirements.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #400**

Motion by Gartner/Kilic-Murray to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 400 dated March 6, 2009, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Courcelle read a letter from RHS Principal Peter Folaros announcing his retirement at the end of the school year. Mr. Mello, on behalf of the Board, thanked Mr. Folaros for his eight years of service. He reviewed Mr. Folaros' accomplishments and wished him well.

The appointments and retirement were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**FY08 AUDIT
REPORT**

FY08 Audit Report - Mr. Amons thanked Randy Roberts and staff for the clean auditor's report. He reviewed the auditor's report and opinion letter. There is also an auditor's letter stating that

the financial statements are in order and there is a letter with recommendations from the auditor. He said there is now a Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A), which is not a required report but the State has requested it. Mr. Amons discussed several items of note in the financial statement. Mr. Courcelle asked if the audit could be posted to the website. Mr. Amons said it is made available to anyone who requests it but since it is written specifically for accountants, it is hard to understand and therefore, not posted.

Commissioner Dress said she is surprised the auditor’s write an opinion. She asked about the employee versus subcontractor notation and asked if the government puts out guidelines on this. Mr. Amons said there are many guidelines and laws to help determine if someone is a subcontractor or an employee. Some of the questions used to determine are: Where are they doing the work? What is the nature of the work? Who is managing the person? It is a gray area. He said many organizations hire subs to avoid benefits. Rutland City Schools does not. He said we have very few contractors and it is not a big issue for us. There was interest in the arrangement with tutors. Mr. Courcelle asked about the MD&A and Mr. Amons said we wrote it – it is our own comment.

Turf Field Release - Mr. Amons said the Turf Field was initially purchased by the Friends Association. Contracts and warranties were written to them. The turf has now been installed and it is paid for. It is time to put the Field in the school’s name.

TURF FIELD

Motion by Fagan/Forshay to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent for the Rutland City Public Schools to enter into an Acknowledgment, Termination and Release Agreement with Rutland High School Alumni and Friends Association, Inc. for the purpose of transferring ownership and other rights to Rutland Public Schools as presented.

MOTION: TRANSFER OWNERSHIP & RIGHTS OF TURF FIELD

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Eden Park License Agreement - Ms. Moran said there is a small piece of land that technically belongs to Success but there has been a small encroachment by Eden Park. This came to light with Eden Park’s new owners. The City Attorney, our attorney and Eden Park’s attorney drew up the release to solve the issue.

EDEN PARK

Motion by Cooke/Book to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent for the Board of School Commissioners of the City of Rutland to approve a Resolution with Eden Park Management, Inc. as presented, contingent upon Eden Park paying the school’s attorney and legal fees. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

MOTION: APPROVE EDEN PARK RESOLUTION

Announcements

- Ms. Moran highlighted art on the walls at Longfellow. March is “Youth Art Month” and the art work on display is in recognition of RPS students’ creative accomplishments. The butterflies are from the primary students. RIS is represented by clay puzzle pieces created by 5th and 6th grade art club students. The project was an extension of the statewide “Art Fits Vermont” project. Each student at RIS also created paper puzzle pieces currently on display at the Diamond Run Mall. The snowmen on the bulletin board are an example of a recent fifth grade project. RMS 7th grade art students made collages representing themselves through the use of symbols for the “Puzzle Piece” project. Teacher Advisories are painting wooden puzzle pieces to exhibit for the “Puzzle Piece” project. The Kaleidoscope Designs on the wall are from the 8th grade students who used protractors, compasses and rulers to create reflective design and construct the Kaleidoscope project. The clay art work are Superhero Masks from the High School Creative Structure Class. Parent teacher conferences march 19-20 in all schools.
- March 19 and 20 are parent-teacher conferences.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Northwest and Pierpoint book fair is March 19-20
- Therapy dogs will be visiting 1st grade on Friday
- K-6 had spectacular Dr. Seuss events last week with excellent attendance
- RIS report cards will be distributed March 13
- RHS Student Senate and the Red Cross are sponsoring a blood drive on March 24.
- GMTI is initiating a 6-month student mentoring program, providing 8th graders with two high school and one teacher mentor who will work through the transition into the beginning of 9th grade.
- GMTI Helping Hands Carnival will be held at RHS gym on March 28.
- Members of the RHS Choral Festival Club, Chamber Singers, and Jazz Ensemble will perform in the Green Mountain Music District Festival concert, on March 13.
- Encore Theatre will be performing their one act, Journey To The World's Edge, at the regional one act festival being held at MSJ.
- Kayla Perry, a second year student in STC's Music Program, directed by Instructor Bill Comstock, has been selected to sing the National Anthem at the Opening Ceremonies of the 2009 Skills USA National Leadership and Skills Conference Opening Session in June in Kansas City. She is the first Vermont student selected for this honor and will be performing in front of 8000-10,000 people. Kayla will graduate from Otter Valley Union High School in June.

**PRINCIPAL
SEARCHES**

- RIS Principal and SUCCESS Director Searches - Karen Gartner will serve on the search committee. At least one board member is needed. The schedule has been distributed.
- Mr. Mello's open letter to the City voters which appeared in the Rutland Herald was distributed.
- Legislative Update - information on the stimulus packages has been distributed. State specific details are yet to come.
- Town Meeting Grid - The state has supplied a grid showing the actual impact of property taxes based upon income and house value. It is available on our website as well as the Department of Education's. The legislature has not yet finalized an \$.85 or \$.86 tax rate.
- Board members received the latest issue of the Howe Center Campus news and a summary of the Tapestry Program.
- Ms. Kilic-Murray said she went to the Stafford Open House last week and had a tour. She said it is a fantastic program and she was very impressed. She recommended other board members take a tour of the facility.

**LEGISLA-
TIVE
UPDATE**

**TOWN
MEETING
GRID**

**STC OPEN
HOUSE**

**COMM.
REPORTS**

Policy Committee - Policy Series 7000-7300 - Second Reading

**POLICY
COMM.**

Motion by Book/Kilic-Murray to approve the following policies from the Student (7000) section of the Policy Manual for second reading:

**MOTION:
APPROVE
7000
SECTION OF
POLICY
MANUAL**

- 7110 - Elementary and Secondary Students
- 7210 - Attendance
- 7220 - Age of Entrance
- 7221 - Pupil Proof of Age
- 7223 - Screening of New School Entrants Confidentiality of Information
- 7230 - Non-Resident Students
- 7231 - Payment of Tuition
- 7231.1 - Tuition for Students of Staff Members
- 7233 - Admission of Non-Resident Students
- 7250 - Students Seeking Admission
- 7330 - Testing Program
- 7341 - Early Graduation

7342 - Graduation Ceremonies
7350 - Matriculation
7370 - Student Records
7371 - Student Records Access

SECTION
7000 OF
POLICY
MANUAL,
cont.

Mr. Book said 7222 - Screening of New School Entrants was pulled and will be brought back at a later time.

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

NEW
BUSINESS

Mr. Mello said board members received an email from Ms. Moran regarding an acknowledgment sent from St. Albans regarding some of our students who were part of a soccer program. He said he was impressed that the students did the right thing, even when no one was watching. The girls conducted themselves in the right way and it was noted by a responsible adult who sent an email to Ms. Moran.

STUDENT
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Request from Rutland Town School Board to lower the tuition rate by 3% or \$37,000 - Mr. Amons explained the law and our practice. He said that every year, a tuition rate for the future year is estimated. In January 2007, the tuition for FY08 of \$8900 was set for high school students. The state now has final financial statements from that year and they compute an allowable tuition based on our statements. The actual rate came out to \$10,109. The state law allows us to charge back to the sending school if there is more than 3% of a difference. Also, we need to pay back the sending school if we over-estimated. For FY08, we undercharged by more than 3% and sent a bill to about six sending towns for the difference.

REQUEST
TO LOWER
TUITION
FROM
RUTLAND
TOWN

Mr. Amons said that Rutland Town would like us to bill them as though the tuition had fallen 3% in that range, and if it fell at exactly 3%, they would not have had to pay. They are asking to ignore the "window". Ms. Moran said if a sending school is overcharged by more than 3%, we refund to the sending town. There is a liability on either side. Mr. Amons said if we made the adjustment for Rutland Town, it would be reasonable to make it for all sending towns.

Board members questioned, discussed and commented:

- What did it cost us to educate one child that year? Mr. Amons said the state has said it cost us \$10,109.
- Where would the \$37,000 come from? Mr. Amons said over time, they would get the \$37,000 from the state education fund. Or we would get it from the state education fund if we did not bill them the money. It is really a state education fund transfer of money between two school districts. They have not yet paid us. We sent them a bill and they are asking to not pay this portion.
- There was a concern stated with setting a precedent and what it would mean for the total amount of money that is owed to us by other sending schools. Mr. Amons said their total bill is about \$170,000 and this is a portion of it. Ms. Gartner said this could impact us close to \$100,000 if we did this for all the sending schools.
- Have we ever been asked this before? Ms. Moran said no and we are following the law. Mr. Mello said there is no explanation for the request in the letter. Some towns have an exclusive agreement with another town for sending their students and that could potentially result in a slightly reduced tuition rate but that is not the request. Ms. Moran said in those cases, the students would not have a choice where to go to school.
- Which fiscal year would this affect? Mr. Amons said it could be FY09, the one we are in or since they have until July 31, 2009 to pay, it could be FY10.
- Is this the first time we have undercharged? Or have we always been in the 3% range? Mr. Amons said we have billed before.

- Would the state be in a position to pursue action against us for asking them to make up the difference out of state funds? Mr. Amons said they would not question it.
- Realistically, we would have \$37,000 less of a surplus in which ever year this was reflected. That would pull us down \$37,000 in that budget year.
- Mr. Amons said he budgeted this for revenue in FY10 but if we get it in FY09, it would be part of the surplus.
- Would the loss of \$37,000 have a negative impact on Rutland City taxpayers? The taxpayers that this Board is responsible to? Mr. Amons said it would run through the formula resulting in Rutland City taxpayers paying 23% of the amount.

**REQUEST
TO LOWER
TUITION
BILL FROM
RUTLAND
TOWN, cont.**

Motion by Courcelle/Cooke to respond to the Rutland Town School Board letter of Feb. 23, 2009 stating that after due consideration, the Rutland City Board of School Commissioners rejects the request to lower the tuition bill and has stated that pursuant to the law, the bill stands. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
DENY
REQUEST
TO LOWER
TUITION
BILL**

Mr. Mello offered an invitation to accompany exiting board members Karen Gartner and Gina Fucci to dinner next Thursday March 19 at Three Tomatoes at 6 pm.

Ms. Dress asked Mr. Amons for a report on how much the insurance buyouts cost and how many people does it affect. He said he will get the information.

**INSURANCE
BUYOUT
QUESTION**

Ms. Dress said that since negotiations are ongoing, she feels that it is timely to look at a pay-for-performance schedule. She is bothered that teachers get a flat raise whether they are good or bad. She said that tenure tends to lead to mediocrity. For those teachers who really make an effort, they deserve special recognition and there is no way to show them that with the current system. Mr. Mello said that since we are in negotiations, there cannot be much discussion on the process. He said he respects the negotiations process and it can be discussed with the negotiating team. Madeline Sherman said there is no tenure in the state of Vermont. If there is a teacher not performing well, it is because an administrator is not giving them the type of evaluation they need to move them along out of education. Mr. Forshay said performance-based pay was discussed with the Association in previous negotiations. Ms. Moran said there are ways to approach this. She also said there are ways to discuss with teachers who may not be suited to teaching that it is time for them to move on. She said there is no tenure in Vermont. It is a misconception that there is no way to release a teacher. It may be difficult, but not impossible.

**CONSIDER-
ATION FOR
NEGOTIA-
TIONS**

Graduation Participation / Discussion - Rutland High School Graduation Requirements - Mr. Courcelle said at the last meeting, this came up during the first reading approval of the policy regarding graduation participation and so the policy was pulled from the list. Ms. Fucci said it has always struck her as counter-intuitive to deny the process of graduation to a student who has been in our school system for years and to take away graduation as a type of disciplinary action. She believes the same discipline can be accomplished by denying the actual diploma and the student can go to summer school or get the credits needed and then get the paper. She said the school's mission is to get children to graduate. Families plan on graduation for months and years. This came to light when some students could not graduate because of disciplinary action.

**OLD
BUSINESS**

**GRADUA-
TION
PARTICIPA-
TION
DISCUSSION**

Ms. Gartner said she believes that these are young adults who are going into the world and who need to be thinking of how their actions affect their future, parents and other family members. Students going on a trip know what is expected of them and they should be taking responsibility for their actions. People make stupid mistakes but sometimes they have to take responsibility for them. Ms. Fucci said she thinks there should be consequences. Requiring a senior to make up credits after the fact will have an impact. She said she does not agree that a

school system that works on trying to get a student to graduation should use it as a disciplinary tool.

Ms. Kilic-Murray said before students go on a YES plan trip, students and parents need to be brought in and made to understand that the contract says that they will lose the right to walk at graduation if they do not follow the rules. It is a difficult decision but they sign the agreement. She said perhaps she agrees that there is a different way – such as giving them an empty diploma. Ms. Moran said the reason they do not graduate is because if they do not pass their YES class, they do not meet graduation requirements.

Mr. Lattanzi said it has happened twice in 16 years that students did not graduate because of YES plan. YES plan is a graduation requirement. Some students might not graduate because of not passing English or fulfilling another requirement. It has been the administration's feeling that students either meet the requirements and walk or do not meet the requirements and do not walk. Mr. Mello said the board, by policy, should set graduation requirements for all students to meet. The other idea is that withholding the privilege is punitive. Mr. Mello said if there are graduation requirements, regardless of what they are, he thinks they should be upheld. Ms. Moran said the policy states what is required in order to take part in graduation. Mr. Book asked if this policy changed, if it would be harder for Mr. Lattanzi to do his job with regard to students taking trips. Mr. Lattanzi said he feels that students should receive their diploma when they meet graduation requirements. He thinks it would be false for someone to get an empty jacket.

Mr. Cooke said this has only happened because of YES plan a couple of times. Those students did not get YES plan credits which means they did not meet graduation requirements which means they did not walk. He said those students otherwise met the requirements of the academics of YES plan. He said there could be other measures. Ms. Fucci said this system makes it so a student can fail a course as a result of a disciplinary action. Ms. Moran said if a youngster has a transgression in YES plan, they are terminated from the course and sent home; which means they cannot pass the course. Ms. Fucci said only seniors have the issue with not graduating. Mr. Lattanzi said a student could fail sophomore English and still make it up and graduate on time. If a student fails senior English in second semester, there is no time to make it up in time to graduate. A senior needs to realize there is much more at stake toward the end of the semester and take responsibility for their actions.

Mr. Forshay said he believes this is a disciplinary action but that its execution has academic implications. He would like something found to allow those students to walk but still have the requirement of successfully completing YES plan. Mr. Mello said this has evolved into a passionate discussion and feels more input is needed from administration, students and others before a draft is written. Nick Ouelette said he agrees it is a disciplinary issue. He does not think a student should not graduate because of the infraction. He suggested perhaps completing community service. Mr. Book asked him how he would feel walking at graduation with someone who failed English. Nick said failing a class does not happen because of one incident; the student has months to bring the grade up. In this case, the student is not given a second chance to fix it.

Ms. Gartner said she would not want to see adult chaperones in the situation of not having this type of contract signed with students, especially if traveling to a foreign country where the drinking age is 18 or there is no drinking age. Mr. Bliss said this is a policy discussion on the board level. He thinks it can be taken up in committee. Mr. Mello said part of the discussion should include Mr. Lattanzi. Mr. Mello said the two related policy discussions are trips and graduation requirements. Mr. Fagan said the district mission statement says that students will take responsibility for their actions. He thinks the board should look carefully before making a

change to the policy. And if it is changed, the district mission statement should be changed too.

Motion by Book/Kilic-Murray to adjourn at 9:03 pm.

**READING
ASSIGN-
MENT**

Mr. Mello reminded the Board of their *Ahead of the Curve* introduction and Chapter I reading assignment for the April 7 meeting.

**MOTION:
ADJOURN**

Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary