

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
AUGUST 25, 2009**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Roberta Dress
Peter Forshay
Cindy Kilic-Murray
Rob Towle
Daniel Wigmore

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Wil Cunningham
Peter Amons
Ellie McGarry
Bob Johnson
Cathy Farman
Bill Olsen

Members Absent

Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon

Motion by Cooke/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**

The Board came out of executive session at 6:55 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 Commissioners Fingon, Fagan, and Cavacas.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
6/23/09
MEETING**

Motion by Towle/Forshay to accept the minutes of the June 23, 2009 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**WRITTEN
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Written Communication - Clerk Courcelle read thank you letters written to the Board and Superintendent. Letters with thanks were received from:

**LETTERS OF
THANKS**

- Amyloidosis Research Foundation for the donation in memory of Madeline Sherman.
- Chelsea Temple for the Dr. and Mrs. Michael Dick Community Scholarship.
- Judy Bowen, Wayne Johnston, and Gretchen Lamb for the terrific 50th class reunion.
- Judy Goodkin in honor of her retirement, for the donation to the Rutland County Humane Society in memory of Shady.

**ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

Back-to-School Agenda - Superintendent Moran said that schools open tomorrow. We have been using the Alert Now phone system to make important announcements. Grades 1-9 and Stafford students start tomorrow. Sophomores, juniors and seniors begin on Thursday. Kindergarten students have an orientation one day this week and begin classes next week. Information has been sent home to families, has been in the newspaper, and is on the website. Each school has a first day of school celebration.

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

**BACK TO
SCHOOL
AGENDA**

Retreat Follow-Up - Mr. Mello reviewed the discussions held at the board retreat. The Board reflected upon accomplishments over the last year in order to verify and validate all the good work. They then focused on two questions:

- The process of evaluation – How does it work? Can it be improved to acknowledge the efforts of some of the teaching staff?
- Status in obtaining Annual Yearly Progress – Are we doing enough? Are we doing the right things? How can we support doing more for the students falling through the cracks or failing to meet adequate yearly progress?

Mr. Mello said the Board highlighted points from the book, *Ahead of the Curve*, on classroom assessment and procedures. Administrators have been asked to come back with a plan on the work as a response to some of those questions. What can be next steps? What can the Board support? Board members have asked for a similar type of retreat in January. Commissioner Dress said she found the retreat beneficial – being able to sit with fellow commissioners and share thoughts; to talk about things that there is no time for during regular meetings. Mr. Mello said the Board also looked at goals from last year regarding the commitment to public engagement. How effective were we in informing the public about our budget process? It is difficult in a district with many schools. Mr. Mello thanked Board members for attending the retreat and said he found it worthwhile.

USE OF FY
10 IDEA-B
GRANT
FUNDS

Use of FY 10 IDEA-B Grant Funds - Ms. Moran said funds were accepted by the Board in June. There is a list of how the IDEA-B and IDEA-B Pre-School FY10 monies are allocated. Ms. McGarry reviewed two new programs under the AARA Grant Funds. Both target Autism: Autism Pro funds and Autism training funds. Ms. McGarry explained their purposes and said the funds are paying for training for one person per building for two years through UVM. Ms. McGarry also explained Goalview, special education document software, being paid for by IDEA-B funds. The software will allow special education paperwork to be done more efficiently. Ms. Moran said there is a group of school districts using the software which is helpful for transfer students and for cost efficiencies.

PERSONNEL

Motion by Forshay/Cooke to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 408 dated Aug. 21, 2009, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION:
APPROVE
PERSONNEL
MEMO #408

The appointments, retirement, family medical leave and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached. Ms. Moran congratulated Cathy Farman, Assistant Principal at RIS. She also acknowledged the retirement of Steven Steigerwald.

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Peter P. Amons Employment contract

Motion by Towle / Kilic-Murray to accept the contract extension for Peter P Amons for a term of July 1 2009 - June 30, 2012 as presented. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

MOTION:
PETER P.
AMONS
EMPLOY-
MENT
CONTRACT

Bid Award - School Bus Replacement 2010 - This was approved by telephone poll earlier in the summer.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Motion by Cooke/Dress to ratify the action taken by the Board of School Commissioners earlier in the summer to award a contract for the replacement of two school buses to Clark's Truck Center for \$159,930. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
BID FOR
TWO
SCHOOL
BUSES**

Health Insurance Buy-Out Report - Mr. Mello asked that this discussion be tabled pending the receipt of more information from Mr. Amons regarding other districts in the region and their buy-out offers.

**MOTION:
TABLE
DISC. ON
HEALTH
INSURANCE
BUY-OUT
REPORT**

Motion by Book / Cooke to table the discussion on health insurance buy-out until more information is received. Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Payment of Warrants - Mr. Mello said Mr. Amons was asked to research the process the district uses for the payment of warrants. Mr. Amons said the law gives school districts authority to set up review procedures for approving expenditures as they see fit. Our district prepares weekly warrants, a list of accounts payables, which gets approved by the Superintendent. They are then sent to City Hall for check-signing. The process has been in place for at least 13 years and has been approved by our auditors. Mr. Mello asked if we are within our legal rights and limits and Mr. Amons said in 1991, the law was broadened to allow superintendents to approve warrants. Commissioner Cooke said he does not disagree with the process but has questions. Should the board authorize a designee each year? Does the board have a policy to address this? Should this be done annually because board members change? Was there ever a motion made that sets out the procedures we are using?

**PAYMENT
OF
WARRANTS**

Mr. Amons said nothing in the law requires an annual designation. The law refers to "policies" but it does not specify written or unwritten. The city charter is specific that says the superintendent is the purchasing agent and this was discussed. Mr. Cooke said the board is responsible, statutorily, for paying bills or authorizing a designee. He would like more knowledge about this. Mr. Mello referred the issue to the Policy Committee to revisit the appropriate policy.

Stratton Road House - Mr. Mello said there has been discussion about using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to purchase the Stratton Road House. There are many questions such as: Can we do it? What are the benefits? Mr. Amons said there are ARRA Funds available, attached to IDEA-B Funds, consistent with how we spend special education dollars. Mr. Amons said he heard that it is possible to buy real estate with the funds. Currently, the district pays \$17,000 in rent and \$3,000 in property taxes annually for the Stratton Road House. He said if the district owned the building, it would be a \$20,000 annual savings. The owners are asking \$265,000. Mr. Amons explained that he has been looking for ways to use ARRA funds to reduce the budget. The application would be written by both Mr. Amons and Ms. McGarry. Mr. Amons said John Rice has told him that we cannot buy another building and renovate it for less than \$265,000 and get the same thing. The state has encouraged us to apply but has not indicated whether or not it would be approved.

**STRATTON
ROAD
HOUSE**

Ms. Kilic-Murray said she thinks the \$265,000 asking price seems high in this market. Mr. Amons said it is high, but the owners are not really interested in selling the property and it is not on the market. They would be willing to sell because it would be for the school district.

Commissioner Book said last year he suggested buying the building and he was told it was not a good idea. Mr. Amons said this would be buying it with someone else's money. The funds are available now and have to be used within 27 months. Mr. Book said for \$265,000, he would rather build something on campus. He said the money is "ours," even if it is federal tax money.

Mr. Cooke asked if other options have been explored. He would like more information. Is there a place on campus we could build? Could STC students build a house? Could it be combined with something else? Could it be closer to campus? Ms. Moran said she and Mr. Amons have been talking about it and they wanted to hear Board opinion. They want to know if they should continue to investigate. Ms. Moran said the owner put about \$150,000 into the house to design it and make it handicapped accessible for this program. Mr. Amons said we have a ten year lease on the house and cannot break it unless there is a change in the program.

Mr. Amons reviewed the ARRA funds and their purpose. He has been looking into opportunities which would relieve the budget. Purchasing this building would relieve the budget of \$20,000 in perpetuity. Mr. Cooke said the annual savings is actually less because of the state reimbursement for using the building for special education. He said the savings would be less than \$10,000 a year. Mr. Cooke asked about other potential uses for the funds, such as transportation. Mr. Amons said we are looking into special education buses and Ms. Moran said we are also looking into an elevator at RIS.

Commissioner Towle said regarding the Stratton Road house, there is no guarantee that when the lease expires, that the rent will be the same. Mr. Mello asked the board if they think Ms. McGarry and Mr. Amons should invest time in the application and Board members agreed they should move forward with an application. Commissioner Courcelle said philosophically, he has a problem with public entities buying property and taking it off the tax rolls. A purchase could end up being a net loss to the taxpayers and that needs to be a consideration. It is a cost shift. Mr. Cooke said the state could be interested because they would not have to contribute their share every year if it was purchased. Mr. Amons said if he does not know the assessment but the taxes are about +\$3000 annually. Mr. Mello said Mr. Amons and Ms. McGarry will work on the application and Ms. Moran will come back with other suggested projects or uses of ARRA money.

Announcements

- Ms. Moran pointed out summer artwork on display at Longfellow put together by Tapestry and Academy students. Thanks to all staff who works at Tapestry.
- School open house and parent back to school night information is posted on the website. There are first day celebrations at all schools.
- The Northeast spruce up day was rained out and rescheduled for Aug. 29.
- RHS - Encore theater students and parents have a meeting on Aug 31. The fall

ANNOUNCE-
MENTS, cont.

- production is Episodes from the Twilight Zone.
- Thanks and kudos to the custodians, maintenance workers and bus drivers for all their accomplishments this summer. Ms. Moran said the amount of work they did is remarkable. Also thanks to the technology department, Patricia, Mark and Dave and their four Geek Squad interns, for their major improvements. They did a great job all summer.

COMM.
REPORTS

Policy Committee - Motion by Forshay / Towle to approve the 7000 Series - Student for First Reading:

POLICY

MOTION:
APPROVE
7000 SERIES
FOR FIRST
READING

- 7610 - Immunization of Students
- 7611 - Prescription and Non Prescription Medication
- 7612 - Athletic Program Safety
- 7650 - Emancipated Minors
- 7690 - Non-discrimination on the basis of Disability 504 Act of 1973 & the Americans with Disabilities Act
- 7692 - Head Lice
- 7694 - Provisions of Special Education Services to Private School Students

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

NEW
BUSINESS

New Business

Student representative Dan Wigmore said tomorrow is freshman orientation at RHS. He will be speaking with freshman. Upperclassmen begin classes on Thursday.

STUDENT
REPORT

H1N1
UPDATE

Ms. Moran said the district has been working with the Department of Health and Department of Education regarding H1N1. All directives will be coming from the state and the agencies will be working together. There is an updated letter posted on the website and which will be sent home. She said there are good plans in place and all the nursing staff met today and reviewed protocols and plans.

GOOD
PARTICI-
PATION
USING
TRACK AND
FIELD

Mr. Cooke said he noticed there are many students participating in fall sports training and it is very encouraging. He said there are many community members using the track on a daily basis – it is great to see all the usage; community members alongside students. Ms. Moran said with all the rain we have had, without the turf, we would not be using the field.

OLD
BUSINESS

Old Business - None

ADJOURN

Motion by Cooke/Book to adjourn at 8:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary