

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 23, 2010**

School Board Members Present:

Richard Courcelle
Christopher Book
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Wayne Cooke
Roberta Dress
Peter Fagan (6:35 pm)
Collin Fingon
Peter Forshay
Erin Shimp
Rob Towle
Daniel Wigmore

Member Absent

Peter Mello

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Peter Amons
Wil Cunningham
Ellie McGarry
Bill Olsen
Bob Johnson
Jay Slenker
Glenn Olson
Lyle Jepson

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Courcelle noted the absence of Commissioners Mello and Fagan.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Motion by Towle / Dress to accept the minutes of the March 9, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

MOTION:
MINUTES
03/09/10
MEETING

Written Communication - None

WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION

Oral Communication - None

REORGAN-
IZATION

Reorganization - Swearing in Elected and Re-Elected Members:

- Christopher Book - Three Year Term
- Hurley Cavacas, Jr. - Three Year Term
- Collin Fingon - Three Year Term
- Erin Shimp - Three Year Term

SWEARING
IN OF
NEWLY
ELECTED
MEMBERS

Mr. Courcelle welcomed new board member Erin Shimp.

ELECTION
OF
OFFICERS

Election of Board Clerk - Motion by Towle / Cooke to nominate and elect Richard Courcelle as Board Clerk.

MOTION:
ELECTION
OF BOARD
CLERK

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Election of Board President - Motion by Book / Cooke to nominate and elect Peter Mello as Board President.

ELECTION
OF BOARD
PRESIDENT

There were no other nominations. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

RECOGNI-
TION

Recognition - Ms. Moran introduced Janet Pringle, an 8th grade teacher at RMS who is active with Veterans Affairs. Her students wrote letters to veterans and the students

have received national recognition. Students Lauren and Justin from the Explorer Team said Ms. Pringle had the students write letters around holiday time to veterans at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The students were practicing their literacy skills and wished the veterans happy holidays and thanked them for their service. The students have received a plaque of recognition from national officials, who are now coming to RMS this week to meet the students. The plaque was presented to Commissioner Courcelle who said it will be displayed at RMS. Mr. Courcelle said the Board is proud of the students.

School Improvement Grant and Department of Education AYP Designation Report
Mr. Bliss said the School Improvement Grant is a federal process and he reviewed how it effects the high school. The school district has been investing its Title I funds mostly in the lower grades, where the poverty levels are higher. The high school has about 40% poverty but it is higher in the lower grades. RHS was eligible for Title I funds but did not accept it in 2008. Mr. Bliss reviewed the options for schools identified as “highest need” if they decide to accept School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds. However, they come with conditions. He said the State has not yet determined when the school must accept or reject the SIG money, perhaps it will be in late April. The State is creating a new school improvement team to work with the schools in need. More information is needed before a decision can be made. Ms. Moran said she has asked the State, in writing, for a narrative and numeric representation on the rankings. That will help inform the Board in order to make a decision. She said more information is needed before the administration can make a recommendation and it is hard to inform the public when the data has not been provided.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Do we have to take the money? Mr. Bliss said we do not have to accept the money or accept an improvement model. The administrators will make a recommendation to the Board, hopefully by the end of April.
- The ranking was based off two data points. Did anyone look at the third data point to see if there is a continuation of the trend? Mr. Bliss said the State had to submit their information to the federal before the 2009 data was available. It was not considered.
- Can we ask the State for something in writing stating that if we accept the funds and we choose the improvement model, that there will be no further strings? Mr. Bliss said we are asking for more information.
- Will Board members have the “red book” before making a decision? Ms. Moran said Mr. Olsen will present a lot of data tonight.
- The state is asking for local boards to control costs but then when the results are not what they want, their plan is to spend more money.
- Ms. Moran said the federal level is anticipating changes to No Child Left Behind, which is an urban model. The rural caucus is saying that this does not apply in rural states.
- The ranking that RHS is a “persistently low achieving” school is troubling since it is based upon two data points. The most recent data point was not taken under consideration and those results are not consistent with the term “persistently.”

Mr. Olsen presented some of the data regarding the NECAP and other assessments being done at the high school. He said he was disappointed with the designation

because it is hard to figure out where it came from, especially since last year's scores were improved. He said they are trying to analyze the results but we do not like to look at just one measure. We are also looking at all the work done over the past three years. Mr. Olsen presented data on the NECAP results as of October 2009. He has analyzed the scores of other schools and he does not understand where our designation comes from. He has asked the State for their calculation and is waiting for a response.

Mr. Olsen reviewed an analysis he performed comparing the test results from a total of 12 schools in the state that have over 200 students in the 11th grade. Of the 12 schools results, Rutland High was fifth in reading and first in reading improvement, eighth in math and third in math progress and tenth in writing and eighth in writing progress. He said while there is work to be done, the school is not "consistently low achieving".

There was further discussion with Board members:

- This is not a good way to measure success. There is such good progress and good work from the faculty. It is disturbing when there are quick labels.
- There has been tremendous progress in the past few years. There is also a good result giving students an incentive to try their best.
- Mr. Olsen said he thinks the test is good because it shows what a student can do and it measures all different skills. But students have no tie to it. It does not go on their transcript or matter to colleges.
- Can we look at different cohorts and see which students took the test in 8th grade and see the results from these 11th grade students? And other measures? Glen Olson has the data from every student from in 11th grade, no matter what Vermont school they attended in 8th grade. We also have the data on the students who went through Rutland City schools.
- Of the 12 schools used in the comparison, how many are tier 1, 2 or 3? Mr. Olsen said Rutland is in tier 2. We do not know who the schools are in the different tiers. We have asked the State for that information.
- Dan Wigmore said all students know that the results of the test do not effect them. Students do not like to have to come in early to take the test when they know other students have the day off from school. Students admittedly do not try on these tests and so the incentives were helpful. Students know there are other measures of the school's success such as number of clubs and activities and the high graduation rate and they do not care about the testing. They were ecstatic to have the incentive.
- In other states, "they teach to the test." Do we do that? Mr. Olsen said we do not teach to the test but we have tried to change the system. We set up a system of incentives. Also, 9th and 10th graders did not stay home this year but came to school and worked on test taking strategies. We have worked hard to line up the curriculum to state standards and we are instructing to those standards. Some departments have changed their assessments; tests have been changed to the NECAP style; i.e., in math, students need to write out answers, not just provide a calculation.
- Training students on how to prepare for the test is much more positive for a well rounded education than teaching the answers.
- Regarding incentives, can we create certificates of recognition, perhaps for a high score or most improved? Then it could be mentioned on a transcript. Mr.

Olsen said one warning is confidentiality. Dan Wigmore said the incentives have been really well received. They include exam exemption, parking pass savings, or extended senior privileges.

- Do we do any high stakes testing in 9th or 10th grade so the students do not lose the test-taking style? Mr. Olsen said teachers are working on their own tests for 9th and 10th graders similar in style to the NECAPs.
- Adam Rosenberg said Ms. Moran spoke to the faculty and they see the designation as a label. We have a continuum of efforts begun a few years ago and there are a number of systems in place. The faculty feels they are working together and they see improvement. This year, the 9th and 10th graders had to come to school while the 11th graders were taking the test. Those students took practice tests and learned strategies. The curriculum is aligned to the standards.

Mr. Courcelle thanked everyone for all the hard work in this an ongoing process. He said it is clear to the Board that RHS is not consistently a poor performer.

HQT Report - Mr. Bliss said there is a federal requirement that the Board and public must be provided with a Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) report. The report is based upon 2008 data. 100% of our teachers are properly licensed and are HQT. 7.89% of our classes were taught by teachers who were not HQT. Mr. Bliss explained that this number comes from some special education or alternative education teachers who might be teaching outside their content area for a portion of the day. For example, a special education teacher who is HQT in math and reading might be teaching a bit of science (and perhaps they are not HQT in science) and that would have to be reported. Mr. Fagan asked if co-teaching reduces the HQT in special education and Mr. Bliss said he thinks it will. Mr. Towle asked if we have a goal and Mr. Bliss said 100% of our teachers are licensed and HQT. The difference is the small amount with special education or alternative education. Ms. Moran said in the fields in which they were hired and teaching primarily, 100% of our teachers are HQT.

Motion by Towle / Fagan to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 421 dated March 19, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

The appointments, transfer, and resignation were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Business Report - None

Announcements

- Howe Center Campus newsletter was distributed.
- As part of our Fresh Fruit and Vegetable grant for Northeast and Northwest Schools, students and staff are being introduced to new fruits and vegetables. Since we cannot grow as much in Vermont, students are being exposed to other fresh foods.
- Students from Northeast will be visiting Sugar and Spice next week to learn

- about maple sugaring process.
- Northwest school has a Little Caesar's fundraiser. The following 2nd grade students have had their art entered in the 2010 Secretary of State poster Contest: Jaeger Burke, Ariel Fitzgerald, Ryleigh Bertrand, Lacey Valente, Samantha Townsend, Finnian McGuinness, Sebastian Salazar and Haley Lassen.
- 6th grade students will have an orientation tomorrow to introduce them to RMS.
- At the New England Music Festival in Burlington, Connecticut, March 18 – 20, the following students represented, RHS: Band – Samantha Hart, oboe; Orchestra – Katie McCormack, violin; Chorus – Kalinen Barrows, Anna Gerretson, Nicolas McKelvie, Mattie Sowards, Julia Stacom
- RHS successfully hosted the Iroquois District Debate and Forensics tournament this weekend. Many student clubs operated concessions at the event. This was the first time a district tournament has been held in Vermont.
- Barry Ferraro's Culinary group will be doing a Mother's Day Breakfast at the Maples on May 9 and will be serving clients and families. They expect 200 plus people. The Maples will supply the cost of product and STC will cook and serve.

Legislative Report

Challenges for Change - Ms. Moran said Ms. McGarry has been serving on the Challenge for Change Design committee. The challenge was put forth that general education must have a savings of \$13.3 million in FY2011 and \$40 million in FY 2012 and that in FY 2012, 25% of the total savings will be reinvested in instructional activities. In special education, there must be reduction in spending by 5% in FY 2011 than in FY 2010 and spend 7.5% less in FY 2012 than in FY 2010. Ms. McGarry said the committee came up with outcomes for education to be addressed as the reductions are being made. The Commissioner will take the recommendations and present it to the Legislature. She reviewed some of the recommendations: administrative costs, non-mandated redistricting, school choice, reduction of small schools, increasing student to staff ratio, and coming up with common systems statewide. Special education administrators outlined ideas and recommendations and adopted what they recommended regarding special education funding. Ms. Moran said Ms. McGarry was invited to serve on this committee which is a nice recognition. She put in a lot of time and travel.

School Governance - Ms. Moran said we are the lowest spender statewide for administrative costs. A change in school governance could hurt the frugal low spenders. Mr. Amons reviewed the current discussion in Montpelier about consolidation of school districts and supervisory unions and schools. Mr. Fagan said one of the bills in the Legislature does have some traction - H. 782. It provides incentives for contiguous school districts to work together. He and Mr. Amons described some of the aspects of the proposed legislation, which might be voted upon at the end of the week. Ms. Moran said it is a creative approach with a five year transition plan. She said last fall, independent of this legislation, Mr. Mello called together school leaders from Rutland City, Rutland South and Rutland Central. He will try to reconvene a meeting in the near future.

Senate Education Committee Hearing - RHS Café - April 5, 2010 at 5:30 pm.

Policy Committee - Mr. Book said the committee met and discussed job descriptions, which are a work in progress.

COMM.
REPORTS

Building Committee - Commissioner Cooke thanked the building committee members for their work. The door project has been taken care of. A major focus at RMS continues to be ventilation. We are realizing benefits from the Johnson Controls project and generating positive savings in fuel gallons and electricity. The lighting project has been completed at little or no cost to us and we are saving a lot of dollars. Ms. Moran thanked Efficiency Vermont.

POLICY
COMM.

BUILDING
COMM.

Mr. Cooke said the committee is still talking about Watkins, the building where we house our buses and maintenance, which is not very efficient, as well as Dana, a former school.

Mr. Cooke thanked everyone for the STC bond. A lot of plans are already in place and planning is critical. The project has an 18 month scope and will cost \$1.4 million. There is a timeline. Plans and bids should be out by the end of the school year. It will impact classes and teachers packing up. Mr. Jepson is working with teachers and they are on board. Mr. Jepson thanked the Board for their support.

NEW
BUSINESS

New Business - Mr. Fagan said the Music in our Schools Month performances were outstanding.

MUSIC

All State Music Festival - May 5 - 6 - 7 - 8, need beds. May 5 - parade downtown.

Mr. Towle congratulated Commissioner Peter Forshay for ten years on the board. Ms. Moran said she celebrated her tenth year in the position this month and she was congratulated.

CONGRATS
FOR BOARD
SERVICE

Dan Wigmore said RHS held their annual blood drive today and over 80 students donated blood.

RHS BLOOD
DRIVE

Old Business - Mr. Towle said there was discussion at the board retreat regarding the presentation of quarterly budget figures and he distributed an example of a spreadsheet with a recap of expenditures and revenues. He asked if the Board could receive something similar quarterly. Ms. Moran said she will have Mr. Amons see if he can prepare the numbers in that way.

OLD
BUSINESS

BUDGET
REPORTING

Motion by Cooke/Forshay to adjourn at 8:21 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary