

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
APRIL 6, 2010**

**School Board Members Present:**

Peter Mello  
Christopher Book  
Hurley Cavacas, Jr. (6:33 pm)  
Wayne Cooke  
Richard Courcelle  
Roberta Dress  
Peter Fagan  
Collin Fingon  
Peter Forshay  
Rob Towle  
Daniel Wigmore

**Member Absent**

Erin Shimp

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Peter Amons  
Wil Cunningham  
Lyle Jepson  
Ellie McGarry  
Bill Olsen  
Kristen Hubert  
Cathy Farman

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The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioners Cavacas and Shimp.

CALL TO ORDER

Motion by Towle/Forshay to accept the minutes of the March 23, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

ROLL CALL

MOTION:  
MINUTES  
03/23/10  
MEETING

Written Communication - Mr. Mello read a Resolution from the State of Vermont Senate and House of Representatives to the RHS Raiders Championship Boys Alpine Ski Team as well as one to the RHS Raiders Championship Girls Alpine Ski Team with congratulations. The certificates were presented to Mr. Olsen.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Oral Communication - None

LEGISLATURE RESOLUTIONS RE: RHS SKI TEAMS

Recognition - STC SADD Project and Award - Clerk Courcelle read a Proclamation and Request for Support from the STC SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Chapter involving distracted driving. It is attached. Student Haley Cotrupi spoke about why she started the project. She said they have been working hard and would like support. Mr. D'Esposito reviewed some of the aspects of the program and what they are doing to raise awareness of distracted driving. Mr. Mello said this is an outstanding community awareness program.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

RECOGNITION - STC SADD PROJECT & AWARD

School Improvement Grant - Status - Superintendent Moran said today she took part in a conference call with the Department of Education and six of the other nine superintendents. There are still not a lot of answers and she does not feel ready to ask for the Board's endorsement. June 15 will be the deadline for getting in the application. There are many concerns from schools in small rural states and a group is working on communicating those concerns nationally. Mr. Mello said he would like the Board to proceed slowly and cautiously and to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing this. Ms. Moran scheduled discussion with the Board for the first meeting in May and she hopes there will be enough information by then in order to make a recommendation. There was discussion on the information which will be available by

EDUCATION REPORT

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT

May and what will be needed in order to make decisions on the School Improvement Grant.

RMS Report - Mr. Cunningham reviewed a summary and update on some of the results of the ongoing school improvement work at RMS. He discussed the committees and said Mr. Beerworth has been working on the change committee. Mr. Beerworth said the enrollment at RMS has declined in the past few years and so it is a good time to make changes. The change committee focused on the student's daily schedule with the following main goals: to provide optimum use of instruction to result in highest level of student learning; provide a lot of programs; and to create a student schedule to allow teacher flexibility in the teaming concept. To attain those goals they focused efforts on: a rotating class schedule, increasing the number of minutes the student spends in the classroom, increasing opportunities for students on Advanced Plans to engage in enrichment opportunities, creating a separate study skills or tutorial block, and reducing the number of daily transitions. Mr. Beerworth said many of the goals were met with this changed schedule. Mr. Cunningham said they also studied the two distinct teaming structures: two teams loop and two teams do not. It was felt that neither structure mattered in the students' measure of success and to have a more seamless structure, it was decided to make the whole school looping, which will be in place in 2011-2012 for all students. He reviewed some of the advantages of looping.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- How did you find more time for instruction? How did you create a study skills block for all students in addition to finding more instruction time? Mr. Beerworth said the rotating schedule allowed the elimination of one core class per day. That means that over a five day period, a student would miss one core class. It reduces about 15 minutes in a week. The traditional 15 minute T.A. was eliminated and lunch and band / chorus / enrichment were shortened. Mr. Bliss said each class will be longer so there is less transition. Classes will go from 48 to 56 minutes. Mr. Cunningham said they had to work within the confines of other items such as busing and the cafeteria.
- Lunch and a few other areas were shortened. From the student's point of view, for many students, it is a long day. With the exception of a 22 minute lunch, they do not get a break. Are they missing something along the way? Mr. Cunningham said he struggles with this also. They had to give up the time for students to go out for a few minutes at lunch. The T.A. is being replaced with Study Skills / Tutorial, which will be once a week. They looked at many different schedules and ideas before deciding on this one.
- Movement is so important for students. Mr. Bliss said they are committed to making sure this is a student-centered set-up. How do we make sure we honor the student's needs? Students will get outlets for snack and movement. Ms. Moran said there will be more team-teaching, project work, and collaborative work. Those will all help with movement.
- How many students will be eating at the same time? Mr. Cunningham said students will be able to eat in that time frame.
- With the extended class time, will there be a problem with concentration for some students? Mr. Cunningham said middle school teachers recognize that students need a variety of activities to meet the objectives of the class. Activities include: cooperative goal work, teacher led work, smart boards, and student led work.

- Within the Study Skills time frame, what are the integrated activities? Mr. Cunningham said it will be different than the high school model. All students will participate at the middle school. Teachers will create lesson plans to help students in the Study Skills class to pick up gaps they have displayed on NECAP tests in the past. All teachers will need to participate. After the NECAP time period, there will be other integrative learning opportunities.
- I think you will see the rewards in the classroom with less transition time and more time in the classroom. It gets students ready for the high school.
- What is UA? Unified Arts. It will be continued to offered every day: PE, Music, Art, Tech Ed, Family Consumer Studies.
- Will all teachers have an assignment during Study Skills time? Mr. Cunningham said all teachers with the exception of the UA teachers. They will use that time for their planning and collaborative work.
- Throughout the year, will you have time for the faculty to reflect? Please keep them involved in reviewing and analyzing the success.
- Is everyone happy and on board with the looping? Mr. Cunningham said everyone is on board and committed to working on the betterment of the school. He said it was a respectful and professional discussion. The faculty, whether they agree or disagree, will be behind it. He said some parents are for it and some are not.

PERSONNEL  
MEMO

MOTION:  
PERSONNEL  
MEMO #422

Motion by Cooke / Towle to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 422 dated April 2, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

Commissioner Cavacas recused himself from voting as he has a conflict. The appointments, transfers, and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached. Ms. Moran introduced Pamela Reed, who will be serving as Associate Principal at RHS effective July 1.

Motion passed with one abstention (Cavacas)

BUSINESS  
REPORT

Mark Skakel Scholarship Fund - Ms. Moran said we lost a talented and educator with Mark Skakel's recent death. Unsolicited donations are already being received. A fuller plan for the scholarship will be developed.

MOTION:  
MARK  
SKAKEL  
SCHOLAR-  
SHIP FUND

Motion by Towle / Fagan to allow RCPS to accept the funds and set up an account for a future Mark Skakel Scholarship Fund. Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

QUALIFIED  
SCHOOL  
CONSTRUC-  
TION BOND

Qualified School Construction Bond - Mr. Amons said STC received state allocation for Qualified School Construction Bond approval for the \$1,368,000 for the renovation project. He reviewed what this means and said the Board needs to take action on this Resolution.

MOTION:  
ADOPT  
DECLARA-  
TION OF  
INTENT RE:  
QUALIFIED  
SCHOOL  
CONSTRUC-  
TION BONDS

Motion by Cooke / Towle to adopt the Declaration of Official Intent City of Rutland Vermont Public Schools to Reimburse Certain Expenditures from Proceeds of Indebtedness (Qualified School Construction Bonds) as presented and attached.

Mr. Amons said the bond length and interest rate still needs to be set. He thinks it will be approximately 15 - 17 years and between 0 - 2% interest. If there are no offers with this method, he will go to the Bond Bank in the summer. We are not obligated to accept anything and he will consult with the Bond Bank when we have an offer.

QUALIFIED  
SCHOOL  
CONSTRUC-  
TION BOND,  
cont.

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

#### Announcements

- Board members received Autism Awareness ribbons courtesy.
- Congratulations to Diana Pfenning who successfully received a grant for the middle school Tapestry Program. It is \$53,000 for three years.
- At Northeast, second grade students recently visited the Southern Vermont Arts Center as part of their integrated art, music and literature grant. The grant obtained by Brad Bender, art teacher, and Jennifer Hart, music teacher, provided an original text, put to music, and suitably illustrated. Teacher Summer King and her second grade students recently presented a musical to the school and parents on "Bugz." Wednesday will be the annual family style spring dinner for the entire school. Thursday evening is science night involving experiments. The event will be staffed by high school science students of Chad Hodgkins. Foster Grandparent Janet Martin will be honored Saturday by receiving the Governor's Service Award.
- Northwest School will hold a Beach Day this Friday which is the culminating activity in their Reading Challenge. Slapstick Science Guy presents to students on Thursday. "Kids Run America" program begins on April 19. Students will focus on physical fitness goals and healthy lifestyles. The culminating event is the Crowley Race on June 13. Thanks to Vermont Road Runners and Crowley Brothers who will pay all expenses for each participating student.
- Puppets for Education were presented today at RIS. This was a pilot program on autism. RRMC is presenting the Home Alone program to students on Thursday. The program emphasizes safety for children who are home alone.
- Thanks to all teachers, parent volunteers and foster grandparents for all the enriching activities.

SUPERIN-  
TENDENT'S  
REPORT

ANNOUNCE-  
MENTS

Legislative Report / Challenges for Change / School Governance / Senate Education Committee Hearing - Ms. Moran continues to watch the Challenges for Changes. There is concern for next year regarding expectations for budget reductions. Last night we hosted a Senate Education Committee Hearing at RHS. There was a good turnout. Ms. Moran said her concern is that Rutland City Schools is a low spender, the lowest spender on administration in the state. Any across-the-board cuts hurt the frugal low spending districts proportionately more than higher spending districts. She said it would also have a significant impact on the integrity of the Brigham decision. Commissioner Fagan said Challenges for Change is going through a challenging time. There are many valid concerns. He does not anticipate changes for 2011. Around the state, \$22 million was saved in school budgets which surpassed what had been anticipated.

LEGISLA-  
TIVE  
REPORT /  
CHALLENGES FOR  
CHANGE /  
SCHOOL GOVERN-  
ANCE /  
SENATE  
EDUCATION  
COMM.  
HEARING

COMM.  
REPORTS

Building Committee - Commissioner Cooke said the STC renovation committee met with the architect and engineers to review their preliminary plans. They will look at final drawings and go out to bid in May for a summer start-up. Commissioner Forshay asked if a Clerk of the Works has been identified and Mr. Cooke said it will be John Rice. He has been very involved and will play a critical role in the project.

BUILDING  
COMM.

New Business - Mr. Mello distributed Board member committee assignments. He asked for feedback if members would like to change or stay the same.

**NEW  
BUSINESS**

Mr. Fagan said he would like to look at using e-books and podcasts as ways to enhance learning capabilities. Ms. Moran said we are experimenting with some products and at the April 27 Board meeting, there will be an instructional technology report.

**BOARD  
COMM.  
ASSIGN-  
MENTS**

**TECHNO-  
LOGY  
SUGGEST-  
IONS**

#### Old Business

Fiscal Reporting - Mr. Amons said the Board has discussed more frequent financial statements and in other formats. He plans to meet with Business Managers from about six other school districts in the near future and he will ask them what they share with their board members at interims. He will also call other large districts. He explained that school finances are different than other businesses. There is no "actual versus budget" on an interim basis in school reporting. Principals are informed but in general, consolidated financial statements are not of great use. The real decision making the Board does is by looking at head counts and expenses involving maintenance and operations. Revenues do not generally change. Changes are brought to the contingency fund which the Board votes upon. He said he will research this in the next few months and Mr. Mello asked for an update report in May.

**OLD  
BUSINESS**

**FISCAL  
REPORTING**

Mr. Forshay asked for an update on the contingency fund and Mr. Amons said he believes it is untouched and that there is \$250,000 available. Is there a plan to spend it? Ms. Moran said she will discuss it with Mr. Rice at the beginning of May to look at potential health and safety projects. She said another use of the funds being researched is to upgrade the telephone system. It will be brought to the Board in the future. Mr. Fagan asked if revenues are coming in as expected or if expenditures are higher than expected and Mr. Amons said he does not see any surprises.

**CONTIN-  
GENCY  
FUND  
UPDATE**

Mr. Fingon asked how the State Department of Education and their facilities are funded Mr. Fagan said they are funded by the General Fund, not the Education Fund.

**STATE DEPT  
OF EDUCA-  
TION**

Dan Wigmore said the National Honor Society had an ice cream fundraiser to benefit the local Red Cross. Tri-M, the Music National Honor Society, recently held an open mic night to benefit Haiti. There is more of an effort in school to reach out and help people in need.

**RHS  
UPDATE**

Motion by Book / Towle at 7:55 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing legal and negotiations 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 8:45 pm.

Motion by Book / Towle to adjourn at 8:45 pm. Passed.

**PUBLIC  
SESSION**

Respectfully submitted

**ADJOURN**

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Janet Mondlak  
Recording Secretary