

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
JANUARY 8, 2013**

**School Board Members Present:**

Peter Mello  
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.  
Wayne Cooke  
Richard Courcelle  
Peter Fagan  
Rob Kurchena  
Jamie Pemrick  
Erin Shimp (6:31 pm)  
Kate Thomas  
Rob Towle  
Lena Cohen

**Member Absent**

Douglas Gage

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Wil Cunningham  
Peter Amons  
Bill Olsen  
Kristen Hubert  
Susanne Engels  
Jay Slenker  
John Rice  
Steve Sampson  
Pam Reed  
Ted Guilmette  
Cathy Farman  
Nicole Carter  
Jessica Henderson

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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 Gage and Shimp.

Motion by Towle / Fagan to accept the minutes of the Dec. 11, 2012 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Written and Oral Communications - Mr. Mello said an email about budget related items was sent to Board members and he responded to it.

Public School Choice Grades 9 - 12 - Superintendent Moran circulated communication from the State regarding a new state-wide school choice law. She reviewed the history of the county collaborative and said the new program will be state-wide, not just regional. The law raises the limits for school choice and while RHS has had a limit of ten inbound students at any given time, for school year 2013-2014, the limit will be increased to 30 students and the subsequent year it will be 40. There are nine students on the waiting list from last year and they will be given first preference. Ms. Moran said this is now law but the Board will be asked to take action on the new regulations as they apply to Rutland City. She said the money does not follow the child.

Budget: FY Budget Presentation and Deliberations - Ms. Moran said based upon Board input from the last meeting, a new draft budget has been prepared. Mr. Amons reviewed that the first draft budget showed an increase of 5.7%, of which 1.2% was "flop-over" from FY13 for labor contracts which were unsettled at the time the budget was written. The Board had asked for cuts and Mr. Amons reviewed proposed changes in draft budget #2:

- 12% had been budgeted for health insurance increases but they will actually be 12.8%. This increases the budget. There was discussion about wage and

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**MOTION:  
MINUTES  
12/11/12  
MEETING**

**WRITTEN &  
ORAL  
COMMUN-  
ICATIONS**

**EDUCATION  
REPORT**

**PUBLIC  
SCHOOL  
CHOICE**

**BUDGET  
PRESENTA-  
TION &  
DELIBERA-  
TIONS**

benefit increases and effects from employees changing health plans or leaving the buy-out and taking the health insurance. Board members also discussed the effects on the budget of the 1.2% which had not been budgeted last year, although it had been spent last year. There was discussion about future health care changes with "Obamacare" and the potential for negotiating with our labor units on levels of benefits.

- Remove the one-to-one student PCs proposed program.
- Reduce capital and maintenance line item. This is still in at \$40,000 more than the current budget, but scales back the proposed increase by \$50,000.

Ms. Moran reviewed the proposed reduction of staffing: three volunteer coordinators (which count as two FTE), reduce RHS home school coordinator, reduce one Library Avenue nurse (which leaves two at Library Avenue and six for the district), and four team paraeducators at RMS.

Mr. Mello commented that the paraeducator cuts seem like they might more closely impact instruction more than other proposed cuts. Mr. Bliss said each reduction impacts the program in some way. We are looking across the district on how we use paraeducators and how they are funded. Ms. Moran said students with needs clearly dictated in their plans will retain their assignments. Commissioner Cooke asked about the four assistants and if they are special education reimbursable or funded locally. Ms. Moran said they are not serving direct need high service children. There is reimbursement. Staff has looked very carefully at all areas and feel that they can make the changes. Mr. Bliss explained that the \$120,000 in savings from cutting these positions is the impact on the expense side of the budget. There is a different impact on the revenue side.

Mr. Amons reviewed that draft budget #2 brings the proposed budget down by \$387,000 and has a net reduction of eleven jobs. The budget increase is 4.9%. Commissioner Thomas said she does not see how cutting 11 jobs is helping the community -- she does not agree with cutting jobs in this economy.

Mr. Amons presented draft budget #3 which further cuts classroom teachers. He reviewed the ratios. If cuts can be made by retirement or attrition, there is financial gain as we keep the job and save about \$30,000 by hiring a lower-cost teacher. There was a question on retirements and Ms. Moran said the deadline is next week. There are very few so far and not many more anticipated. The number is far fewer than in previous few years and is not expected to grow much in the coming years. She believes the bubble has passed.

Mr. Cooke said he would be interested in seeing class sizes, as impacted by the cuts proposed draft #3. Ms. Moran reviewed the current numbers and proposed numbers if a teacher is cut at Northwest and Northeast each, plus one co-teacher. Commissioner Cavacas said the State is asking us to do more with less and we have schools which are not making AYP. Ms. Moran said that is a good point: for example, the proposal to purchase more computers was cut, but by 2015, we will be required to have all assessments performed electronically. We do not have that capacity. Commissioner Pemrick said she feels we need to get to the level where there are computers for the students. There are some families who can purchase computers for their own students. She thinks parents should be encouraged to do that so the district has to buy fewer.

She said in other states, families get a list of what students need to bring to the first day of school and the items contribute to the school such as crayons or tissues or glue sticks. Ms. Pemrick said there are changes in the budget she is not comfortable with and she would like to go over it line by line with the whole Board. She is not comfortable passing the budget with what she is seeing and she wants to do it before cutting teachers. Commissioner Towle said he thinks there may be some other opportunities. He would like a special budget meeting.

Mr. Mello said he thinks that paraeducators provide a service that is more closely related to instruction and those are cuts which bother him. He does not think it is good practice to go over the budget line by line with the whole Board, however, Board members have the right to ask questions, such as "Why is X more of a priority than Y?" He does not think Board members should be cherry-picking line items, but the Board does have the responsibility to keep the budget as low as possible and to raise questions. There was further discussion on the suggestion that families provide supplies for the schools, that some of our population is struggling to put breakfast on the table and that in public education, we have to educate all equally. Mr. Mello asked for each Board member's opinions.

Mr. Cavacas said he is not in favor of going through the budget line by line. He said if there are lines which Board members question, he would like to hear them. Commissioner Thomas said there are professionals who go through the budget line by line. She suggested using Google Docs to get everyone's thoughts before a meeting and to streamline conversations. Ms. Moran said we have to comply with the open meeting law. Commissioner Fagan said a number of times he has brought specific questions in and met with Mr. Amons and he thinks that if Board members want to do that, he thinks they should do the same. Commissioner Shimp said she agrees with Mr. Fagan and feels there are other places which might be able to be cut. She thinks everyone should come back with ideas. She said the budget is going to increase this year, regardless.

Commissioner Kurchena said he would prefer to ask Mr. Amons or Ms. Moran his questions. He thinks it would be difficult to go over the budget line by line. He said the way schools are funded, we could be vigilant and even come in with a level funded budget, but if other schools throughout the state have high budgets, we will still see a tax increase because we all pay into the education fund. He asked about the percent increase after taking out wage and benefit increases. Commissioner Courcelle said he does not want to go through the budget line by line. However, if thinks that this budget will be defeated. Voters will be facing increases in the municipal and sewer budgets and everyone just took a 2% pay decrease because of the FICA increase. Last year our budget passed by a small majority and it had less support than the municipal budget. Mr. Cooke said he feels the same as Mr. Courcelle and said it would be difficult to go line by line over the budget. He said he has a hard time cutting positions but if it means going from 14-15 to 16-17 students per class, he thinks those numbers are acceptable and manageable. If jobs could be reduced by attrition, that would be the best. He asked about the increase if we took out salary and benefit increases. He said he cannot look at the 1.2% differently. It is bottom line to bottom line. The CLA is still below 100% and the number of pupils is down. The increase could be \$.09 or \$.11 on the tax rate.

Ms. Pemrick said her intent with the budget by saying "line by line" is for the Board to look over the entire budget. She has questions on increases in travel, overtime, supplies, etc. She would like an additional meeting for everyone to ask questions and make sure Board members are doing the job they are supposed to do. Commissioner Towle suggested Board members look individually line by line and bring questions to a special meeting, perhaps getting them to Mr. Amons in advance. He said that if he is making cuts, he would like to know that the Board looked at everything. He said if everyone's questions are answered and everyone agrees with the cuts, the budget has a better chance of getting passed.

Mr. Mello proposed that each Board member review the budget and asked they send their questions to Mr. Amons or Ms. Moran in advance of the meeting. There was discussion from board members on the process of getting questions to Mr. Amons and giving him the chance to get answers to bring to the meeting. Mr. Mello said his number one priority is education and he wants that to continue. Ms. Moran invited Board members to come in and talk with administrators.

Resident Sean Pemrick said he did not realize Board members do not go through the budget line by line. He believes Board members' job as elected officials is to represent taxpayers and he thinks the Board should look at all areas before people lose their jobs. He asked the Board to put in a policy for future years that the Board looks at budgets line by line. Mr. Amons said large school district Boards do not go through budgets line item by item. It is 78 pages long. He said this is not the first tough budget year. We have cut in so many ways. FY12 will have a deficit of \$100,000 - \$150,000 which shows the budget is very tight. The maintenance budget has been cut over the years by \$1.6 million. We are beyond "chip and pick." We have to either cut class size or reduce programs. Mr. Amons said it is not always the wisest move to have the lowest cost school district or "we leave a lot of money on the table from the State."

Resident Jessica Dennison said she is a local business owner with 12 -20 employees. She thinks it is important for Board members to look at all the pages of the budget. That is the number one with running a business. She would hate to see any teacher lose their job and if there is a way for Board members to go over the budget line by line, she recommends it. Mr. Mello said the implication that the school budget is not reviewed line by line is incorrect. He said this public education; to assume that no one looks at line items is wrong. Administrators do that in great detail. Board members have to learn about the budget and defend it, but they do not have to go through it line by line. There are people the Board counts on to do it and if the Board does not think they are doing it correctly, that is a different problem. Mr. Cavacas said he reviews the budget very carefully. He knows when things have been reshuffled. He looks for offsets. Mr. Mello said Mr. Amons spent time at the last time explaining all significant changes.

Mr. Amons reviewed the FY13 tax rates and FY14 scenarios. He said the state has begun issuing their estimate of what they think the base tax rate is going to be. With the first draft of the budget, the tax rate on tax bills is up \$1.51 and the second draft of the budget has an increase of \$1.49 on the tax rate on tax bills. There has to be \$200,000 in cuts to save \$.01 on the tax rate. That has to do with the tax formula.

There was discussion on the tax effects on a typical house in Rutland, valued at

\$150,000, using scenarios of a household with no income sensitivity relief, partial relief, and someone on social security. There was discussion on the Rutland median household income and the city's average valued home. Further discussion on income sensitivity.

**BUDGET  
PRESENTA-  
TION &  
DELIBERA-  
TIONS, cont.**

Mr. Mello said the Board will meet next Tuesday, January 15, for budget discussion. He asked Board members to send Mr. Amons questions in advance. Ms. Moran said the budget must be ratified by January 22.

**SCHOOL  
SAFETY  
DISCUSSION**

School Safety Discussion - Ms. Moran said there have been conversations about school safety following the tragedy in Connecticut. We have a strong relationship with the Rutland City Police Department and we have a high quality School Resource Officer. She said there was a recent meeting with Police Chief Baker and some of his staff about what we do and about best practices. We will be conducting some exercises in the future. We have recently reviewed and will continue to look at all our safety plans. We will invite the Chief to assign officers to do debriefs when we do exercises. Ms. Moran said she has been meeting with faculties and parent groups to get their input and those are ongoing. Mr. Rice reviewed the status of physical security throughout the district. There are many systems in place and more planned for the near future. He said he thinks the priorities for the future should be improved and expanded public address systems, cameras at all primary entrances (to observe comings and goings), access controls, and improvements of interior and external signage.

Mr. Rice reviewed the practice for access into the schools during the day. Ms. Moran said the Board should be discussing ideas like keeping all doors locked all the time, buzzer systems, or having someone at the doors. She said there has been discussion on addressing mental health issues and making sure that people are getting help if needed. But there are no guarantees. Mr. Kurchena asked who we have consulted with and Ms. Moran said we work with state and local associations and are relying on Chief Baker for best practices. Mr. Cavacas said he would like us to explore a buzzer system for coming into the primary access of each school during the day so entry is monitored. Mr. Cooke said he agrees, he would like to see controlled access at every primary access at every school. It will be discussed at the building committee meeting tomorrow. Ms. Pemrick said she wants locked doors and questioning visitors as to the purpose of their visit. She also wants to see an alert button that automatically calls emergency services without someone taking the time to call 911. Ms. Moran said when the renovations were made to Northeast and Northwest, the offices were relocated by primary accesses.

Resident Sean Pemrick said he goes into a lot of schools for work and he does not think controlled access is an option. He thinks doors should be locked and a buzzer system installed. He recommended potential funding sources from the Dept. of Public Safety.

**PERSONNEL**

Motion by Towle / Cavacas to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 475 dated Jan. 4, 2013, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:  
PERSONNEL  
MEMO #475**

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

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

FY14 Announced Tuition Rates - Mr. Amons reviewed the proposed tuition rates for FY14, how they were computed, and the increase over FY13.

**BUSINESS  
REPORT**

Motion by Towle / Pemrick to approve the school tuition rates for FY14 as presented:

**MOTION:  
APPROVE  
FY14  
TUITION  
RATES**

- Secondary (7-12) at \$13,000
- Elementary at \$8500
- Allen St. Campus at \$25,000

Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**SUPERIN-  
PENDENT'S  
REPORT**

#### Announcements

**ANNOUNCE-  
MENTS**

- Lena Cohen reported RHS has final exams this week. Club Giving students collected and distributed food baskets. The Environmental Club is working on reducing idling outside the school and asking parents to turn off their cars. Ms. Moran said this initiative is district wide. Lena said at a recent meeting, a teacher talked to students about school wide rubrics, how they are used to approve teaching methods and how they help evaluate students. Lena explained how it helps her and that she can see results on Infinite Campus.
- Northwest School had a bowling trip for top four Stuff-A-Bus classrooms. Skating Club starts next weeks and each Wednesday will feature a special guest coach. Special thanks to Danielle Greene for her efforts and diligence with this program. This year 82 K-2 students signed up to participate.
- RIS and Castleton State College's Blue Line Club have joined forces to offer a free skating event for students.
- Tomorrow night is the 8th grader open house at RHS
- Ms. Moran noted that St Michaels College has sent word that teacher Matt McDonough has been nominated as an unsung hero by a graduated RHS student who is now a St. Michael's College student.
- Mr. Bliss said the Howe Center January graduation will take place this Friday. It is a terrific event.

**COMM.  
REPORTS**

Policy Committee - Mr. Bliss reviewed policies for second reading.

**POLICY  
COMM.**

Motion by Mello / Towle to adopt Policy #7410 Prevention of Bullying of Students for second reading.

**APPROVE  
POLICY  
#7410 FOR  
SECOND  
READING**

There were clarifying questions asked and answered. Mr. Mello said he had asked Lena Cohen to comment on the policies as they impact students. Lena said she thinks the practices outlined in the policies work well. Students looked them over and have been talking with peers to get different perspectives. She feels the general consensus is that students feel that if they have a major problem and bring it to an administrator, it is dealt with.

Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Motion by Cavacas / Towle to adopt Policy #8250 - Internet and Email Use for second reading.

**APPROVE  
POLICY  
#8250 FOR  
SECOND  
READING**

Mr. Cooke asked about people who bring their own technology to schools. Mr. Bliss said the policy covers any device using our pathways or infrastructure. It does not address handheld devices using the 4G network.

Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**New Business**

Mr. Fagan expressed concern with the solar development proposed for the landfill and the potential for a leachate problem if the installment is not anchored properly into the landfill cap. He asked that Green Mountain Power ensures that they do not breach the integrity of the cap and that we are held harmless if something goes wrong.

Mr. Towle said he received a complaint about Starbase from a student who was finally old enough to participate, and found the age group changed and they could not participate. Ms. Moran will look into it.

**Old Business**

Mr. Mello reminded Board members to return superintendent evaluations by the end of the week.

Motion by Towle / Fagan at 8:39 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel and 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.

The Board came out of executive session at 9:00 pm.

Motion by Cavacas/Kurchena to approve the side letter to the REA Agreement relative to the Parent-Teacher Conferences. Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Motion by Pemrick / Cooke to adjourn at 9:05 pm. Passed.

Respectfully submitted

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Janet Mondlak  
Recording Secretary

**NEW  
BUSINESS**

**CONCERNS  
WITH  
GMP'S  
PROPOSED  
SOLAR  
DEVELOP-  
MENT**

**STARBASE  
QUESTION**

**OLD  
BUSINESS**

**SUPERIN-  
TENDENT  
EVALUA-  
TIONS**

**MOTION:  
EXECUTIVE  
SESSION**

**PUBLIC  
SESSION**

**MOTION:  
APPROVE  
REA SIDE  
LETTER  
AGREE-  
MENT**

**ADJOURN**