

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 10, 2012**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon (6:40 pm)
Jamie Pemrick
Erin Shimp
Kate Thomas
Rob Towle
Caroline Corsones

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Peter Amons
Jessica Henderson
Lyle Jepson
Bill Olsen
Patricia Aigner
Bob Johnson
Jay Slenker
Ellie McGarry
Peter Miller
Pam Reed
Cathy Farman

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioner Fingon.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Motion by Cavacas / Towle to accept the minutes of the Dec. 13, 2011 regular school board meeting with a correction in the spelling of Commissioner Courcelle's name. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
12/13/11
MEETING**

Written Communication - Commissioner Courcelle read a letter from the mother of a 6th grade girl asking for reconsideration against combining the 7th and 8th grade girl basketball teams. Ms. Moran said teams are offered based upon the number of students and they are evaluated every year. We know there are many 5th and 6th grade girl basketball players and next year there will be two teams. The change was done based on the number of youngsters. Commissioner Book said there were ten girls cut this year and there are two boy teams. Ms. Moran said it is not boy versus girl and she anticipates two girl teams next year. She will respond personally to the letter-writer.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

PARENT LETTER REGARDING MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAMS

Oral Communication - None

ORAL COMMUNICATION

FY 13 Budget Deliberations and Ratification - Mr. Amons reviewed a draft of a "cut list" and a worksheet showing the "scenario of possible taxes." Board members asked to see what the budget would look like if it were level funded. The current budget draft shows a 1-3/4% increase over this year's budget. The budget is less than the standard inflation rate. The current year budget, FY12, is down from FY11 because last year we cut \$1.2 million of inflation + \$600,000 more. Ms. Moran said last year there were 19 positions cut. In order to provide this draft "cut list", they started with the recommendations from tiers 4 and 5 from last year. They met with school leaders and staff. She said if all the things on this list were cut, it would result in a 0 dollar increase year over year from this year to next. Mr. Mello said this was an exercise the Board and Administration has done for the past few years. Last year's cuts, in his opinion, placed us as close as we can be without affecting programs. He asked for Board member comments.

EDUCATION REPORT

FY 13 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

- Commissioner Cavacas said he is opposed to any cuts. He has concerns with the transition to Common Core. There will be new standards and the faculty and staff are in the trenches. It is difficult to teach to different standards with less. We will be Common Core testing in 2014. It does not give us much time and it would be even harder with reduced staff.
- Commissioner Fagan said he does not know anyone getting a raise this year, last, or the year before. Household budgets are based upon what they made three years ago. He would like to compromise and see the first level of cuts.
- Commissioner Towle asked about the budgeted contingency fund. Mr. Amons said it is \$250,000. Over the past few years, we have spent anywhere between \$50,000 to \$200,000 per year. Mr. Towle asked if we could cut it in half and Mr. Amons said perhaps it could be cut by \$50,000 or \$75,000. However, cutting contingency is not a decision to spend less money. If it is not used, it runs as a surplus and goes back to the taxpayers. It is not a true expense cut.
- Mr. Towle asked about the literacy coaches and if they are affected by the School Improvement Grant (SIG). Ms. Moran said the program has been in place for about six or seven years and is not part of the SIG program.
- Mr. Towle asked about the items on the “cut list” regarding teachers and if they are related to lower student counts. Ms. Moran said there is a slightly smaller enrollment projected but not by large numbers. If we have to, we could make the cuts but it would have a significant impact on instruction, the co-teaching model, and the intensive work to keep students from falling behind. She said she would not want to lose this. The Board had asked to see what it would look like to have a 0 increase.
- Ms. Moran said it is preferable to ratify the budget tonight but the final deadline is the fourth week in January.
- Mr. Courcelle said he does not doubt that property taxes are going up this year. We have done an admirable job in holding down the cost of education compared to the rest of the state. There is a huge shortfall in the education fund. It is important to keep the integrity of our programs. He said he understands Mr. Fagan’s point. He believes the Board needs to pass a responsible budget while keeping the integrity of the system. It is not up to this Board to determine what a property taxpayer will pay. He said he is proud to be associated with this Board and school district. He said these are tough decisions but we have to be careful about digging too deep and also respecting the fact that people are struggling.
- Commissioner Thomas said students will grow up in this economy and need to be well-equipped to meet the challenges in their adult lives. Rutland City has done a good job keeping costs down and providing a wonderful service for that low cost. She is not willing to sacrifice the educational system to save a few bucks on her property tax bill.
- Mr. Fagan said he has been asking in the Statehouse about what the Governor might recommend and he has heard it will be \$8700 and not \$8900. This is an increase of 2% which means property taxes will go up. The education fund was shorted \$13 million under the Challenge for Change concept and that amount will never be put back. He said there are Irene-related property tax abatements which have been approved. He does not think our education system will be ruined by making the first tier of cuts although it might run a little tighter. He said the education system is still wonderful in Rutland City; we produce outstanding students and that will not change.

- Commissioner Fingon asked about the 3-8 nurses and Ms. Moran said they are clinic based.
- Mr. Cooke asked about the major pieces affected by inflation. Mr. Amons said wages and health insurance increases. It is “people” costs and a little bit of fuel.
- Mr. Fingon said the Board’s job for the community is to look out for the taxpayer and uphold the school system. He does not want to cut. The school system is an employer and one of the bright shining stars in Rutland. He went through the school system and came back. There is not a lot for young people to come back to. He said he would challenge the Governor and Legislature to create jobs. He said we might be able to shift some maintenance but he does not advocate for cutting personnel by a couple of jobs here and there. That would take jobs out of the tax pool and save just a few pennies on the tax bill. He said he is comfortable with the proposal and not in favor of any more cuts. He commended the staff who put together the budget and the Board for challenging it.
- Mr. Mello said with a \$45 million annual budget, there are always ways to trim. But what would it take to cut \$1 million? Teachers are being asked to reach higher benchmarks and higher targets. If we continue to add stresses, it will make it increasingly difficult to reach targets. How much can we continue to cut maintenance? The administration has spent time putting this together and coming in with 1.75% increase and he said in his opinion, he would like to see the budget adopted as presented at this level.

Mr. Amons presented FY13 possible tax scenarios and explained the data. He said in summary, a \$150,000 house with no prebate reduction (75% of Rutland City taxpayers do get a prebate reduction) would be taxed an extra \$35 because of the increase. He said cutting \$200,000 would save a penny on the tax rate. Mr. Amons said he believes the FY14 tax rate will be higher because there is \$460,000 Education Jobs Fund money which not be recurring. Mr. Courcelle said he wants to remember the 5-10 year capital plan. Mr. Cooke said there has been some discussion about putting the Watkins money into the system and buildings. John Rice has a great plan. He said at a bare minimum we need to be maintaining.

MOTION:
FY 13
BUDGET
RATIFICATION

Motion by Cavacas / Fingon for Rutland Public Schools Board of School Commissioners to adopt a budget in the amount of \$45,157,547, as proposed by the administration, to put to the voters in March. Motion passed with one no vote (Fagan)

Administrative Searches: Northeast Principal and Tapestry Director - Ms. Moran distributed the schedules for the Northeast Principal and Tapestry Director searches. She said advertisements have gone out and screening teams are being put together. One Board member is still needed for the Tapestry Director screening team. Mr. Towle asked how salaries are determined for these positions. Ms. Moran said the Principal is contractual; part of collective bargaining with the administration. The Tapestry position is non-aligned and relatively competitive.

ADMINISTRATIVE
SEARCHES
FOR
NORTHEAST
PRINCIPAL
AND
TAPESTRY
DIRECTOR

PERSONNEL
MEMO

Motion by Cavacas / Towle to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 455 dated Jan. 6, 2012, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #455

The retirements, appointments, and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

PERSONNEL
MEMO
MOTION,
cont.

Motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS
REPORT

Tuition Rate - Mr. Amons explained the method used to determine the tuition rates. Mr. Book asked how long the Success tuition has been \$20,000 and Ms. Moran said at least five years. Ms. McGarry said there is currently a handful of students from other districts. We used to get more but a lot of other districts have created their own home-based programs. She said she does not believe we would lose students if the Success tuition was raised. Private programs are much more expensive. Mr. Amons suggested raising it to \$25,000. Mr. Fagan asked if Rutland City taxpayers are subsidizing out of city students at the recommended rates and Mr. Amons said no. Ms. Moran said there are four parental paid students in the district. Ms. Moran said the memo shows where our tuition falls compared to other Vermont high schools. It is exceedingly favorable. Mr. Amons said he would feel comfortable to recommend tuition at \$25,000 for Success, based upon Ms. McGarry's comments. Ms. Moran said we know the program is highly regarded and she does not think the increase will have an adverse effect. Some Board members believe the Success tuition has been at \$25,000 for at least seven years.

TUITION
RATE

Motion by Fagan / Towle to set the following tuition rates for FY13

- Secondary (7-12) at \$12,000
- Elementary at \$8100
- Success at \$25,000

MOTION:
SET
TUITION
RATES FOR
FY13

Motion passed unanimously.

SUPERIN-
TENDENT'S
REPORT

Announcements

- A letter was received from St Michael's College recognizing RHS teacher Matt McDonough, who was nominated as an "Unsung Hero" by former RHS student and current St. Michael's student, Kelsey Miller.
- Peter Miller has been honored by the Music Journal of Woodwind and Brass as "One of 50 Who Make A Difference" nationally. One music educator in each state has been recognized.
- Howe Center graduation is Friday. It is a spectacular event. The Howe Center newsletter was circulated and the graduates were noted.
- The STC spring continuing education program was distributed. There is an incredible number of offerings both traditional and non-traditional.
- There was a recent break-in at RHS. The security cameras worked and the perpetrator has been arrested and charged. Ms. Moran thanked the custodians, city police and Officer Greene for their work on this. People should know our buildings are secure and well-marked. Other cameras are being added.
- At Northeast School on Wednesday there will be a Principal's Tea with topics of discussion Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the Positive Paws Program. Joining in will be Christy Coloutti, Coordinator of Support Services and co-coordinators of the program, Leah Abatiell and Marie Marallo. January 13 will be a School Spirit Day: Mismatch Day. January 18 is the next in a series of parent programs provided by counselors, Kathy Riley and Nancy Spalding-Ness. On Jan. 20 there will be a PTC sponsored Movie Night featuring "The Smurfs".
- Northwest School is starting an "Ice skating Club" led by Danielle Greene. It is a four week program. Thanks to Danielle, Rutland Recreation and Giorgetti.

ANNOUNCE-
MENTS

- RIS held a school-wide PBIS assembly on January 16. Student improvement for behavior and attendance was recognized as well as student council. RIS also has a monthly PTC movie night this Friday and 5th and 6th graders will be voting on the movie to be shown.
- The RMS Drama Club will be performing an 'Evening of Monologues' on the auditorium stage on January 11.
- The Winter Tapestry newsletter was distributed.
- Now that there is ratified budget, it is time to plan community outreach: "Budget Buddies." Ms. Moran asked for Board volunteers. There will be fact sheets prepared and community meetings scheduled.

ANNOUNCEMENTS,
cont.

Legislative Report - Ms. Moran has forwarded the first legislative report from VSBA and VSA. There are a number of education items held from last year and 15 new education bills introduced in to date. Mr. Mello said Senator Mullen will be invited to the first February Board meeting to talk about some education items of interest. Mr. Fagan said of the bills introduced each year, only 10-15% of them are actually passed.

LEGISLATIVE
REPORT

Committee Reports - None

COMM. REPORTS

New and Old Business

- Mr. Fagan shared a story from his son, a UVM student, about how he was praised by his Professor about his good writing mechanical skills after the Professor told the class how disappointed he was overall with the students' work. Mr. Fagan said his son's good work is a result of the school system.
- Mr. Towle praised the RIS Holiday Concert and said he was very impressed with the orchestra. He said they should do more concerts.
- Mr. Mello went to a mid-year graduation and ceremony and awarded a diploma at Success school. He said it was very rewarding for the graduate and well done.
- Mr. Mello said he and the two other Board incumbents with expiring terms are circulating petitions to hopefully continue their journey on the Board.

NEW & OLD
BUSINESS

Student Report - Caroline Corsones said Key Club inductions are being held Jan. 18. RHS finals are tomorrow and Thursday. Club Giving held a dessert raffle to raise money for underprivileged children at holiday time. A couple members of the RHS Student Senate visited the RIS Student Government and encouraged them to continue with student government. Ms. Moran said she and Ms. Corsones have talked about how student Senate members are representative of all students.

STUDENT
REPORT

Motion by Fagan / Towle at 7:35 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing 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.

MOTION:
EXECUTIVE
SESSION

The Board came out of executive session at 8:05 pm.

PUBLIC
SESSION

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

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak, Recording Secretary