

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
MARCH 13, 2012**

**School Board Members Present:**

Peter Mello  
Wayne Cooke  
Peter Fagan  
Collin Fingon  
Jamie Pemrick  
Kate Thomas  
Rob Towle  
Caroline Corsones

**Member Absent**

Hurley Cavacas, Jr.  
Richard Courcelle  
Erin Shimp

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Bill Olsen  
Peter Amons  
Jay Slenker  
Ellie McGarry  
Lyle Jepson  
Wil Cunningham  
Susanne Engels  
Glenn Olson  
Cathy Farman  
Steve Sampson  
Patricia Aigner

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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, Courcelle, and Shimp. Commissioner Book's seat is vacant. There is a quorum.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

Motion by Towle / Fagan to accept the minutes of the Feb. 28, 2012 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
MINUTES  
02/28/12  
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

**WRITTEN  
COMMUN-  
ICATION**

Oral Communication - Mr. Mello said Senator Kevin Mullin is present to speak with the Board about the possibility of creating equity for Rutland families by implementing a pre-K program. Senator Mullin said Vermont taxpayers are paying for the pre-K program based upon a pre-K ADM from the education fund. There are a couple of approved programs in Rutland City which meet the accreditation. The program has been in place in Vermont for a number of years and it has gone through a couple of expansions and more recently, the caps were lifted. The program allows a district to count those students and get reimbursed. Senator Mullin said the memorandum from Brad James, dated February 17, 2012 (attached) outlines the program for Rutland City. If this Board were to adopt the pre-K program, it does not obligate the school district to find slots if there are not enough slots. But it would allow the school district to allocate available slots, for example, by lottery, as long as it does not discriminate. Senator Mullin reviewed the contents of the memo involving the financial aspects of the program. School districts can be paid for administrative costs involved with running the program. The district would have options of how much would be able to go to an approved facility. There might be a neutral financial impact, increase, or decrease on the tax rate and he explained those variables. Senator Mullin said that the Vermont Community Foundation has offered funds to help defray costs because of per pupil averaging.

**ORAL  
COMMUN-  
ICATION**

**SENATOR  
MULLIN  
AND PRE-K  
OPPORTU-  
NITIES IN  
RUTLAND**

Senator Mullin said he wants to create equity for Rutland County families to allow them to access programs. He thinks there are overall tremendous benefits to the community

and to the families. He reviewed a lot of the positive research which has been done on pre-K programs including reduced future special education costs, less remedial work needed in the primary grades and potentially reduced future corrections rates. Senator Mullin said that Governor Shumlin would like to brand Vermont as the pre-K through grade 16 state and be known world-wide in that regard. He said there are other efforts to create successful pathways to get students to high school graduation. Vermont taxpayers statewide are paying for pre-K and there is no reason why Rutland families should not be able to take advantage of some of those dollars and opportunities.

There were questions and discussion from Board members and Senator Mullin further clarified many of the points of the program. He said it is not a grant and the school district would not have to commit to a pre-K program. They would have to commit to administering the fund so the money would get to the providers who are at the 4- or 5-star level. He said that if there is a district that has opted in, there would not necessarily be a cost to the district. The district would ascertain a set amount that would go to the program and a set amount per child for administration to cover costs. He said there are not many approved providers in the area now but he would hope that more providers would continue their education and training to get the credentials to become a 4- or 5-star provider. There are different ways for it to be done creatively. He suggested starting with current capacity and he thinks the district would see the positive benefits and the value. Senator Mullin was asked how there could be \$5000 per child spent without seeing a local tax impact. He said the funding comes from the education fund. The program has been in place for many years in Chittenden and other counties. All Vermont taxpayers are paying for it. Those programs will continue to grow. Mr. Wennberg said he understands the program is cost-neutral in about 80% of the school districts in the state which offer it. Burlington's program has been in place for about 15 years. He said the likely outcome, depending on the number of students enrolled and the level of administrative overhead, is that the district will make money. Mr. Wennberg said he is on the board of directors of the Vermont Achievement Center, a provider. Senator Mullin clarified that the district would not make money but they might be able to reduce the tax rate.

Board members still questioned how the program could be implemented in Rutland without raising the local tax rate. Senator Mullin said Burlington takes 20% off the top for administration. As long as the school district is covering their costs to administer the program, the rest of the money can go to the centers and help them to create opportunities. The reason it does not increase the local tax rate is because the district is getting more of a count. Each student is counting as .42. He said when the district figures spending per student, the spending does not go up and increase the tax rate. He said he is impressed with how Rutland City Schools keeps their budgets down. Senator Mullin was asked if there would be more slots available statewide and if Rutland City does not take them, if someone else will and he said in order to get slots, a provider would have to meet 4- and 5-star credentialing. VAC is close to getting their credentials. There is a clear set of criteria. He said students all around the state are accessing slots and Rutland City taxpayers are helping pay for it. He said that by Rutland participating, it would just make slots available for our families. He said there are open slots because families do not have the resources to pay for the service by themselves.

Commissioner Fagan said there are about 90,000 students in the state right now. There is 80% participation from the municipalities in pre-K. The Governor has recommended the caps be lifted and the Legislature has done that so anyone can access pre-K. He asked if every municipality in the state accesses pre-K, how many students would be added. Senator Mullin said it cannot happen all at once. Mr. Fagan said at some point there will be enough slots. It was determined there would be approximately a couple thousand additional students statewide. Mr. Fagan said if the education fund has \$XX, divided by xx number of students with additional students, there would be the same dollars in the education fund but it would be divided by a higher number of students. He asked how it would not add to the tax rate. Senator Mullin said it will add to the tax rate but it is spread out statewide. Rutland City taxpayers will still pay for increased costs as the program expands but will not get the benefit if they do not participate. He does not think Rutland City should not participate because it would add to the tax rate, because everyone else is doing it. Mr. Fagan said he thinks this is a worthwhile program but there is a cost. Senator Mullin said he thinks it can be offered here and that the district could save money by accessing the planning grant from the Vermont Community Foundation. He said taxes will go up over time because of the expansion of the program; but it is happening around the state.

Mr. Mello said he will ask the business office and educators to articulate any questions and concerns and try to address them to Senator Mullin. There were further questions from Board members. Senator Mullin addressed the questions and said there is no needs testing; anyone would be able to access slots. He thinks it impacts private day care facilities by giving them the incentive to go out and improve their quality to get the 4- and 5-star rating. Studies show that quality early childhood education is better for children and he elaborated on the benefits. There was discussion on child care facility employees unionizing and Senator Mullin said there is an effort but he does not think this program should be confused with that. It was pointed out that Rutland City already has EEE and Head Start programs for families who cannot afford pre-school and Senator Mullin said they are only available for families at 100% of the poverty level. Families at 200% of the poverty level are shut out. He reviewed research showing heterogenous mixing of students will provide better results. Senator Mullin was asked how the program is funded and he said it comes in through the tax rate.

Mr. Wennberg said that the state education fund is \$1 billion. The impact that for example, another 100 pre-K students in Rutland City would have is a small percentage of the total of the fund. The impact on the district and families if Rutland City participated would be substantial. There was an explanation of the handout entitled Rutland City Schools Pre-K Analysis. The analysis shows the revenues per ADM, the ADM, revenues, cost and available for overhead, all for each of 1, 15 and 100 students participating. Mr. Wennberg said there are now 15 students who live in Rutland City who go to VAC who would be eligible to participate. Mr. Wennberg described many of the benefits of pre-K education including reducing remediation in primary grades and addressing preparedness prior to kindergarten. He said that for VAC, pre-K education is extremely price sensitive. This year, VAC raised their rates and they lost families. This program would give families a credit to the cost of the education and make it more affordable for them. The message would get out to show that the benefit is available. It has an effect of expanding the number of slots without placing an additional burden on the taxpayers. 80% of the school districts in the state participate. He recommended that

school leaders speak with their peers and review the report coming out tomorrow. The state provides a lot of support by pre-qualifying programs and giving school districts options of two curriculum. Mr. Mello invited anyone who has not had an opportunity to speak to submit comments in writing.

**REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD**

Reorganization - Swearing in Elected and Re-Elected Members - The following Board members took the oath of office:

- Peter Mello - Three Year Term
- Rob Towle - Thee Year Term

Mr. Mello passed the gavel to Commissioner Cooke, who called for motions for Election of Board Chair. Motion by Towle / Fingon to nominate Peter Mello to be Board Chair for one year. There were no other nominations. Motion by Fagan / Towle to close nominations. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
ELECT  
BOARD  
CHAIR**

Election of Board Clerk - Motion by Towle / Fingon to nominate Dick Courcelle to be Board Clerk for one year. There were no other nominations. Motion by Fagan / Towle to close nominations. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
ELECT  
BOARD  
CLERK**

Board Commissioners not present tonight will each receive a copy of the DVD of the meeting so they can review the discussion with Senator Mullin.

Committee Assignments - Mr. Mello asked Commissioners who would like to change their committee assignment to let him know.

**COMM.  
ASSIGN-  
MENTS**

Board Vacancy - Mr. Mello said there is a vacancy as a result of Mr. Book's resignation. Douglas Gage has indicated interest to return to the Board.

**BOARD  
VACANCY**

Motion by Fagan / Towle to send Douglas Gage's name to the Mayor for consideration to be appointed to the Rutland City School Board seat, until the next election. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
RECOM-  
MENDA-  
TION TO  
FILL BOARD  
SEAT**

Mr. Towle said he knows Doug Gage and he is a great resource. Ms. Moran said he served from 2000 - 2007.

**EDUCATION  
REPORT**

Assessment Analysis - Mr. Bliss and Mr. Olson reviewed the NECAP results from grades 3 - 8. The results are guiding questions and observations. He reviewed the scoring and said the numbers show exact cohorts as they travel through Rutland City Schools. The results show net gains over four years for those exact students. We look at how we did compared to all Vermont students over the same four years. Our results are better than the state in reading. Mr. Bliss said Vermont math scores show a decrease over time and so do our students. He said we look at the schools and see that RIS student scores are reasonably favorable and RMS is asking questions. The results give us the opportunity to ask questions, especially during transition. With the Common Core coming up, there needs to be changes. Mr. Bliss said he has met with coaches and within the PLC model, teachers are asking questions. Do these results align with common assessments? Commissioner Fingon asked if the test is evolving over time and Mr. Bliss said the team that looks at this tries to look at the assessment and see if it is valid. The test does evolve although he is not sure if drastically. Mr. Mello

**ASSESS-  
MENT  
ANALYSIS**

said math is “hot” now and the schools which were identified as SIG schools were identified for math. The Common Core will have a significant impact on what will be taught at different levels. He said analyzing the data will mean looking at if what is being taught is being tested and if yes, the teachers need to look at instructional practices. If not, they need to ask what can be done to change it. Commissioner Towle said he likes the format of the presentation. Mr. Fagan commented on the Kahn Academy and students advancing at their own pace. Ms. Moran said the credit recovery process at the high school is geared toward that. The students work on what they missed, not the whole program.

Mr. Olson said across the state, there is always a substantial decrease in scores. There is a three-year gap without scores. Grade 11 students are not doing as well. He put together data using the mean scaled score. We are showing the exact same students in grade 11 who took the test in grade 8, no matter where they were in the state in grade 8. It is the exact same 213 juniors. Mr. Olson talked about results and said the data is very targeted. There was discussion with Board members and Mr. Bliss said there are different theories why in each cohort, grade 8 numbers are higher than grade 11; both RHS and Vermont. Some reasons include sequencing of courses, apathy, and expectation. Mr. Olson said it is a very challenging test in grade 11 and it is likely that some students have not yet had the material. He has done analysis based upon individual students and their specific sequencing. Ms. Moran spoke about sequencing and discussions going on around the state right now.

Mr. Mello said this is an excellent analysis. He said he presumes that when it gets down to where it matters, in the classroom, that teachers are looking at the numbers, who are the students, and for those who did not achieve, what they need in terms of support. Mr. Olson said another example of data analysis at RHS involves looking at the results of the sophomore PSAT tests and seeing trends with wrong answers. Mr. Fagan said he is concerned with the mandate the state administration is proposing which would require high schools to offer Algebra I as a freshman. There was discussion about this proposed mandate and sequencing. Mr. Olson said he is working on the results showing what percentage of students had the pre-requisites in order to score well. Mr. Cooke said he is interested in the percentage of students who have already reached that. Mr. Olsen said based upon RHS' new freshman schedule, every student should have taken Algebra I and Geometry by sophomore year. Commissioner Fingon said he is also interested to see other data on individual students, such as what else they are doing in their life such as athletics, activities or community involvement, which leads to building overall better students.

PERSONNEL

Update on Administrative Searches - Mr. Bliss reviewed the process and timeline of the Tapestry Director screening team and Mr. Mello reviewed the same for the Northeast Principal position. Ms. Moran hopes to bring a recommendation for each position to the next Board meeting.

ADMINI-  
STRATIVE  
SEARCHES  
UPDATE

Motion by Towle / Fingon to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 459 dated March 9, 2012, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION:  
PERSONNEL  
MEMO 459

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

Ms. Moran thanked Kevin Brown for taking over teaching driver education so students could get in their hours, in light of David Wilson's passing.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

New Telephone System RFP - Mr. Amons said the district wide phone system is more than 17 years old and the vendor no longer supports it. The replacement has not been budgeted. An RFP has been drafted and Mr. Amons reviewed some of the specifications. He proposes putting the RFP out to bid for summer 2012 installation and to pay for it in two installments, one in June 2012 and one in July 2012, being equally charged to contingency for FY12 and FY13. He estimates the cost to be between \$150,000 and \$250,000. He reviewed the process for determining the desired system and where the RFP will be advertised.

**BUSINESS  
REPORT**

**NEW  
TELEPHONE  
SYSTEM  
RFP**

Motion by Towle / Fingon that the City of Rutland Board of School Commissioners approves the issuance of an RFP for the procurement of a new district wide telephone system as specified by the administration.

**MOTION:  
APPROVE  
ISSUING  
RFP FOR  
NEW  
TELEPHONE  
SYSTEM**

There were questions from the Board and further discussion about some of the specifics of the system.

Motion to approved passed by all those in attendance.

**SUPERIN-  
TENDENT'S  
REPORT**

#### Announcements

- Student Representative Corsones gave an update on RHS activities. The girls' snowboard team placed first in the State Championship this year: Congratulations to Kelsey McKay, Marie Schwalbe, Cally Holthouse, Taylor Noel, Katelyn Novak, Toni Kenny, Abby Lancour, and their coach, April Cioffi. Encore Theater hosted the very successful regional one-act festival at the on March 3rd, and received an award for Theatrical Style for the Scarlet Heart. RHS Students led the initiative last week to "Spread the Word to End the Word," and students signed a giant pledge to stop using the R-Word. The Student Senate organized a cyber bullying awareness week last week – We read facts about the dangers of cyber bullying on the announcements and held an anti-cyber bullying coffeehouse Wednesday morning. Encore theater put on a powerful skit and Officer Greene and Mr. Appel, the director of the human rights commission, spoke to students about the dangers of cyber bullying. Key Club had a successful Prince and Princess for a Night sale last Friday and raised a lot of money for the Pink Butterfly Project, an organization for breast cancer research. March is "music in our schools" month – The band, orchestra, and chorus all put on concerts. The jazz ensemble is actually in Burlington right now for the Flynn Jazz Festival.
- Mr. Mello said he saw the Channel 3 clip on the freshmen interdisciplinary unit on maple sugaring. The instructors were excited and he said it was an outstanding way of presenting an interactive unit.
- Ms. Moran reviewed activities at RHS. April 3 is their annual blood drive. Key Club members are going to The Pines to decorate a room for one of their young residents celebrating his birthday this. GMTI students have been cooking at the Dismas House monthly. This month one member, who is also a culinary student at STC, will be taking the lead. GMTI is doing a "Zumba and Healthy Snacks"

**ANNOUNCE-  
MENTS**

class with Tapestry students on Mondays in March. Encore Theatre is presenting "The Scarlet Heart" on the same night as Soup Bowls for Hunger, also at RHS.

- A copy of an advertisement placed by Rutland City Schools cheering on the MSJ Boys Basketball team was distributed.
- March is Youth Art Month in recognition of our students' creative growth, the RPS art teachers have put together a display of artwork from primary through high school.
- Parent teacher conferences are taking place all week at all schools.
- There were wonderful Dr Seuss celebrations last week.
- STC has results of the DECA annual Career and Development Conference posted on the website.
- The latest edition of Red & White newsletter from RHS was distributed. Ms. Moran said it contains good reporting on difficult subjects.

Legislative Report - Mr. Fagan and Ms. Moran reviewed a number of bills which are being considered in the Legislature having to do with education.

LEGISLA-  
TIVE  
REPORT

Committee Reports - None

COMM.  
REPORTS

New & Old Business - None

NEW & OLD  
BUSINESS

Motion by Towle / Fagan at 8:25 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session 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.

MOTION:  
EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

The Board came out of executive session at 8:44 pm.

PUBLIC  
SESSION

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

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

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Janet Mondlak  
Recording Secretary