

Approved by the Rye School Board at its March 18, 2009 meeting.

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The monthly meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at the Rye Junior High School on February 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Betty Anderson,
Peggy Balboni, Jeanne Moynahan

Absent: Mike Schwartz

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary

Staff Phoebe Guarnaccia, Kathleen Cole, Jeanne Brown, Ron Fortier,
Sharry Sparks, Tom Southworth

Residents/Visitors: Bud Jordan, Director, Rye Department of Public Works
Paul Penman, Director and Vicki Loring, Rye Recreation
Department

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Approval of public minutes - On a motion by Ms. Anderson, and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the public minutes of January 21, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications – Dr. Cushing read a letter from Portsmouth High School (to the Rye School Board) seeking a donation supporting Celebration Graduation. This program is run annually to provide a drug and alcohol free environment for graduation activities. In the past each school board of SAU 50 has made a \$250 donation.

Ms. Anderson proposed a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to approve the \$250 donation to PHS Celebration Graduation 2009. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Dr. Cushing circulated an invitation from Susan Detwiler to Rye School Board members inviting them to participate in the annual Dr. Seuss's Read Across America celebration at RES on March 6, 2009.

REPORTS:

Mr. Grant noted that Mr. Schwartz was unable to attend tonight's meeting due to a travel conflict. He suggested the Track & Safety Committee report be moved up on the agenda to allow Mr. Jordan to make his presentation regarding the track.

Mr. Grant introduced Bud Jordan, Director, Rye Department of Public Works.

Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Moynahan, Mr. Jordan and Gregg Mikolaities worked together to create a plan to build a 1/8 mile track at Rye Elementary School.

Mr. Jordan presented the plan to the Rye Selectmen and at their February 9, 2009 meeting the selectmen unanimously voted to support the plan.

Handouts were available detailing the plan which shows much work to be done by Mr. Jordan for a significant cost savings.

Dr. Cushing asked Mr. Jordan about a proposed time frame. Mr. Jordan said he would like to ideally cut the brush in March and then take care of the logs and brush. Two-thirds of the job can be done with little cost.

Mr. Jordan stated that as pointed out by the Selectmen there will be a lot of work as part of spring clean up on the roads of Rye and it is understood his work related to the RES track will come second to his work for the town.

Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Jordan for his personal time, the time he puts in with the DPW and for wearing two hats related to this project. Mr. Grant pointed to the "Track edging: Labor – to dig and set" heading on the cost spreadsheet which calls for 'school help'. Mr. Grant asked for a cost estimate for this labor if, as worse case scenario, there was no volunteer help. Mr. Jordan replied this labor would be about 7 man hours @ \$20/hour.

Mr. Grant spoke to the outstanding hydroseed costs on page 2 of the cost spreadsheet. He stated that historically hydroseeding on the RJH field was been disastrous and delayed the use of the field for an additional year and a half. He is sensitive not to skimp on loam, top soil and seeing. Mr. Jordan said there is some loam there to screen and use. Additionally Mr. Jordan recommends spraying this year on loam that is there and then next year spread 2-3" of loam and respray. He further suggested spraying with liquid calcium and then hydroseeding. This cost is not in here but it is generally about 4¢/square foot for an estimated cost of \$2,200.

Mr. Grant said the Board purposefully put the cart before the horse with this project to see what the town would sponsor but it is not a funded project at this time. The PTA is doing a fundraiser to support funds. Mr. Grant suggested not to clear the woods of trees for the project without funding properly in place.

Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Jordan for his generosity of his time and work and hopes funding for this project may come available when the unreserved fund balance is discussed.

Ms. Balboni also thanked Mr. Jordan and said it is wonderful for the school and town to work together on this project.

Mr. Jordan thanked the board and said he appreciates working with Dr. Cushing on behalf of the schools.

Superintendent:

- *RES Science Fair* – Dr. Cushing acknowledged the incredible science fair at RES. He said the student work was incredible and the students were very proud and eager to share their projects.
- *NEASC* – Dr. Cushing wanted to recognize all the work and time that has gone into the NEASC accreditation process. He stated that fewer than 250 NH schools put themselves through this process. He acknowledged the amount of time but feels the resulting recommendations and commendations are of great value.
- *PHS budget* – Dr. Cushing attended the Portsmouth public hearing regarding the PHS budget. Dr. Cushing said he spoke against a move to implement a ‘pay for play’ system within the sports program. He also spoke to the number of students that SAU 50 sends to PHS, the revenue that means to Portsmouth and the fact that there is a feeling that per pupil costs are increasing but services are not. Dr. Cushing supported Mr. Collins in the budget discussion and the PHS budget ended up with minimal cuts. There were no staff cuts though \$340,000 was cut from the budget. Dr. Cushing said it is important to note that the teacher contract and COLA are born by the city and not the school budget. Mr. Grant asked if any of the retiring positions were not being filled. Dr. Cushing said the retiring librarian and guidance counselor positions would be filled. A retiring special education skills position will not be filled but support will be provided online instead.
- *Legislative Issues – HB 368* relative to annual goals in a home education program. The primary change is the portfolio assessment required. One of 3 assessment tests will now be required of home educated students.
- *HB 143* – this bill addresses the financial responsibility of the receiving or sending district for out of district placement of a student who develops special education needs.
- *HB 123* – requires a financial literacy component as part of a high school economics course.
- *HB 154* – this bill defines truancy as an unexcused absence; an absence without administrative permission. It also defined habitual truancy as ‘10 half days of unexcused absence during the school year’. This is a change from 20 half days.
- *Stimulus package* - Dr. Cushing said he had received a call from the Portsmouth Herald seeking comment regarding special education funds coming as a result of the stimulus package. Dr. Cushing does not know any specifics at this time. He was invited to attend a presentation at Carol Shea-Porter’s office in Dover this Friday about the national stimulus package and what it means locally.

Tom Southworth – Mr. Southworth said he emailed the Board NECAP results and had answered a few follow-up questions from board members. Mr. Southworth then spoke to the gender report he and Ms. Costanzo worked on. Last year they identified some areas of concern and began working with a cluster of 8th grade female students with math challenges and a cluster of 10th grade male students who were benefiting academically after receiving extra help. Mr. Southworth also spoke to class rank and noted that historically class rank is skewed with more females at the top but noted that the 11th graders are pretty much 50/50. There was board consensus that Mr. Southworth should re-do the gender report in the fall. Ms. Anderson asked for a definition of ‘small’ in the notation that a ‘small number Rye students at PHS students were suspended for substance abuse’. Mr. Southworth said there were only 3 Rye students suspended but feels strongly that substance abuse is still a major community problem outside of school.

Mr. Southworth said the NECAP results are a real credit to the writing program within the Rye schools. Ms. Richardson said that Mr. Southworth's informal ranking has RES rated 2nd in the state. She further said that even first and second graders are showing very good writing skills and by 4th or 5th grade they become great writers. Ms. Richardson feels this is related to the Gary Chadwell workshops at the school and said he has come twice already this year and is coming again next month. Mr. Chadwell models in classrooms and shows teachers a rubric to use. Ms. Richardson thanked Mr. Southworth for his work with NECAP, ranking, and analysis to keep the teachers current.

Mr. Grant asked if it could be determined of the partially proficient group how many are identified. Mr. Southworth said he went through the list and indeed many were identified and a few were simply adjusting to the new school routine.

Mr. Grant asked about AYP status. Mr. Southworth stated he is not optimistic about the Rye School District achieving AYP. He said there is a formula and the state has added special education students which raises our formula. He is planning on addressing this with state coordinators. He stated that this type of testing is challenging for special education students and there are no alternatives for them. Mr. Southworth feels is it not a fair test for someone who is weak in math or reading and any school with a cluster of math or reading disabilities can't make AYP. Mr. Grant feels we need to be proactive with AYP and explain it to parents and the community and not have them hear it from a headline in the *Portsmouth Herald*. He said it was going to be important to get the message out that the whole school is not failing – in fact results were very strong – just that the school needs to work more with certain groups. Mr. Southworth said he will work on a draft letter with Mrs. Lyons and Dr. Cushing.

Mr. Grant said 8th grade writing results jump out. Mrs. Balboni suggested going back to 7th grade teachers to prepare students for upcoming NECAP in October.

Ms. Anderson asked for clarification of the process if a district does not make AYP 2 years in a row. Dr. Cushing said they need to get a plan for the district.

Principals

Ms. Lane Richardson – Rye Elementary School

- Ms. Richardson reported on the recent six days with Artist in Residence: Randy Armstrong funded by REF
- Ms. Papoutsy and Ms. Wirth coordinated a concert with performances by the kindergartners as well as 1st and 2nd graders
- Ms. Manning had a wonderful display of student work for parents to enjoy
- Both the girls and boys basketball teams are participating in championship games
- Ms. Warden did Jump Rope for Heart with 4th grade students
- Ms. Warden also borrowed snow shoes from New Castle and took the 4th and 5th graders out snow shoeing! The students loved it and we plan to write an REF grant for our own snow shoes next year.
- Jim Gordon is working on a custodial handbook.
- Ms. Richardson distributed the parent survey stating she is open to input and the idea is to put the survey on survey monkey. Mr. Grant commented that in general he liked the survey and asked board members to email Ms. Richardson their specific feedback. Ms. Balboni stated that given the parent and student surveys we conduct it might make sense to have a survey directed at the school staff. She said that while she and Mr. Schwartz attend staff meetings

those meetings do not always provide the opportunities for staff to offer input on various matters. Ms. Balboni asked the principals to ask their staff if they would like the opportunity to participate in a survey.

- Ms. Balboni said how much she liked Mrs. Vadala's technology report as part of Ms. Richardson's report.
- Mrs. Moynahan recognized the terrific work and presentations of the 5th grade RES students who participated in the science fair.

Mr. Chris Pollet – Rye Junior High School

- Mr. Pollet presented a list of equipment recommended for disposal. The list was created by Tim Moynahan. The recommendation is that following policy the equipment be disposed of.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the board directed that the listed equipment be disposed of following policy and any remaining equipment would be offered to Ms. Sheila Adams for the Belize/UNH exchange program she co-founded. It was asked that future lists state the year the equipment was purchased.

- Mr. Pollet spoke of the highly successful bread baking presentation. He was most impressed with the students' attentiveness and participation. He said they were an incredible audience which is a testament to both the students and the teachers. Students went home with flour and a recipe to make two loaves of bread from scratch. One loaf of bread was to be brought to RJH as a donation to charity; the other was for enjoyment at home. RJH donated 171 loaves of bread to a local charity.
- The 8th graders will have their poetry reading on February 20th. There will be a morning and afternoon session.
- NEASC visit/welcome is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on March 29, 2009
- Public telephone on RJH campus – currently the cost is \$83/month for this public telephone. Mr. Pollet spoke with our phone company and for \$300 they can install a phone with limited call service during school hours. Ms. Balboni asked if it was required and/or necessary to have this public phone. Mr. Pollet said it is not required and its need is not as it was 10 years ago but he does worry about the one time a student may need it. Mr. Pollet will continue to look into options.

Financial

Manifest –

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to approve the manifest of January 16, 2009 through February 5, 2009 in the amount of \$594,547.99. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to approve the manifest of February 6, 2009 through February 12, 2009 in the amount of \$48,877.43. Vote: Unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Goals Update -
College Prep goal discussion

Mr. Schwartz has submitted some information to Mr. Southworth with the goal of creating a booklet for parents. Dr. Cushing asked Mr. Southworth to speak to PHS counselors for their input as well.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: No one asked to be recognized.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

- Physical Plant – Nothing to report at this time.
- Special Issues - Nothing to report at this time.
- REF – On behalf of Mr. Schwartz, Dr. Cushing extended his thanks to REF for all of their hard work on the upcoming REF Gala to raise funds for the RJH laptop initiative.
- PHS – Nothing to report at this time.
- PTA – There is a PTA meeting set for February 19th. Currently there is \$9,000 in the kitty. The spaghetti dinner is set for April 2nd.
- Mrs. Moynahan noted that Doug Nelson questioned building a 1/8 mile track; as a coach and runner he had never heard of a competitive track this size. Mrs. Moynahan clarified that the track was not for competition. Ms. Anderson said the general feeling is that the track is a good idea but that given the economy there is a little reluctance. Ms. Balboni asked if there was consensus supporting the track. Ms. Anderson said those with concerns about the track felt a larger track would have been better but they understood the limitations. Mrs. Moynahan said Kensington recently built a 1/8 mile track with a grant from Health New Hampshire. Mr. Grant said when he spoke with aides of Senators Gregg and Shaheen he was told that there would be no funding from the stimulus package available for outdoor athletic projects. Dr. Cushing said he would pose the question again when he attends the stimulus package presentation at Carol Shear-Porter's office.
- Communications – Ms. Anderson was seeking final input on the Rye School Board Newsletter. The Board gave their approval to the final draft.
- Rye Recreation – Mrs. Moynahan said she continues to meet with Ms. Richardson, Mr. Schwartz and Paul Penman, Director of the Rye Recreation program about space needs for next year. Ms. Richardson said she meets weekly with Mr. Penman regarding programs, spring vacation, and summer possibilities. Registration for the summer program takes place in May which will determine needs. As follow up to discussions at the last meeting with Lee Arthur about getting calls from parents not understanding why there was a wait list, Mr. Grant suggested the Board send a letter to parents regarding space needs and any confusion about the aftercare program at RES. Stating that since he suggested it, Mr. Grant provided a draft letter to the Board and outlined constraints and other matters. Board members concurred.
- Technology – Nothing new to report.
- Curriculum – Dr. Cushing reported that Mrs. Walsh is back from her medical leave and has had some terrific meetings with the professional learning communities. All CORE documents will be completed by June; they will be continually updated. We need to deliver something to parents and will work on verbiage synchronizing across the SAU. Mr. Grant confirmed that the CORE requirements could be adjusted as needed within Rye if our focus in an area was different than that of other SAU 50 schools. Ms. Richardson said there was great excitement among the 1st grade teachers who worked with Mrs. Walsh today.
- NEASC – discussed in principals reports.
- Energy Committee – Mr. Grant met last month with the energy committee and there are two tracks: 1.) The project needed to be bid-ready and Jordan Institute came in with a bid of \$28,000 which was the lowest of 3 bids and it was decided to proceed with that. 2.) Contract management

- Jordan Institute is not interested in doing the project management for our project. Need to seek general contractors to serve as project managers. Proposals will be sought for that.
 - Library renovation – Mr. Grant stated, on behalf of Mr. Schwartz, that Mr. Schwartz was asking for the Board’s approval to seek private donations for the library renovation. Ms. Balboni asked if there were any logistical conflicts if we were to proceed with both the energy project and a building (library) renovation. The Board had no issues with that process. Mr. Grant said he would check with Mr. Katkin on this matter.
 - Bus Committee – Mr. Grant said the contract will be likely be at the March or April Board meeting due to Mr. Katkin’s schedule.
 - Policies: Ms. Anderson thanked Debbie McKenna for her behind-the-scenes work on policies. Mr. Pollet then thanked Ms. Anderson for her time keeping the website current with all Board related matters and policies.
- JLD – School Guidance and Counseling Program, 1st reading: Ms. Anderson made a motion to adopt, seconded by Mrs. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- JG – Assignment of Students to Classes and Grade Levels, 2nd reading: Ms. Anderson made a motion to adopt, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan. Vote: Unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Deliberative Session Process

- Posting of signed warrants – Going forward Dr. Cushing and Mr. Katkin will take care of all postings together (budget and related warrants).
- Ms. Anderson suggested someone check the voter list. She feels we need to assign someone that responsibility as it has been overlooked. This should be discussed further with School District Moderator, Gary Holmes.
- Ms. Sparks said she confirmed with the town clerk that that can be done and that she had the voter list at the last school board deliberative session.
- Mrs. Balboni suggested we can do a better job advertising our sessions and what will be discussed.
- Dr. Cushing said typically we get a list of dates of upcoming meetings and related deadlines. Important communication comes from the budget committee.
- Mrs. Balboni said it might be helpful to spell out the purpose of the meeting and what the opportunities are there for the public to act on.
- Ms. Anderson suggested sending out postcards in October/November regarding budget season
- Mrs. Balboni said coverage via our website might be best and we might just need to provide greater detail.

Unreserved Fund Balance

- Mr. Grant said there are a couple of potential big pieces still to come (PHS tuition) but Mr. Katkin said there is about \$150,000 in unreserved funds. Of this, \$100,000 has been ear-marked for energy conservation.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, \$100,000 of the current unreserved fund balance was designated for use for energy conservation. Vote: Unanimously approved.

- Mr. Grant confirmed with Ms. Richardson that her list of expenditures presented tonight were her priority.

Ms. Anderson made a motion to direct \$25,000 of unreserved fund balance to funding the RES track. Mrs. Moynahan seconded the motion for discussion. Mrs. Balboni stated that she would rather spend funds on items cut from budget than fund the track at this time. Mrs. Moynahan stated that she would love to see the track completed if there were enough unreserved funds. Mrs. Moynahan withdrew her second and Ms. Anderson withdrew her motion but noted that she would like to see the school work

with the town as they have been very supportive of this project. Mr. Grant said he envisions approaching the budget committee for support and additionally he has reservations about clear cutting now if the project is put on hold until funding is achieved. It was determined to wait for the March Board meeting for further discussion and vote on the track. Ms. Anderson requested a special meeting in the event we get more information about available funds.

On a motion by Mrs. Balboni, seconded by Ms. Moynahan, the expenditure of \$50,744.36 of unreserved funds according to approved lists submitted by Mr. Pollet, Ms. Richardson, and Mrs. Lyons was approved. This included 25 mini computers and microscopes for RJH that had been reduced in the budget process as well as computer hardware and custodian equipment for RES. Vote: Unanimously approved.

SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:*

Approval of non-public minutes

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the non-public minutes of January 21, 2009 were accepted and sealed. Vote: Unanimously approved

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 8:34 p.m. in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 9:15 p.m.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the changes to world language teaching positions, Ms. Jarvis – 60% RES, 40% RJH; Ms. O'Brien – 40% RES, 30% RJH, were accepted as proposed in Mr. Katkin's memo of February 18, 2009. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ADJOURN: Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni to adjourn at 9:20 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary