

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its February 20, 2008 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 January 16, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Betty Anderson, Peggy Balboni, Gary Dodds  
Michael Schwartz

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

Staff: Jeanne Brown, Jeanne Moynahan, Katie Jarvis, Kathleen Cole

Residents/Visitors: Maggie Duffy-Durkin, Joe Cummins

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded, a motion to approve the School Board public minutes of December 19, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Schwartz proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded, a motion to approve the public minutes of December 21, 2007 as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Schwartz seconded, a motion to reconsider the minutes of November 20, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Schwartz seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of November 20, 2007 as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications:

- Dr. Cushing received a letter of recognition for Mary Lyons on behalf of NH School Administrators for her presentation entitled "Students who get lost in the System".
- Dr. Cushing received correspondence from Lucy Neiman of the Rye Town Energy Committee regarding energy audits and reducing energy. Rye was selected as schools to benefit from this program.
- Mr. Grant discussed a letter he received from Representative Paul Ingelbretzen, speaking about the amendment to preserve local protection of schools. Mr. Grant asked the Board if this was something we wanted to pursue. Dr. Cushing said he would read the letter and respond to the Board.

**REPORTS:**

**Superintendent:**

- Dr. Cushing discussed the PHS Secondary Advisory Committee meeting and how Rye would like to have more say in the PHS budgetary process. Dr. Cushing has discussed

this with the PHS School Board. Other topics discussed were class sizes with math, language arts, and world language being top priorities. There will be no new positions at PHS next year, so they will be looking at restructuring class sizes. The PHS School Board will go on a retreat to discuss these issues. Mr. Grant asked if it would be of benefit to resubmit a letter sent to the PHS Board last year by Rye and the SAU#50 outlining our thoughts on the budget process and the role we wished to play to the new PHS School Board. It was agreed it would be a good idea to resubmit this letter. Dr. Cushing will get the information to them.

- PHS will have 13 retirements (3 at the high school) this year.
- The Youth At Risk Survey has just been released. Dr. Cushing, RES and RJH Guidance Counselors, and Bob Lister will review and report to community.
- Mr. Pollet will communicate expectations regarding honors at PHS to parents. Ms. Anderson stated that, of the 4 parents who raised concerns to her last year because their children did not get accepted into honors programs, 3 of those students left to attend private schools and the 4<sup>th</sup> student was moved to honors classes in the second semester. She stated that we need to communicate to parents that it is not the end of the road if their student is not accepted into the honors program at the beginning of the year and that they should keep pushing PHS for this result. Many parents and students believe it is very important to get into honors programs so we should help to prepare them for the testing. Dr. Cushing agreed that the teachers at PHS make good judgments once the students are at PHS. Mr. Grant agreed we should do what we can to help prepare them, maybe an after school volunteer program. Mr. Schwartz discussed the AREA agreement and the requirements that must be followed. He thinks we should investigate this as he feels although there may be a benefit to this model we should understand our options. Dr. Cushing stated once we get through the budget cycle we could look at this further.
- Dr. Cushing attended “Rachel’s Challenge” last week at PHS. He said it had a phenomenal impact on the students and staff and that it was very moving as it discussed changing the culture in our schools with an emphasis on kindness and compassion to reduce violence and bullying. The PHS principal says that students are already taking action with the steps needed for change. He thinks we can build on this and looked at programs we could use here in Rye. Dr. Cushing is arranging to bring Rachel’s brother to give the presentation for the SAU-50 middle schools along with the Portsmouth Middle School with a presentation in the evening for parents. Mr. Dodds and Ms. Anderson also attended the presentation at PHS and agreed that it was powerful and worthwhile.
- The PHS Calendar was discussed. The Rye School Board is not in support of changing April vacation. Bob Lister supports Rye’s recommendation. Ms. Anderson said that we should notify parents of the PHS meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup> regarding the calendar. Both principals stated they would send out a mass e-mail to inform and allow parents to weigh in on this issue.

### **Elementary School**

- RES held their Winter Celebration last week. Ms. Richardson stated she did have some complaints that there was no Christmas concert. The 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade concert is next week.
- RES held a wonderful enrichment assembly with Brazilian dancers.
- Julia Madden and Kathy MacAlpine have organized the spaghetti supper scheduled for February 22, 2008.
- Kathleen Cole, Denise Wheeler and Ms. Richardson are reviewing the results of the “My Voice” survey and will develop an action plan and report back.

## **Junior High**

- RJH held another wonderful enrichment program with dancers and musicians from Rwanda. This was a school wide assembly that also served as a kick-off to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade's Africa unit.
- Staff from RJH attended the "My Voice" conference and have identified areas to work on.
- RJH is working on the first area of NEASC which is mission and expectations. We are analyzing our mission and what we want to adjust. This step should be completed by mid February. Ms. Anderson inquired about the 6<sup>th</sup> grade math position. Mr. Pollet replied he has interviewed 3 candidates and is checking references. Mr. Grant asked how we are dealing with the transition in light that we have already had more changes than we wanted. Mr. Pollet said that Linda Allen will be leaving at the end of February and he hopes to overlap with the new hire. His priorities are finding someone highly qualified in math and who has middle school level experience. He feels confident with the candidates interviewed and that the perception from students and parents is that the quality of math they are receiving is good.
- Ms. Anderson inquired about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip. Mr. Pollet stated he spoke to the parents at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade coffee with the principal and that the number one choice with students was to go to Merrowvista. Merrowvista can tailor the program to suit the grade level visiting and that the social component will be a focus. The plan is to go for 2 nights from June 11<sup>th</sup> to June 13<sup>th</sup>. The parents he has spoken to are in support of this trip. Mr. Grant asked about a Outward Bound type program. Mr. Pollet said that had been discussed.

## **Financial**

Manifest –

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of December 14, 2007 in the amount of \$1,557.92. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of December 20, 2007 through January 3, 2008 in the amount of \$1,368,253.90. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Grant noted this amount includes first semester tuition at Portsmouth. He also noted that on the first page was a charge from Birse's for a back loader used for snow removal. This is usually done by the town and Mr. Katkin is checking into this. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of January 4, 2008 through January 11, 2008 in the amount of \$244,761.16. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Dodds questioned the cost of waste management in light of the schools' recycling programs. Mr. Grant stated that we are charged based on the size of our container not the amount of waste. It was agreed the principals will have the containers checked to see if we could use smaller containers.

Budgetary considerations - Nothing to report.

Deliberative Session – The Deliberative session will be held on February 6, 2008 at 6:00 pm in the RJH cafeteria. This is an important meeting to attend. Snow date is February 7, 2008 at 6:00 pm in the RJH gym. Mr. Grant asked that the principals send out a mass e-mail to staff and parents regarding this meeting.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- Calendar of Policy Action: January: Report by Superintendent – Evaluation of Principals. Dr. Cushing reported that both principals are on target and are fully focused on non-tenured staff.

Ms. Richardson holds mentor meetings at RES at the beginning of the school year which Dr. Cushing attends to meet and talk with new staff. Dr. Cushing said there are no staff members up for tenure this year.

- Goals Update: Mr. Grant stated he would like to formalize and update the goals but that they are in good shape. The following information has been updated:
  - Curriculum: Action # 1 - First stage is complete, process is ongoing. When: March 2008. Action # 2 – One more scheduled meeting. When: April/May 2008. Action # 4 - Mr. Pollet met with Tech committee last week. They are merging old tech plan with RES's plan to fit RJH. When: April/May 2008.
  - Communication: Action # 1 – Complete, ongoing. Action # 2 RES is done, RJH to be improved by 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester.
  - Leadership & Organization: Action # 1 & # 2 – On track. Action # 3 – Complete (5 year contract negotiated).
  - Budget: Action # 1 Meeting was delayed due to snow. Next meeting scheduled for January 17, 2008 to review final draft. When: April 2008. Action # 2 – Complete. Action # 3 – Complete.
  - Assessment & Accountability: Action # 1 – Dr. Cushing is working with Jan Yost. Presently looking for what is standing in the way and on individualizing. When: March 2008. Action # 2 – When: April 2008. Action # 3 – Complete. Ms. Anderson asked what the next step will be to address the gender discrimination issues. Mr. Pollet stated he has found some programs that deal with gender issues. Ms. Schwartz found a similar gender study from another school. Mr. Grant stated we should start with the studies from a school that has already completed for review and report back at February's School Board meeting. When: February 2008. Action # 4 - Completed.
- Non Resident request for kindergarten: Ms. Balboni reported that the cost for kindergarten at the Montessori school is \$6,000 a year. The Board members discussed the need to offer comparable tuition costs. Dr. Cushing said that the Community Child Campus sets their pre-school rates based on an average of the surrounding schools. Mr. Schwartz feels that allowing this request by a Rye teacher would be a benefit to the school. Ms. Richardson stated that it would make it easier on the teacher and feels that if we have the room we should allow the request. Mr. Schwartz proposed a motion, seconded by Ms. Anderson to allow Vicki Scally's child to attend kindergarten at RES next year for the amount of \$5,000.00. Mr. Grant asked why \$5,000.00 and not more or less? Ms. Anderson stated that the school district will receive extra value from this teacher so we should not charge her for full tuition. Mr. Grant stated that today the number of students in the kindergarten class is not an issue but what happens when it is? Ms. Richardson stated that they start kindergarten registration the first week in February, but that they still receive registrations throughout the summer. She does not foresee larger than normal numbers. Mr. Grant agrees with allowing the request but is concerned if it comes to the point where we would need to hire additional staff at the kindergarten level due to the fact that we accepted an out of district student. As an example he suggested that it would not make sense to have to hire an additional teacher due to class sizes and pay an additional \$40,000 and receive \$5,000. Mr. Schwartz amended his motion, seconded by Ms. Anderson, to allow Vicki Scally's child to attend kindergarten at RES next year for the amount of \$5,000.00 as a non-precedent setting action exclusively for one year kindergarten. Vote: Unanimously approved.

## **RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS:**

- Ms. Moynihan reported that the RJH production of Grease held their first meeting today. The performances will be on April 17, 18, & 19, 2008.
- Ms. Cole stated that they have 3 DI teams at RES and 1 at RJH. One team had to be cut because there wasn't a coach. The coaches recently attended a very positive training session at UNH. Ms. Cole further commented that the most recent voting at RES was very challenging.
- Mr. Cummins asked if it was possible to pay families to not have their children attend kindergarten at RES. Ms. Anderson replied that she believed that is against the law. Mr. Cummins asked Mr. Grant what the total percentage increase was to the budget this year. Mr. Grant replied it was 4.6% including warrant articles. Mr. Cummins asked what the enrollment change was. Mr. Grant stated that they would not have those figures until the beginning of the next school year. Mr. Cummins asked if field trips are mandatory for students to attend. Ms. Richardson replied that they are mandatory and that all field trips are tied in with the curriculum. Ms. Anderson stated that, as a parent, you can choose to keep your student at home on the day of a field trip. Mr. Cummins asked if differentiated instruction was a self-reported style. Mr. Pollet replied that it is not "self-reported". He stated that teachers and staff look at individuals and create groups to maximize learning using different methods and levels. Mr. Cummins asked if gender disparities were determined by test results. Mr. Grant stated that an analysis was done that looked at test scores, performance etc., and that there is a disparity. Mr. Cummins asked if there was any forum for parent feedback on the curriculum. Mr. Grant stated the Principals Advisory committee is a less formal venue for parents to ask questions. He further stated that any questions should be first directed to the teacher, then the principal. Ms. Richardson stated the procedure is outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook. Ms. Duffy-Durkin asked about the NEASC process. Mr. Pollet replied that there are 7 suggested areas that will be focused on. Ms. Duffy-Durkin asked if we had a self-assessment. Mr. Pollet stated that we are currently at the self-assessment stage.

#### **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant: Mr. Dodds discussed issues of getting into RJH after hours. Mr. Pollet stated that the new phone system will help in that area. Mr. Dodds stated that there is no place for students to wait to be picked up. He thinks we need to increase this budget line item. Ms. Anderson thought that we could probably find money in the budget to correct this area sooner than next year.
- Special Issues: Nothing to report.
- REF: Mr. Schwartz stated there was no meeting this month.
- PHS: Nothing more to report.
- PTA: Ms. Anderson reported their last meeting was held January 15th. She stated that, after receiving input from the school attorney, the PTA will not hold a Bingo night, but instead will have a raffle. The PTA was looking for a cause to benefit this raffle, and Ms. Anderson suggested the RJH library renovation. Mr. Schwartz asked if the track was discussed and Ms. Anderson responded that it was, in addition to other worthy endeavors.
- Rye Rec: Mr. Pollet attended this meeting. Among the topics discussed were: gym use, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade basketball programs, new sign for Rye Rec and the basketball tournament.
- Communications: Mr. Schwartz discussed the upcoming teacher appreciation breakfast for RJH and RES. Ms. Balboni and Mr. Schwartz are working on the annual report and newsletter. They will be dedicating the report to the community. They will not be mailing out the annual report, but instead will communicate that a copy of the report will be

available to pick up at schools, town hall and public library. Mr. Schwartz made a motion to approve this, seconded by Mr. Dodds. Vote: Unanimously approved.

- Technology: Mr. Schwartz was unable to attend the meeting this month.
- Curriculum: Nothing to report.
- Peer Schools: Next meeting February 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Athletics: Dr. Cushing met with Mr. Pollet and Ron Fortier today. They discussed the need for additional help for the athletic director. Mr. Grant asked if the Rye youth lacrosse field issue had been resolved. Mr. Pollet said he will look into this and discuss with Ron Fortier.
- Bus Committee: Next meeting January 17<sup>th</sup> regarding the PHS bussing survey. This survey will be available on line.
- Running Track: Information is still being gathered regarding the building of this track.
- Policies: JLC – (for re-approval) with change to 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to re-approve. Vote: Unanimously approved.  
EEA- (for re-approval) Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to re-approve this policy. Vote: Unanimously approved.  
KF - School Sponsored Activity Fund Raising – (2<sup>nd</sup> reading) Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to approve on second reading. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson asked if anyone had more input for the next policy meeting. Mr. Schwartz said he has some changes and will send to Ms. Anderson.  
GBEBB (for adoption) Ms. Anderson stated there are some changes in this policy relating to teachers as parents transporting students outside of normal business hours. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds to adopt. Vote: Unanimously approved with changes.  
GBCDA (1st reading) for review. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds to approve on first reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- Mr. Pollet submitted a request to pay the hotel cost for 2 teachers attending the annual NELMS conference in Sturbridge, MA in the amount of \$94.00 (plus taxes). Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds to approve. Ms. Anderson stated the money should come from the teachers' professional development fund. Dr. Cushing confirmed that it would. Vote Unanimously approved.
- Issues regarding voting at RES were discussed. There was concern for the safety of the students during a.m. drop off. Various ideas were discussed on how to eliminate this hazard. It was agreed that voting should start earlier than when school starts. Mr. Grant suggested using the front entrance of the school for voters and the back entrance for students on voting days. Mr. Dodds stated he would like to, as a citizen of Rye, ask to add more money to the budget under maintenance at the Deliberative Session, to be used for an access road at RES and new doors at RJH allowing easier access after hours and a safe place for students to wait to be picked up. Ms. Anderson replied that she doesn't agree with asking for more money at the Deliberative Session as the Board was aware of these issues when working on and submitting next year's budget. Mr. Grant stated that a resident of the town does have the right to ask to add money to a budget line, but he thinks that Mr. Dodds should research the cost of these items. Mr. Grant stated he would like to address the issue of having voting start earlier and suggested sending a letter requesting this to the Town. Mr. Dodds said we might want to suggest another public location for voting. Mr. Grant stated he will draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen with suggested alternatives to voting relative to safety of the students.

**ADJOURN:** Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to adjourn at 9:20 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary