

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its August 15, 2007 meeting.*

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

A special meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at the Rye Public Library on July 12, 2007 at 8:00 a.m.

**PRESENT:**

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

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent  
Mary Lyons, Director of Pupil Services  
Chris Pollet, Principal of Rye Junior High  
Lane Richardson, Principal of Rye Elementary School  
Dr. Heather Driscoll, Curriculum, Data & Grants Coordinator

Others: Tim Moynahan – IT Director (Present initially to set up for Mr. Flynn), David Flynn – Director of the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Ms. Balboni seconded, a motion to approve the public minutes of June 20, 2007, with grammatical corrections proposed by Ms. Anderson and clarifications proposed by Ms. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Ms. Balboni seconded, a motion to approve the public minutes of June 28, 2007 with one correction as requested by Ms. Balboni. Vote: Approved: Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni, Mr. Grant, Mr. Schwartz; Abstained: Mr. Dodds (not present at June 28<sup>th</sup> board meeting).

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Schwartz seconded, a motion to approve and seal the non-public minutes of June 20, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Schwartz seconded, a motion to approve and seal the non-public minutes of June 28, 2007. Vote: Approved: Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni, Mr. Grant, Mr. Schwartz; Abstained: Mr. Dodds (not present at June 28<sup>th</sup> board meeting).

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Dr. Cushing asked Mr. Pollet to update the Board on the Art teacher position.

Mr. Pollet stated that, in preparation for interviewing, he referred to a couple of important books in his library. The first is *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson and Davis, 2000) which is often referred to as the "Bible of middle school". From this book Mr. Pollet found three key points relevant to the art teaching position at hand:

1. Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do that is relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
2. Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
3. Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.

The second book Mr. Pollet referred to is *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform* (NASSP, 2006). This book has been revised for the middle school and again offered a few key points Mr. Pollet felt were relevant:

1. Provide structured planning time for teachers to align the curriculum across grades and schools and to map efforts that address the academic, developmental, social, and personal needs of students, especially at critical transition periods (e.g., elementary to middle grades, middle grades to high school).
2. Entrust teachers with the responsibility of implementing schedules that are flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming, common planning time, and other lesson planning.
3. Align all programs and structures so that all social, economic, and racial/ethnic groups have open and equal access to challenging activities and learning.

Mr. Pollet then presented three different possible scenarios for the Art position that are the results of in-depth discussions between himself and Tom Southworth.

- 60% Schedule: This removes one day of art from the schedule. The drawbacks are that we would have to reconfigure all sections. Library classes could be inserted for that one day but this would be inconsistent with the Library course as the schedule now exists. He stated his goal for the librarian is to collaborate with other teachers, not to have a stand-alone library class.
- Shared Art Schedule: This would bring JoAnn Manning up to RJH on Thursday; the drawbacks are that RES would have to adjust all schedules and there would be less technology time at RJH, require shared sections, and not allow common planning time.
- Proposed 2007-2008 schedule with the increase in the art position expands opportunities for students and allows for complete curriculum coverage with potential integration units at each level. It allows for: a maximum of 72 meetings for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders; more integration and curriculum coverage, 8<sup>th</sup> grade will focus on essential skills for high school and beyond, provide 30 minute art challenge period at each grade level once a week (art appreciation, quick write, etc.), and allow for team meetings once a week for better integrations.

Mr. Pollet feels the proposed 2007-2008 schedule shows great opportunities for team planning. The greatest challenge is for 7<sup>th</sup> grade but Susanna has committed to making time before and after school as needed.

Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Pollet for his research and presentation. Mr. Grant stated the conversation about this topic at the last meeting was difficult and he, for one, now has a better understanding of the reason for the proposed increase. Mr. Grant is still of the belief that we do not have the luxury of looking at Rye Elementary and Rye Junior High as separate schools.

Mr. Schwartz asked if there is an opportunity for Ms. Manning to assist at RJH even beyond Ms. Petti's increase to .8. Mr. Pollet suggested this might be possible in the future. Ms. Richardson recommended we stick with the increase to .8.

Ms. Richardson commented that while the last discussion about increasing Ms. Petti's position was difficult; it was productive. Going forward she and Mr. Pollet will work together earlier in the process (before budget time).

Mr. Grant acknowledged that Mr. Pollet had inherited this schedule and stated that he appreciated the time and effort put into this. Further, he said it was good to hear that Mr. Pollet is already thinking of things going forward. Mr. Pollet stated that team effectiveness and program design are the primary goals before him with the scheduling challenge. Ms. Richardson added that schedules and the needs that drive them differ yearly and adjustments are necessary from time-to-time. Mr. Grant asked Mr. Pollet if he is comfortable with art class twice per week vs. additional time for foreign language or computer education/skills. Mr. Pollet stated that presently time spent learning world language is disproportionately greater than other Unified Arts classes and would like to see a more balanced schedule. He will continue to evaluate our curriculum goals. He is sure that, in order to create balance now, more time is needed for art and added that, in its present schedule, the art curriculum is not properly completed.

Mr. Grant suggested a motion to reaffirm the vote of June 20, 2007. On a motion made by Mr. Schwartz, and seconded by Ms. Balboni, it was unanimously agreed to reaffirm the vote of June 20, 2007 increasing Susanna Petti's position by 20%.

Mr. Grant again extended his personal appreciation to the whole team for working through this issue.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

##### Physical Plant update

Dr. Cushing reported that the Rye Junior High has a newly paved parking lot which has been needed for nearly 10 years. Additionally, there were improvements to curbing out front and a drainage swale was created to take water from the main drain down behind the school. Bud Jordan negotiated with a work crew to have all of this work completed for \$18,000.00 (well below the projected \$35,000.00). Dr. Cushing met with Mr. Jordan to go over the project and check on progress. At one point, Mr. Jordan held the job up because he was not satisfied with the quality of the work so he had the crew re-do it. Dr. Cushing acknowledged Mr. Jordan's role as a troubleshooter with all of this work and recommended that we recognize Mr. Jordan's effort with a breakfast or something to show our thanks as we have done in the past.

The remaining 'to-do' list for the schools includes:

- Replace the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window above the entrance door - RJH
- Replace tiles in 4 rooms - RES
- Ceiling tile in the teachers lounge – RES
- Roof replacement will start Tuesday, July 17th – work will be completed before the start of school – RES
- Dr. Cushing added that the sprinkler system heads will be cleaned and adjusted - RES

Ms. Richardson noted that the custodians have been working well together.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### Bus committee

Mr. Grant stated that the bus company did not get him material necessary to provide an update and recap of his meeting with them earlier in the month. He would like to present this information to the Board at the next meeting.

One issue Mr. Grant uncovered while researching the bus routes was that currently parents contact the bus company directly with any requests/changes. The bus company typically obliges and makes the additional stop (the most common request). Mr. Grant feels it is important to have a point person on the school side to act as a liaison. Mr. Grant's personal recommendation is that we bring this contact back inside the school. He recognizes that bus issues can be emotional for parents but he feels it is best to have parent requests come to the school as opposed to the bus company directly.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the principals should be responsible for the bus-related questions and concerns with the understanding they could delegate that duty. Ms. Richardson asked for clarification of what bus issues would now be re-directed to the schools. Mr. Grant reiterated that from his discussions with the bus company he learned that the parents contact the bus company directly with requests for additional stops and this results in many stops and turns that were not initially part of the established routes. This costs time and money. Dr. Cushing expressed caution about having the principals make the bus decisions without input from the bus company. Ms. Balboni suggested we may be better served by a liaison who can then consult the bus company and get back to the parent. Mr. Pollet said his approach would be to listen to the parent, acknowledge their request/concern, talk to the bus company, and discuss options. He does not have a problem taking calls from parents. Mr. Grant said the most important issue right now is where is the "first" call made as he is already anticipating a handful of parents who will question the new routes. He stated another possible contact could be the bus committee. Ms. Richardson stated that we will need to send something home at the beginning of the year and mention the bus committee and highlight the preferred method of communication to make it clear for parents. Mr. Grant indicated the new routes will be more efficient than in the past. He suggested we call parents affected by the changes to give them a heads up.

Mr. Schwartz stated that he thought Mr. Grant had suggested we take a ride on the new routes prior to making a decision. He thought we would review the impact to families before making a decision. Mr. Grant explained that the bus stops at each kindergartner's house but then the next year, the bus continues to stop at that house even though the child is no longer in kindergarten. There is no need to continue those stops.

Ms. Richardson feels calling the parents affected by the new routes would be a huge help. She feels we will otherwise be bombarded with calls of concern. Mr. Grant said the reality is that any change will generate queries and that he agrees it is best to be pro-active and it is easy to identify those that need to be called about the changes.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the principals could seek input from their advisory councils about bus questions that need "local" knowledge to answer or resolve.

Mr. Schwartz was interested in the number of families that are impacted by the changes. He also asked if it would be possible to determine how many calls have been received by the bus company and how many changes have been accommodated by the bus company in the past. Mr. Grant will ask the bus company for this information but he is not sure they track such calls.

Ms. Richardson would like to have the bus route changes communicated to the Principals so they remain well-informed and are able to handle any calls that come in. Mr. Grant said the changes are not drastic but they will have dramatic, positive, time effects and there are still a couple of other ideas being brainstormed to lend to more efficiency.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Rye Elementary - There are no new nominations at this time. Ms Richardson indicated there may be a need to hire a SPED teacher; she will know more by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

Rye Junior High – Mr. Pollet has received numerous applications for the Music teacher position and he has interviews scheduled already for 4-6 candidates. Additionally he will be conducting interviews for the Math teaching position next week. Mr. Pollet has also received a lot of applications for the para position and hopes to set those interviews up at the end of next week.

Ms. Richardson submitted hard copies of the results from the report card survey. She only had 54 returns which she found disappointing. Most parents would like more information in the “teacher’s comments” part of the report card. The comments received have been terrific. Mr. Grant thanked Ms. Richardson for coordinating the report card survey and communicating the results with the Board.

Mrs. Lyons presented the Special Education report for the month of June for the Rye School District.

**ADJOURN:**

There being no further business, Ms. Anderson proposed a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds, to adjourn the School Board business portion of the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

---

School Board Secretary