

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

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

An abbreviated monthly meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at the Rye Junior High School on July 24, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Michael Schwartz (via phone until 6:21 p.m. when he arrived in person) Gary Dodds, (arrived at 5:45), Betty Anderson and Peggy Balboni (arrived at 5:35)

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent
Chris Pollet, Principal of Rye Junior High
Mr. James Katkin, Business Administrator

Residents/Visitors: Joe Cummins (arrived at 6:15)

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

FINANCIAL:

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Grant, a motion to approve the manifest of June 21, 2007 through June 29, 2007 in the amount of \$178,656.03. Vote: In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson. Mr. Schwartz abstained as he could not see the manifest. Ms. Balboni arrived at this point. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of June 30, 2007 through July 12, 2007 in the amount of \$172,890.65. Vote: In favor: Ms. Balboni, Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson. Mr. Schwartz abstained for the above stated reason. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of July 13, 2007 through July 18, 2007 in the amount of \$651,961.55. In favor: Ms. Balboni, Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson. Mr. Schwartz abstained for the above stated reason.

REPORTS:

Communications:

Dr. Cushing submitted a formal letter of resignation from Kristen Syphers. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept Kristen Syphers' resignation. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Katkin presented the DOE-25 Annual Financial Report. It is in balance with the Treasurer and bank. In response to a question from Mr. Grant, Mr. Katkin went over the unreserved fund balance of \$203,782.50. All unspent tuition will be returned except for approximately \$23,000 which was previously approved by the Rye Town Budget Committee. Ms. Anderson applauded Mr. Katkin for all his work on the budget and stated it remarkable to have no unreserved balance (excluding tuition). Mr. Dodds entered the meeting at this time.

Nominations:

Before presenting the nominations, Dr. Cushing stated that he met both of the nominees and feels they are excellent candidates with a true focus on kids and their parents.

Dr. Cushing placed into nomination Michelle Wirth for the 60% music position. The Board members discussed the candidate. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to accept the nomination of Michelle Wirth. In response to a question from Ms. Balboni, Mr. Pollet stated that Ms. Wirth is a qualified choral instructor and will, in addition to other duties, be teaching the junior high choral program. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Dr. Cushing placed into nomination Elise Catalano for the 8th grade math teaching position. The Board members discussed the candidate. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept the nomination of Elise Catalano. Vote: Unanimously approved.

For both candidates, Mr. Grant asked if their hiring caused a deficit in funding for those positions. Mr. Katkin stated that there would be a deficit of between \$8,000 and \$10,000 for each position. Dr. Cushing pointed out that there are other positions where the person hired will cost less than what was budgeted.

Bus Committee:

Mr. Grant gave a final summary of the bus committee's work and recommendations. He restated that the goal was to shorten bus routes, particularly the longest ones to have a ride of no more than 30 minutes in the morning and to make them shorter in the afternoon. The I-9 will be significantly shorter. He reported that the recommendation proposed will shift some routes and consolidate some bus stops. This was arrived at after discussions with the bus company with a focus on safety. Mr. Grant also stated:

Some half curve (crescents) routes (Harborview, Huntervale, and Red Mill Lane) will have stops at the entrance and exit of the crescent.

Some clarification remains to be done of specific routes.

Exact consolidations will take analysis.

Some students will take different busses in the morning and afternoon.

The committee is continuing to look at faster loading at RES.

This will be an ongoing process. The committee will re-review again next year to see how the changes went and determine any additional improvements in the future. Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Katkin for his help on the bus committee. Mr. Dodds asked why there were different routes for morning and afternoon. Mr. Grant responded that there is one less bus in the afternoon and, with some changes, it makes logical sense for some kids to ride different morning and afternoon buses. Ms. Balboni questioned the kindergarten routes. Mr. Grant said the kindergarten policy of stopping at a kindergartener's house would not change. For the bus routes that were being shortened, Mr. Schwartz asked if students would be picked up later or if there would simply be more time in the morning for children when they arrived at school – before school began. Mr. Grant and Mr. Katkin stated some students will be picked up later and maybe some earlier because of the changes but, more likely, the result will be getting kids to school sooner. Mr. Dodds reiterated his concern over communication of the changes and Ms. Balboni agreed that the principals should proactively call the parents of affected children. Ms. Balboni also suggested putting the map of the routes on the school web sites. Mr. Grant

said that phase one was to get a consensus from the Board. Communication is the second phase. He said he could get the routes posted on the web sites and as discussed at the last meeting, he would suggest that parents of children on the crescent streets be contacted due to the changes and again the new routes would be in the paper. He also reminded the Board that the committee sent out backpack fliers at the end of this past school year providing a “heads up” to parents that routes might change. Mr. Grant said the principals will be the point person for parent concerns going forward, a change from the current process where parents call the bus company. The principals will discuss concerns with the bus company. Ms. Anderson suggested that, if the principals were not sure of an answer to a bus inquiry, they could talk to bus committee members as well. Mr. Grant agreed. Mr. Dodds asked if this would affect high school routes. Mr. Grant said it would not. Mr. Schwartz asked if the Board would be riding the busses as he thought Mr. Grant had suggested in a prior meeting. Mr. Grant stated there was no need to do that at this time. Mr. Schwartz asked how many families will lose a direct pick up. Mr. Grant said he does not have that data with him, but restated that logical moves were made. (Note: Mr. Schwartz physically entered the meeting at 6:22 p.m.) Mr. Grant referenced a ½ mile policy for dead end roads or half circles. Mr. Katkin explained the ½ mile criteria for walking to bus stops. Mr. Dodds asked for a synopsis of changes. Mr. Grant asked if the Board supported the recommendations of the bus committee. Mr. Dodds stated he supports the recommendations but would like a copy of the bus committee’s report. Mr. Katkin said he will send a copy of all bus routes to Board members. Mr. Grant restated the goals of the committee. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds, in support of the objective to reduce the time children ride buses and the recommendations of the bus committee to equalize routes and consolidate stops where it makes sense (where there are too many stops within short distances of each other) and is safe. Vote: In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Balboni, Mr. Dodds, Ms. Anderson. Mr. Schwartz abstained as he felt we should wait until Mr. Grant had the information about how many families would be impacted by the changes. Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Grant for taking on this “thankless task” and working so hard with the bus committee members, the principals, Mr. Katkin, and the bus company to try to make a positive difference for Rye’s kids.

Mr. Cummins asked if there would be 6-7 year old students who would be walking a ½ mile to bus stops. Mr. Grant stated that is a rare occurrence, usually in the case of a dead end street the bus can’t go down because there is no turn around. He stated that, to the best of his knowledge, none of the committee and bus company suggested bus stop changes added walks of ½ mile. If there are any, they are the same as previous years.

Facilities:

Mr. Katkin described an incident that occurred at RES today. A nail was hit by a circular saw used by the roofer. He smelled smoke and used a fire extinguisher as a precaution but there was no fire. Coincidentally, a custodian set off the fire alarm while cleaning. A reporter from the Portsmouth Herald came to the site because he heard of the incident over a scanner.

Ms. Anderson asked how the roof job was coming along. Mr. Katkin gave an overview of the project. It is on target due for completion by August 20, 2007, dependant on rain. Mr. Schwartz asked if the roof project was less than the amount voted on and put in the reserve fund. He wondered if the excess would need to be returned to the Town. Mr. Katkin said the money can be used on other building maintenance projects but cannot be returned without a vote by the Town. Mr. Katkin stated they should have \$132,000 left in capital improvement reserves.

In response to a question from Ms. Anderson, Mr. Katkin stated the paving project at RJH cost almost \$25,000 and replacement of a window cost \$3,200.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL VISITORS:

Mr. Cummins thanked Mr. Katkin for choosing Walter Barstow. Mr. Cummins asked if the money loaned to Destination Imagination for their trip to the Global tournament had been paid back. Mr. Grant said the Board earmarked \$7,500. It was not a loan. Mr. Cummins asked for further clarification about concerns about the acceptance number at Philips Exeter Academy. Mr. Grant reiterated that it is a point of interest, that there are a number of subjective components that went into who was accepted, that having a low number accepted does not necessarily mean we are doing a good job or a bad one. He stated it is an interesting marker for the school.

ADJOURN:

Mr. Dodds proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to adjourn at 6:50 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary