

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its December 17, 2008 meeting.*

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District to set the 2009-10 school district budget was held at the Rye Elementary School on November 25, 2008 at 3:15 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

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

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent  
James Katkin, Business Administrator  
Mary Lyons, Director of Pupil Services  
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High  
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 3:21 p.m.

Mike Schwartz showed plans for the expansion to RJH library. A contractor has the plans and we await an estimate for construction. Mike suggested a warrant article for this proposal.

There are some revisions to the budget that we discussed yesterday. Mr. Grant reiterated his appreciation of everyone striving for a “0” budget increase or near 0 at yesterday’s meeting.

Mr. Katkin distributed a new list with adjustments based upon the prior Board’s meeting and changes. He made a revision to projected students at PHS from 190. He estimated that 67% of grade 8 would move to PHS. He has added 6 students. He also added approximately \$20,000 (\$18,000 with benefits) for a teacher who plans to retire next year. With this addition, the budget is at .7 over a “0” increase budget. Mr. Grant restated his belief that we stay with a 0% increase budget. He stated his appreciation for the work that was done yesterday.

Mr. Grant stated he thought it important that the Board have a framework to proceed with today to work on the budget and wanted to see if there was agreement to have a zero increase to the budget.

Ms. Anderson made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Grant that we keep to a 0% increase budget. Discussion: Mr. Grant said he wanted to restate what he said at the previous meeting, that he believes that it is hard to expect Rye tax payers—many whom have lost 30%+ of retirement savings/income, have lost jobs, or whose own companies are struggling—to cut their own personal/family budget to pay an increase of taxes because we did not have the political will to make the hard decisions in the school budget. Mr. Schwartz stated that the work that was done

yesterday was laudable. However, he felt the process was very problematic. He felt that a board decision to achieve or approach a zero percent budget should have been done a month ago, not after the administration had spent a month coming up with their budget proposal. He stated that trying to reduce the budget to zero after that work has been done did not create a process to ensure sound decisions. He feels that at this point we keep it close to 0% but was not supportive of mandating a zero percent increase. He stated that we can't control salary and benefits and it is most important to maintain a solid curriculum. Ms. Balboni agreed with Mr. Schwartz that we should come as close to "0" as we can but not be tied to that number. Vote: In favor: Mr. Grant and Ms. Anderson. Opposed: Mr. Schwartz, Ms. Balboni, and Mrs. Moynahan.

Mr. Grant stated that he had re-reviewed the budget and distributed a list of potential new cuts. He reviewed the list (that totaled \$113,000 of additional cuts) with the Board and administration and asked for motions if there was interest. He then talked about the inequality in the bus contract between the cost per route given for Rye and the cost per route given for Greenland which is about a \$4,000 per route difference. He is optimistic there will be more savings on the bus contract but that this would not be resolved for a while.

### Non-Public Session

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to go into non-public session at 3:50 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

### Public Session

The Board re-entered public session at 4:45 p.m. Mr. Pollet spoke about Merrowvista. He could live with it being funded half through the school budget and half from fundraising. It was pointed out that money was put into the student assistance account for both RES and RJH for families that could not afford the cost to them. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Pollet, a motion to cut funding for Merrowvista to \$5,000, cut out one night from three to two, and to cut the corresponding stipends to reflect the one night reduction. Mr. Grant felt that, as last year was the only year of the program's existence that this was fully funded, he could agree to cut this back. Ms. Anderson felt the current economic times prohibit fully funding this line item. Mr. Schwartz asked if reducing the trip would be detrimental to the students' learning. Ms. Anderson and Mrs. Balboni said that one less day at Merrowvista made no difference to their children as they were still able to enjoy the total environmental camp experience. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz for discussion, a motion to have the Rye Board decide to make a motion at the SAU-50 budget public hearing to eliminate the curriculum coordinator position at the SAU level to be re-assessed next year. Dr. Cushing stated that it was a very important position. Ms. Anderson stated that, she was a strong proponent of adding the position four years ago but that the value over that time has not been shown. She believes, again, that while this is an important position, it cannot be afforded this year. Mr. Katkin talked about a weighted vote for an SAU decision. He stated that he does not believe Rye will have a 50+% weighted vote based on student average daily membership. However, if one other SAU-50 Board member agreed, the vote would be approved. Mr. Schwartz said that he does not support

unilaterally removing this from the SAU budget after we already agreed at the SAU meeting to include this position. He thought that this was the wrong approach and would be detrimental to the operations of the SAU. Dr. Cushing stated that he does not recommend this. Mrs. Lyons talked about the importance of keeping the Curriculum Coordinator at the SAU level. Mr. Pollet talked about the benefit of the collaboration and the concern over teacher isolation and not being exposed to best practices around the district. Ms. Anderson again stated that, while the position is important, she would hope that our principals could call other principals and set up opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Vote: In favor: Ms. Anderson; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz and Ms. Balboni. Abstained: Mr. Grant and Mrs. Moynahan. Mr. Grant noted that his thoughts have always been to have the Curriculum Coordinator be taken out of the SAU and instead combined with another Rye district position and serve only Rye's curriculum needs.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to cut the School Board stipend line item to \$5 from \$6,000. Mr. Schwartz stated that he supported a reduction, but not a zero line item. He stated that if we intend to reintroduce this in the following year's budget, it will be that much more of an increase that will then make it more difficult or painful to add other needed items as we will not want a large percentage increase in a future year. Mr. Grant stated that it was important for everyone to understand that the Board included itself in looking for areas to reduce the budget. In favor: Ms. Anderson, Mr. Grant and Ms. Balboni; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz. Abstained: Mrs. Moynahan.

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to reduce the "School Board other" line item to \$0 from \$2,500. Vote: Unanimously approved

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Grant, a motion to eliminate the line item for School Board minutes from \$1,900 to \$0 and offered to do the minutes herself. Mr. Schwartz stated that he valued the ability of Ms. Anderson to participate in the board meetings without having to take minutes and thought her involvement would provide greater benefit to the schools and town than the \$1,900 savings. Vote: In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Mrs. Moynahan, and Ms. Balboni; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to reduce all other stipends by 10%. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Katkin estimates that the savings at RES will be approximately \$1,760 and \$4,690 at RJH.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to eliminate the NHSBA membership dues for one year for a savings of approximately \$3700. Mr. Schwartz feels that it is important to keep membership as this organization benefits all school districts and we have an obligation to help fund their efforts. While the others agree, they didn't feel this could be afforded this year. Dr. Cushing stated that information received in other SAU schools could be shared with Rye if critical. In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to accept the use of older than five year buses under the new bus contract for a savings of \$5,000. Mr. Grant stated that Mr. Katkin had put it in the budget this way originally but that he had asked that the cost for newer buses be

included. He clarified that the 5+ year old busses would not be in service until the option years of the contract and there would be an opportunity for newer busses through re-bidding in the option years depending upon the Board's interest. Mr. Schwartz stated that he was concerned about the level of cuts we have been discussing and their impact on the students. He reiterated that we have salary and benefit increases that are out of our control and that the level of cutting we were now implementing (cuts below zero percent to make up for the salary and other increases) may impact student learning. Vote: In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Moynahan.

After a discussion about library books, no motion was made to cut funding for library books.

There was a discussion about advisability of cutting custodial supplies. It was explained that \$7,000 was already cut before the budget was brought to the School Board. No motion was made.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to reduce the line items for repairs to HVAC and plumbing totaling \$6,000 based on the knowledge that the building and maintenance trust fund can be used to fund these repairs, should they be needed. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni a motion to reduce plumbing repairs and heat at RJH by \$7,000 for the same reason. In favor: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz.

After Mr. Pollet explained that only one computer cart was needed due to cuts to computers made yesterday, Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to cut the line item for computer carts in half from \$2,600 to \$1,300. Vote: In favor: Ms. Balboni, Ms. Anderson, Mr. Grant, and Mrs. Moynahan; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to reduce the speech pathologist line item from .4 to .2 for an approximate net gain of \$16,700. Mrs. Lyons had proposed this change to the Board. Mrs. Lyons noted that IEP students would not suffer with this change. Vote: In favor: Ms. Balboni, Ms. Anderson, Mr. Grant, and Mrs. Moynahan; Opposed: Mr. Schwartz.

At the request of Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to create a warrant article that would allow surplus money from this year's budget to be used for PHS tuition next year. This could help cover the unanticipated return of students returning to PHS. Mr. Katkin explained the tax impact. In favor: Mr. Grant; Opposed: Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni, Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Moynahan.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to eliminate the .2 psychologist position. The administrators proposed this change. Vote: Unanimously approved. This leaves a .8 guidance counselor position at RES and a .8 guidance counselor position at RJH.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion to add \$20,000 for mini computers for 7<sup>th</sup> graders as part of the proposed new one-to-one laptop program. Discussion: Mr. Grant stated that, while this is a great proposal, the Board only heard one presentation from the committee at the outset. He recalled part of that discussion was the Board wanting to know that there was a written plan as to how teachers would utilize it. Without that plan there is the potential that teachers and students would not utilize it to its potential. Other schools that have similar 1:1 programs have taken the time prior to insure that everything was ready to go prior to the purchases. Ms. Anderson stated that she would support this motion under better economic circumstance but cannot this year. Mr. Schwartz stated that this increase represents three cents on the tax rate. Vote: In favor: Mr. Schwartz; Opposed: Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Balboni; Abstained: Mrs. Moynahan.

Ms. Balboni asked for clarification on how the Administrator-directed portion of professional development money, \$8,000, can be used. She asked if the money can be used when the principal brings in someone to lead training in the school. Mr. Grant stated this was the intent when the contract was negotiated. Ms. Anderson confirmed that. A discussion ensued and Mr. Katkin said he would get back to the Board with his opinion.

A discussion occurred about warrant articles for the track, access road and library. Mr. Schwartz stated that from his perspective the library expansion was a higher priority for him. As the estimate is being worked on, he hoped the Board would wait for the estimate to decide. He spoke in favor of the library expansion at RJH. He said this is probably not the year for the safety road or the track. There was consensus not to have a warrant article for the road and the track. Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded for discussion by Ms. Anderson, a motion to let the Budget Committee know now that we are considering a warrant article on the RJH library expansion. Mr. Grant state he would rather wait to see the cost before indicating one way or the other to the budget committee. Vote: In favor: Mr. Schwartz; Opposed: Mr. Grant, Ms. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan, and Ms. Anderson.

At this point Mr. Schwartz left the meeting due to a prior commitment.

Ms. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to add back in a teaching position that was cut yesterday. The cost is approximately \$65,000. After a discussion, the Board voted: In favor: Ms. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan, Ms. Anderson; Opposed: Mr. Grant. While he thinks it is best not to cut this position, he thinks other cuts can be made to make up for this cost.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, to add in the cost of the employee who is going to retire next year for an approximate cost of \$20,000. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mrs. Moynahan stated the Budget Committee scheduled their review session with us for Dec. 10. Numerous members said that date does not work. The Board agreed that December 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. would be best for that meeting. Mr. Grant stated that it would also allow the Board to receive information on the RJH library and act upon that.

Mr. Grant stated the budget is approximately now at about .7 above a 0% increase.

### Non-public Session

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Ms. Balboni, a motion to go into non-public session at 5:50 p.m to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

### Public Session

The Board re-entered public session at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Balboni proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to grant raises for the two secretary positions in accordance with the amounts stated in the formal letter to RESPA and to make those raises retroactive to July 1, 2008. The Administrators and the Board feel that the raise is warranted due to their higher level of responsibility and accountability, including supporting the principals and managing issues of a confidential nature. Vote: Unanimously approved. Dr. Cushing was instructed to inform RESPA. The principals will inform the Secretaries.

There was a discussion about when the public hearing on the School Budget will be. The Budget Committee sets that date. The School District Deliberative Session will be early in February at a date to be determined.

Mr. Grant thanked everyone for their hard work to create a fiscally responsible budget. It was not necessarily an enjoyable process and hard decisions and prioritizations had to be made while still providing a budget that provides the best possible education to Rye students.

### **ADJOURN:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to adjourn at 6:15 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary