

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its December 19, 2007 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 November 14, 2007 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 Jacquie DeFreze, Kim Boulay, Tim Moynahan, Kathleen Cole,  
Jeanne Brown, Sheila Adams, Joanne Costanzo, Katie Jarvis,  
Tom Southworth and Kathy Collyer.

Residents/Visitors: James Betti, Jeanne Moynahan, Anne Crotty Zannos, Rebecca  
Harrison., Janet Stevens and several RJH Students.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded, a motion to approve the School Board public minutes of October 17, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded a motion to approve the non-public minutes of September 19, 2007 and October 17, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications:

- Dr. Cushing received a letter from Attorney Hildreth regarding the Verizon cell phone tower proposal and a letter from the PTA regarding a running track at Lang field. Both of these issues will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Dr. Cushing received correspondence from the 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Ms. O'Connell's class. The students in her class are writing persuasive letters about things they would like to do or change at RJH. The students will send the letters to teachers, administrators, the Superintendent and the School Board.
- Dr. Cushing also received a newsletter regarding the tax rate and several newspaper articles.

**REPORTS:**

**Superintendent:**

- Dr. Cushing welcomed the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students that were in attendance at the School Board meeting.

- Dr. Cushing introduced Tom Southworth and JoAnn Costanzo who reported on the gender study they had completed. Mr. Southworth stated that at RES there were no major differences in CAT testing by gender including identified students. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade at RJH had the biggest difference between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Anderson asked what the 8<sup>th</sup> grade percentage was compared to what their percentage was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Mr. Southworth replied they did not have that 5<sup>th</sup> grade information. Ms. Balboni suggested that we track the same class going forward for each grade. Results were discussed from PHS. Mr. Pollet passed out information with the percentage of students attending college and SAT scores. An analysis was created and suggestions made on what to do with this information. Mrs. Costanzo stated that the challenge now was what we can do with this data to motivate students. She said the grade level teachers and counselors will meet as teams and create opportunities. Ms. Anderson asked if hiring a consultant with experience in gender differences might help. Mrs. Costanzo replied she thought it was best to work from the inside out, and to learn how we could bring out the best in each student. She suggested that we should meet as teams with a structure in mind to try and determine how best to figure this information out. She further added, once we generate some ideas then we might want to hire an expert to help. Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Southworth and Mrs. Costanzo. He asked how they picked what they measured and if they looked at other studies. He suggested that we should look at what others have already done and learn from them. Mr. Southworth said that they started with what they did know. Mr. Grant stated he would like to see the national averages. Mrs. Costanzo stated they did refer to NAEP. Mr. Grant said the logical place would be to look at peer schools (NELMS) and see what other people (experts) have done so that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Mr. Pollet agreed with Mrs. Costanzo that we should look at each individual student's needs, and how to get them to perform at their best. He thought the "My Voice" survey would be a good place to start with data to see where we were at and what we need. Dr. Cushing asked about the phone survey. Mr. Southworth replied that they will have a report in December. Ms. Anderson thanked both counselors for hosting the Parent to Parent meeting which was well attended. Dr. Betti a resident of Rye stated that he believed gender was real issue at the school and that we needed to look at the needs of the male students. Mr. Grant replied that this study was only a starting point and that the school will be looking at the information and using different strategies.
- Dr. Cushing attended the PHS School Board meeting where the budget forecast was discussed. Tuition costs were brought up and what the Rye district was getting for their money. Dr. Cushing expressed his concerns and stated that PHS wanted to keep us involved in the process.
- Dr. Cushing also attended a meeting with PHS and SAU 50. Policies regarding bullying were discussed. How to conduct an investigation and creating a panel for discussion open to those interested was also brought up. It was agreed to have a common policy on bullying from RES to PHS and that SAU 50 and SAU 52 (PHS) will work together to come up with a policy collectively. It was proposed that a meeting take place on January 10, 2008 at PHS to discuss. Mr. Grant stated it would be a good idea to involve students in what our policy is. Ms. Anderson agreed.
- Mr. Grant noted that the SPED report did not really answer the questions he'd asked to have answered at the last meeting. Ms. Anderson noted that she would like a further breakdown on what "other health impaired" is. For example, does that include 10 students with ADHD, etc. Mr. Grant asked for information on how many parents requested assistance for their child, had to pay for testing themselves, and what the final outcomes were from those meetings.

- Mr. Southworth asked if there were any questions on the CAT testing. Mr. Grant noted that it was basically a study on the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. He further stated that the categories that needed to be worked on were identified by Ms. Richardson when she first started and, as a result of the changes she implemented, the test scores are now showing improvement. He thanked her for her efforts in this area.

### **Elementary School**

- Ms. Richardson introduced Mrs. Defreze and Ms. Boulay for a presentation to the Board on differentiated math instruction for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Mrs. Defreze said the students were given a geometry project and were told at the beginning what it was they would learn by the end of the project using geometry. Ms. Anderson asked if her experience teaching 5<sup>th</sup> grade helped her to differentiate instruction for the advanced learner in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and wondered if other teachers who did not have that experience could benefit from professional development in this area. Ms. Defreze replied that it did. She further stated that the CORE meetings they are attending were extremely beneficial in providing a wealth of knowledge by sharing with other same grade level teachers. Ms. Richardson and the Board thanked Mrs. Defreze and Ms. Boulay for their presentation.
- Ms. Richardson stated that RES had gone “live with their mass e-mail system and that it was working well”.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms had cabinets installed on Friday.
- Ms. Richardson reported that the teachers at RES submitted a lot of grants for review to the REF.
- Mr. Schwartz asked about website use. Ms. Richardson replied that the teachers used it to communicate with the parents.

### **Junior High**

- Mr. Pollet said the e-mail system at RJH was also working very well and helped with communication between the school and parents.
- Mr. Pollet stated that the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in attendance tonight were here to earn challenge points for their social studies class, and he commended them on attending.
- The Veterans Day assembly at RJH was a huge success. Plans to have an assembly annually were discussed. The band and chorus performed, veterans and family members were invited to attend. Each grade level had their own presentations at the assembly.
- 30 student volunteers from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade made a visit to Pease Air Force Base to greet returning soldiers from Iraq. Mr. Pollet stated it was a very moving time. If any one would like more information on greeting troops visit [www.peasegreeters.org](http://www.peasegreeters.org).
- The 6<sup>th</sup> grade team and Mr. Pollet have been discussing their recent trip to Merrowvista and are discussing ways to improve and expand the goals of this experience. Ms. Anderson asked about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip and what they might be doing this year. Mr. Pollet replied that at this point they have surveyed the students and are looking at the various options. Mr. Pollet felt that the social component was the most important part of this trip from the students’ point of view. Mr. Grant asked what the process for deciding was. Mr. Pollet said that they have collected information and discussed going to Merrowvista, Outward Bound or a trip to Boston. They will resolve in a month or so exactly what the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip will be.
- Mr. Grant inquired why there was a teachers’ workday on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Cushing replied that this was a compensation day for parent conferences. Mr. Grant stated that

there was some concern with the number of days off of school in November and that the Board needed to look at this again for next year.

### **Financial**

Manifest –

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of October 13, 2007 through November 6, 2007 in the amount of \$876,823.33. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of November 7, 2007 through November 13, 2007 in the amount of \$54,021.63. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Budgetary considerations-

There will be a meeting at the SAU 50 office on Monday and Tuesday from 8:00 am to 12:30. The budget books will be available for review on Friday.

### **Other**

The letter from Attorney Hildreth for Verizon was discussed and a site map distributed. Mr. Katkin suggested a piece of land on the map that may be possible for them to use. This part of school land would not affect the future operation of the school. Ms. Anderson stated we needed to make it clear we were not interested in leasing the land near Lang field. Mr. Grant felt that the Board might want to consider assisting, in that the cell service it would provide would be helpful to the community. He supported allowing Verizon wireless to present how they might use this identified land without accessing it from school grounds. Mr. Schwartz proposed that the Board might consider the land that Mr. Katkin had highlighted. It was decided that the Board would discuss this further at Monday's meeting.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Calendar of Policy action for November:

- It was agreed at the October School Board meeting that each building administrator would have a light evaluation in March 2008.

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

- Ms. Cole spoke about administering CAT tests in the spring or fall. She supported having testing in the fall as the results are provided within a few weeks and the teachers are able to assess the students' needs for the remainder of the year.
- Ms. Moynahan said that the PTA membership was now up to 194 which is 38 members over last year's enrollment.
- Ms. Brown commented on the prior statement by Dr. Betti. She stated that the parent and home role was not discussed and that she felt this component was necessary for the discussion about gender differences and student performance.

### **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant: RES- skylights are in and the roof did not leak after a recent heavy rain storm. RJH – the window above the school entrance is scheduled to be replaced in November.
- Special Issues/Principal Advisory Committee:
  - Ms. Balboni said that the bus stop by the Rye Public Library was discussed. The students going to the library on Friday after school have to cross the street at the current stop. It was agreed that on Fridays the bus will stop at both the safety

- building and the library walkways. In addition, the librarian will be outside to meet the students going to the library.
- Safety at the a.m. drop off at RES was discussed. Currently there are still parents dropping their kids off on the wrong side and students are crossing the parking lot by themselves. Ms. Richardson assured the Board that she continues to try and resolve this issue with those involved.
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish not being offered at RJH was discussed. It was explained that this will be phased in as these students approach that grade and that it needed to be communicated to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents at New Castle that Spanish is being offered at RJH.
  - The Special Issues committee also met and discussed parent stipends. The committee recommends that a stipend should be offered to the best qualified person for the particular job, whether the person is a teacher, parent or community member. The committee also recommended that parents and community members receive stipends as well as teachers. After the Board discussed, Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds that we keep the parent stipends but give everyone the option to donate that stipend. Vote: In favor: Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Dodds, Ms. Balboni. Mr. Grant opposed because parents volunteer throughout the town and this starts a slippery slope and creates two categories of volunteers. Ms. Anderson– opposed as she does not believe parents should receive stipends when many other parent volunteers do not.
  - REF: Will be voting on grants next month.
  - PHS: Nothing further to report.
  - PTA: Ms. Richardson brought up the idea of holding a bingo night or money raffle as a fundraiser. After discussing, Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to support this idea with direction that the administration get an opinion from the school attorney on the legality of this endeavor. Vote: Unanimously approved.
  - Rye Rec: Ms. Anderson was unable to attend the meeting this month.
  - Communications: Interest in allowing teachers who live outside the district have their children attend Rye schools and pay for tuition was discussed. Ms. Anderson stated that this benefit should be negotiated as part of the contract with the teachers' association. Prior to that, she felt these issues should be brought directly to the Board as individual requests. Ms. Balboni stated that the issue was primarily for kindergarten students that attended a half day kindergarten program. Ms. Richardson will go back to the interested individuals and tell them to request this in writing to the Board. There was general agreement in favor of allowing kindergarten students of teachers to attend Rye schools due to the half day issue but this was not a formal approval.
  - Technology: Ms. Anderson asked if Mr. Moynahan would be a part of the technology budget process. It was agreed he would. Ms. Anderson asked what percentage of his time is spent troubleshooting and what percent is spent planning.
  - Curriculum: The committee met on November 14<sup>th</sup> and discussed Professional Development.
  - NEASC: Determining the members of the steering committee is in process. We are in the middle of formalizing which teachers will be involved.
  - Peer Schools: The next off site visit will be in January.
  - Athletics: The athletic department is still in need of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls' basketball coach.
  - Bus Committee: Mr. Grant has expanded this committee and they are presently looking at bussing Rye students to and from PHS. They will complete a similar study including an on-line survey.

- Policies: EHAA, (for adoption) Computer Security, E Mail and Internet Communications Policy. After discussing, Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds a motion to approve this policy as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.  
EHAB, (for adoption) Retention of Electronic Communications. After discussion on changing some of the wording, Mr. Dodds made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to approve this policy as modified. Vote: Unanimously approved.  
GBE, (for adoption) Employee Responsibilities. It was agreed at this time to table this policy for further discussion.  
EEA, (second reading) Student Transportation Services. This policy has already been approved.  
KF, (second reading) Use of School Facilities. There are still changes that need to be made in the wording. Mr. Schwartz will work with Dr. Cushing on this.  
School Sponsored Activity (second reading) Ms, Balboni will work on the re-wording of this policy and bring it back to the Board.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Rebecca Harrison of the PTA passed out a map showing where the proposed running track at Lang's Field would go. Mr. Grant suggested that the PTA involve school employees, in particular Ron Fortier at RJH and Holly Warden at RES and Mr. Katkin of the SAU 50 office. He further stated that if we agree to go forward, that he believes we should do it right the first time by making it the correct size and explore a variety of location that it might be placed. Mr. Grant suggested a committee be formed with school involvement to obtain further information and research in order to determine what needs to be done. Mr. Dodds proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to form a committee to look into this issue. Mr. Schwartz will work with Dr. Cushing to form this committee. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- Maternity leave from March 10, 2007 to May, 2008 was requested by Meg Louney. Ms. Richardson stated she is working with Mrs. Lyons for coverage during that time.

Ms. Anderson spoke about the Parent to Parent meeting. She feels we need to philosophically talk about how we want to advertise and promote this, and how we can better serve the community by providing information on both public and private schools.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Dodds proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:05 p.m. to discuss personnel. Vote: Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:** The Board returned to Public Session at 10:15 p.m.

**ADJOURN:** Mr. Dodds proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz a motion to adjourn at 10:15 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary