

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its April 15, 2009 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 March 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

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

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

Staff Katie Jarvis, Kathleen Cole, Tom Southworth, Michelle Wirth,  
Cindy Bean, Susan Bates, Sheila Adams, Jeanne Brown, Maggie  
Hanna, Doris Gianforte.

Residents/Visitors: Bob Eaton, Robin Husslage.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Dr. Cushing called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. Dr. Cushing asked for nominations for chairperson of the Rye School Board. Mrs. Balboni made a motion to elect Mr. Schwartz for chairperson. This motion was seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Ms. Anderson made a motion to elect Mr. Grant as chairperson of the Rye School Board, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan.

Mr. Schwartz thanked Mrs. Balboni for the nomination. Mr. Schwartz recognized that Mr. Grant has done an amazing job in many ways as chair over the past three years. He stated he would continue those great attributes such as the focus on action items and organization skills. Mr. Schwartz stated that he believed there are leadership qualities that he could bring to the board to make us even stronger as a collaborative board – within the board and community. Mr. Schwartz stated he could: bring a more collaborative tone to meetings; create an environment that empowers each individual board member; look for ways to strengthen the alliance between the board and administrators and support the administrative goals; encourage the board to have strategic well thought out and open discussions and engage the community being open and transparent.

Mr. Schwartz conveyed his understanding of the role of a chair suggesting that he would error on the side of being impartial. He mentioned that he has been chair of other organizations such as A Safe Place (the seacoast region Domestic Violence support services organization). He will welcome and solicit feedback, not viewing it as criticism, but as an opportunity to improve. Mr. Schwartz stated his strong belief in democratic participation and that he would value increasing the involvement of others over seeing his opinion on a topic achieved. He suggested that this is a good year for change, both from a personal perspective, where he would have more time, and also that after three years perhaps it's a good

time for change. He suggested that a new perspective and new style would be the best way to move the board forward. He reiterated his respect for the work that Ian has done.

Mrs. Balboni stated she chose to nominate Mr. Schwartz to “bring about change and a new perspective to the Board”. She continued that she thinks it is a good idea to rotate positions on the Board periodically.

Mr. Grant stated he appreciates the support of the Board for being the chairperson over the last year and feels he has brought organization and focused strategic goal setting to the Board. He further commented that he has always had an open door policy as chairperson of the Board. He emails Board members for input on the agenda each month. He noted that Dr. Cushing said no other chairs do that in the SAU. Mr. Grant noted that he pushed to have retreats to discuss Board objectives and was surprised that only now during the nomination for chair have any thoughts on changing the meeting structure been raised. In the end any decision comes from the majority of the Board, not just the Chair or any one Board member. To imply anything else is disrespectful to other Board members. In conclusion, he remarked that he is only one vote and that any notion that he not be able to weigh in on decisions, voice his opinion, and vote, seems out of place in a town of 5,000 and with only 5 Board members. His belief is that the Board has done and will continue to do good work, works extremely well with the administration, and that asking questions—not just being a rubber stamp, focusing on accountability, raising the bar on quality, and being fiscally responsible is in his opinion key roles of the Board. If Board members agree he would hope for their vote.

Vote: Mr. Schwartz for chairperson: Mrs. Balboni, Mr. Schwartz. Mr. Grant for chairperson: Ms. Anderson, Mrs. Moynahan, Mr. Grant. Mr. Grant approved for chairperson. Mr. Grant stated that he would continue to keep an open door policy as chairperson of the Rye School Board.

Mr. Grant asked for nominations for Vice-Chairperson of the Rye School Board. Ms. Anderson made a motion to nominate Mrs. Moynahan, seconded by Mrs. Balboni. Mrs. Balboni stated that Mrs. Moynahan has a lot of experience on the Board and feels she would be a good choice. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant asked for nominations for Secretary of the Rye School Board. Mr. Schwartz made a motion to nominate Mrs. Balboni, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan. Vote: Approved: Mr. Grant, Mr. Schwartz, Ms. Anderson, and Mrs. Moynahan. Abstained: Mrs. Balboni.

Mr. Grant asked for all Board members to review their current committee assignments and they will discuss and make any changes at the next meeting.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Grant proposed, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, a motion to go into non-public session at 6:23 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 6:45 p.m.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

*Approval of public minutes* - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Ms. Anderson, the public minutes of January 14, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the public minutes of February 5, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the public minutes of February 18, 2009 were accepted. Vote: Approved: Mr. Grant, Mrs. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan, and Ms. Anderson. Abstained: Mr. Schwartz.

*Communications* – Dr. Cushing reported he received a resignation letter from Linda Perrott as guidance counselor at RES. Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni to accept her resignation. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mr. Grant thanked her for the work she has done for the Rye School District.

Dr. Cushing received a letter from Robin Ellwood requesting a paid sabbatical for the 2010/2011 school year. She stated in the letter that she respects the Boards opinion regarding her last request. Dr. Cushing stated that this request should be discussed during the budget process for that school year.

## **REPORTS:**

### **Superintendent:**

- *College Planning* – Mr. Pollet stated that the Board's goal with college planning is to prepare the parents of junior high students for the transition to high school including the financial aspects and getting more information to parents earlier. He is working with Portsmouth Middle School who recently hosted a college planning night at their school.

Mr. Southworth prepared a packet of information for the Board to review outlining what a junior high school does and what a high school does for college preparation. He attended the PMS college planning event which is held every spring. He reported that it was well attended by Rye parents and that it would be a good idea to continue to advertise this event to our parents. Mr. Southworth stated that colleges and private schools are looking for diversity including scholars, athletes, musicians and students from other countries. He continued that the planning aspect is very important and that students and parents really need to plan ahead. Most schools are looking at what you do now and what you have to offer, and that it is not about class rank.

Mr. Pollet passed out information regarding the financial piece to the Board members. Mr. Schwartz commented that he recently attended a meeting with the Commissioner of Education and discussed students wanting to go to college but not having the resources or desire. He stated he thinks it is a good idea to require all Rye students in PHS to apply for college, even if they do not plan to attend. He believes that there is great value in the application process – allowing students to develop writing, analytic and other skills even if they choose not to go to college. He suggested that the board and administration consider this for our students. Mr. Southworth said that it is not mandatory for students to apply but that they do encourage all students to apply. Dr. Cushing stated that he has discussed with Dr. Lyonel Tracy having this kind of preparation imbedded in an English course. He will discuss further with Portsmouth. Mrs. Balboni stated that at PHS the students fill out a short essay in English class, but it is usually only for students who are actually applying. Ms. Anderson stated that, because so many RJH students have a goal to go to private high school, likewise,

it would be beneficial to teach RJH students how to write application essays. Mr. Southworth replied that Kerri Ridolfi does some things already in her class for college preparation, and that we are looking at expanding preparation for the SSAT at RJH. The Board thanked Mr. Southworth for his information.

## **Principals**

### **Ms. Lane Richardson – Rye Elementary School**

- Ms. Richardson introduced Doris Gianforte, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at RES, who was in attendance to discuss the RES vertical curriculum science team. Ms. Gianforte began a slide presentation of the work they have done and where they are today with the program. She stated that they started by looking at how RES was aligned with the science standards and focused on what they were already doing and what components they were missing. Working in teams, they created a vertical guide for each grade level and purchased items to fill in what they were missing. The team created a word document with key headings and phrases to come up with a one page grade level document that teachers could use. They have continued to improve on this document and now have one for each grade level completed. Mr. Schwartz asked if there was consensus and clarity as to the meaning of each standard or if that was part of the process for the teachers. It was explained that this clarifying was part of the challenge and process the teachers went through. Ms. Richardson stated she is very proud and thankful to the team for all the work that has gone in to it. Mrs. Balboni asked if, now that this work is complete, do all the teachers follow the same curriculum at the same time. Ms. Gianforte replied that they cover the same material but not always at the same time or in the same way. Mr. Grant asked if we were properly budgeted with professional development to make sure we can continue this work. Ms. Anderson stated that Rye standardized test results in science have been low. She asked if we can expect improvement, as a result of this team's work. Ms. Gianforte replied that that is their hope. Ms. Anderson restated her belief that standardized tests are not the most important indicator of success but they are a reality that cannot be ignored, particularly because standardized test taking impacts a student's ability to get into private high school, college, and graduate school. Dr. Cushing commented that the team did an excellent job and that science at the elementary level is sometimes difficult to get your arms around.

## **Superintendents**

- Dr. Cushing passed out the Special Education report from Mrs. Lyons.
- Dr. Cushing discussed Senate Bill 180 – Accountability for Adequate Education. Each school must meet standards and site visits will be conducted to validate. This is the visit that was recently held at RJH. Both RJH and RES have met all of the standards and have been approved (which is their highest rating) until June 2013. In the 2011/2012 school year the department will develop a performance task force looking at a variety of things including; programs, attendance rates, number of highly qualified teachers. They then prepare a detailed report identifying all schools with a rating.
- The Commissioner's meeting next Friday will be focusing on the stimulus package. Dr. Cushing will report on this meeting at the SAU50 Board meeting next Wednesday at GCS.

## **Principals**

### **Ms. Lane Richardson – Rye Elementary School (cont.)**

- Ms. Richardson reported that the science fair held recently at RES was a success.
- Town election went well. Ms. Richardson thanked Bob Eaton and Chief Walsh for how smoothly it went.
- Ms. Richardson stated that RES has completed all their NEASC work and are ready for their visit. Mrs. Moynahan stated she reviewed the NEASC book and is amazed at the amount of work that went into it. Ms. Richardson thanked Kathleen Cole and Kathy Tucker and all of the RES staff for their time and hard work.
- Mr. Grant thanked the teachers and staff for the hard work on NEASC and noted that it was not lost on him that they were also going to be in the classrooms on a Sunday! He hoped the Board would consider this later when we look at weather related make-up days

### **Mr. Chris Pollet – Rye Junior High School**

- Mr. Pollet reported SES day will be held on March 20<sup>th</sup> at UNH.
- Next Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> is USO Night at RJH from 6:30 to 8:00. They will have swing dancing and a museum with an archivist. Students will be dressed in period clothes and the band and chorus will be performing.
- Mr. Pollet gave the Board a copy of RJH's NEASC book for review, and thanked the steering committee members, Mary Coombs, Kerry Ridolfi, Bridget Hughes, Piper Cronin, Ruth Cote, and Mary Harte
- Hats off to Broadway performances begin April 2<sup>nd</sup> and conclude on April 4<sup>th</sup>.
- On April 5<sup>th</sup> Mr. Pollet and 4 teachers will attend the NELMS conference in Rhode Island.
- The community garden has received a grant from the Garden Club and is just beginning to plant seeds.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> grade DI team finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and will move on to the state competition with Mr. Scogin on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **Financial**

### **Manifest –**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of February 13, 2009 through March 9, 2009 in the amount of \$1,638,977.09. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of March 10, 2009 through March 12, 2009 in the amount of \$33,386.56. Mrs. Moynahan questioned charges at RES and RJH for the security alarm system. One was for scheduled maintenance at both schools and the other was for a repair at RJH. Vote: Unanimously approved.

## **Budgetary Considerations**

Mr. Grant stated that budgeted line items will be spent according to the principals' requests and will be discussed at the April board meeting.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Calendar of Policy Action – March:

School Board Elections, School Board Organizational Meeting, Election of School Board Officers, and Payment of School District Treasurer – all completed.

Building Administrator Evaluation by Superintendent, School Board Reviews of Building Administrators' Evaluations and Re-election of Professional Staff will be discussed later.

Surveys -

Mr. Pollet reported that they have investigated various surveys with several different companies. We are currently looking at purchasing Survey Gold software. The hope is to clean up the information, get feedback from staff, and work with RES so that they are similar. He added that they have spoken with Mary Lyons and included some information regarding special education. Mr. Grant commented that they used an online survey for the bus surveys and that it worked out very well. Mrs. Balboni asked if there was any interest in doing a survey with the staff. Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet stated they would speak to staff members and report back.

## **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:**

Bob Eaton, Town Moderator thanked both Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet for their help and set up at the Deliberative session and on Election Day. He was pleased that the turnout for the Deliberative session was at least 100 people over past sessions. He reported that the recent election also went very smoothly at RES. He realizes that this is an intrusion for the school day, and said Ms. Richardson went out of her way to make things go well. He has received good feedback from the town.

Maggie Hanna thanked the NEASC Committee and teachers at RES for the work they accomplished.

## **NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 7:21 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

## **PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 7:55 p.m.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

- Physical Plant – Mr. Schwartz remarked on some leaks in the roof in the library at RJH. Mr. Pollet reported that this occurred by the ice damming and no insulation. Dr. Cushing said he would look into the matter.
- Special Issues – Ms. Anderson reported that the principals came to the Special Issues committee to discuss adding another 20 days to Mr. Southworth's schedule this school year. Ms Anderson and Mrs. Moynahan agreed that Mr. Southworth has made a significant contribution this year and more work is needed. The Board agreed to wait until after planning for next year to make any adjustments for that year. Ms. Anderson proposed a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan to hire Mr. Southworth for an additional 20 days in the 2008-2009 school year. Vote: Unanimously approved.
- REF – Mr. Schwartz reported on the REF gala held last Saturday. He said the REF board worked really hard to make it successful and it was. They raised \$15,000.00 in donations for the One to

One laptop pilot at RJH. Mr. Schwartz thanked Tim Moynahan who was able to get a mini-computer (similar to the type the students would receive) donated for the event. The School Board has also allocated \$12,500.00 for the pilot. Mr. Pollet passed out information to the Board members that outlined the history of this program and preliminary plans for implementation. He stated that what we need to do first is to give the minis to the teachers to begin preparing for the 1 to 1 program. Mr. Grant asked if the vision was for the students to take the minis home. Mr. Pollet replied “not initially”. He stated they would first identify which students did not have access to a computer. Mr. Schwartz added that the consensus was that being able to continue your school work at home was important, that students would be able to access their files from outside the school and that the teachers could, on a case by case basis, allow a student to take home a computer if needed. Mrs. Balboni suggested having a parent information session for the pilot with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade parents. Mr. Schwartz stated that the evaluation from the School Board perspective would be most important. He also stated, in addition to evaluating the 1-1, the evaluation should also look at the increased access to carts in grades 6 and/or 8.

- PHS – Secondary School Advisory: Mrs. Balboni stated that Mr. Southworth’s report covered some of what was discussed at the last meeting. Also discussed were honors applications and the open house for parents. Mrs. Balboni and Mr. Schwartz stated that Jacquie DeFreze, president of the PTA at PHS, stated it is important for Rye to show up at PHS’s budget meetings and that we need to get the word out so that they are well attended. Mr. Schwartz asked what we could do to help encourage people to go. Dr. Cushing stated we have made people aware of meetings at PHS, but we need to know what it is we are advocating for. Mr. Grant stated that, assuming it is positive, he supports it. He further stated we could post it on our websites and send information out via our Friday e-mails.
- PTA – Mrs. Moynahan reported she was unable to attend the last meeting. There are currently 204 members. They recently funded requests for yearbooks and the fun finale at RES, in addition to t-shirts for Destination Imagination. The track was discussed and they are currently looking at grants to help fund that but the outlook does not look good.
- Rye Rec – Mr. Schwartz stated they have a two page memo of understanding drawn up to be signed by RES and Rye Rec. Lee Arthur stated she still has reservations, but will look at the document. The memo outlines that RES will provide space for 65 students but encourages Rye Rec to look outside the school for appropriate space as well. Mr. Schwartz stated that the memo identified one dedicated room, one room available beginning at 2:45 each day and a room for homework. He stated that the room available at 2:45 would be setup with a few round tables and not used as a classroom – therefore it would be more suited for the after school program. Ms. Richardson said Rye Rec will be moving their dedicated room Ms. Richardson said they also discussed paying a stipend to an employee of RES to help manage the transition of students to the aftercare program from 2:30 to 3:30 and to act as a liaison. Ms. Arthur was resistant to this idea. Ms. Anderson suggested that, if the Board felt strongly about such a position, it could require the position. It was agreed by the Board to approve including the request for a \$1,500 stipend from Rye Rec for such a position, as part of the Memorandum of Understanding. The board agreed not to ask for payment for utility charges, custodial fees, phone service and other current in-kind offerings. Ms. Richardson outlined the number of students upstairs (25) and downstairs (40). Mr. Schwartz will bring back the revised memo of understanding to the Rec. Commission Board meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Communications – Mrs. Balboni reported she and Mr. Schwartz organized the annual School Board breakfast at RES last Friday. She said it was nice to stay and speak with the staff members. The breakfast for RJH will be held March 27, 2009.

Mr. Schwartz thanked Ms. Anderson for her work on the School Board Newsletter and the Annual report. Mr. Grant noted he received an email stating it “was the best newsletter” this person had seen and that he had forwarded it to Ms Anderson.

- Technology – Mr. Schwartz reported that Tim Moynahan has the district technology plan completed. Mr. Pollet has asked staff members for any final input and will have the plan ready for Board members to review at the next meeting.
- Curriculum – Mrs. Balboni reported that SES day will be held March 20 at UNH and that there are a lot of courses to choose from. Linda Walsh is back and working on an addendum to professional development courses.
- NEASC – Nothing further to report.
- Energy Committee – Mr. Grant reported it has frustratingly taken 3 weeks after signing the contract to get the program going with The Jordan Institute. He stated that we had requested they finish the phase 1 ASAP and Jim Gordon is doing a walk through with the team to get the specs. He expects to have the bid ready spec in 8 weeks. Mr. Grant reported that the stimulus package is still pending direction from the Department of Energy with what direction it will take. Mr. Schwartz asked if we were expected to spend the school budget funds for the energy project between now and June. Mr. Grant replied that \$28,000 will be for the bid ready spec and with a contract signed and work commenced that the second payment would come out of the energy savings.
- Bus Committee – Nothing new to report.
- Track and Safety – Mr. Schwartz and Ms. Moynahan met with Bud Jordan, Gregg Mikolaities and Mr. Schwartz to see if there was any way to build a larger track, but it was determined they could not. He stated the PTA did not have funds for the track at this time, but the town was willing to use its resources. Mr. Grant said we should know how much we will have in the unreserved fund balance by the next meeting. Ms. Anderson said it is unclear where we are with the cost of high school tuition. Dr. Cushing stated the bill from the high school came in late. The costing out formula saved us \$100 per student, but they will not be able to give that to us in writing until they sign off on the AREA agreement. We should know the answer by the end of next week but estimated the amount to be \$174,000.00. Ms. Anderson wondered if there was any way to use this money to help build the track. Mr. Grant asked if there was another path we should explore for using this money as opposed to giving it back every year. Mrs. Moynahan said that we should take the opportunity to use this money, if the Budget Committee agreed, as this is a onetime event. Mr. Grant asked if the track was something the Board wanted to fund. Ms. Balboni thought it was a good collaboration with the town and that we have put a lot of work into it already. Mr. Grant suggested we see where we are on unreserved fund balance basis at the next meeting. Mr. Schwartz suggested that we pursue clarifying the ability to use these funds. Mr. Grant noted he has been working with Jim Katkin and the DRA on this and other matters.
- Policies:
  - JFAC – Tuition for Resident High School Students, for adoption: Ms. Anderson made a motion to adopt, seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Vote: Unanimously approved.
  - IJO – Community/Partnership Resources, 1<sup>st</sup> reading: Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to accept as a 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.
  - IHAK – Character and Citizenship Education, 1<sup>st</sup> reading: Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to accept as a 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.
  - IFA – Instructional needs of Students with Different Talents, 1<sup>st</sup> reading: Mr. Schwartz added (in italics) to the first paragraph, second sentence *academic* development. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni to accept as modified as a 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ILBA – Assessment Program, second reading: Ms. Anderson stated she did not like the language used on page 2, second paragraph. She feels it might create a contractual obligation outside of the CBA which should not occur. She would like the entire paragraph removed. Dr. Cushing will look at revising the paragraph. It was agreed to table this policy until the next meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Nomination of Professional Staff: Dr. Cushing stated, “In accordance and compliance with RSA189:14a, 189:39 and 189:39b, it is my pleasure to place into nomination the following names for teaching positions and support staff for the 2009/2010 school year in the Rye School District. In accordance with the District policy, GCPA, the list includes the position of the teacher, percent employed, and salary for those teachers that I am placing into nomination. See attached list. ” Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to accept the nominations. Vote: Unanimously approved with the exception of Mrs. Moynahan who abstained from the vote for the position of Director of Information Technology.

Dr. Cushing then referenced the classified employee list. He stated memos of understanding will be issued to those on the list with the correction of adding five (5) hours per week for Sharry Sparks for RJH homework club which will not reduce or increase her contract over the previous year.

Mr. Grant congratulated Susan Detwiler, Kathleen Kennedy, Giselle Chagnon, Piper Cronin, River Bissonnette and John Waters for receiving tenure in the Rye School District as a result of the vote.

Dr. Cushing passed out an overnight field trip form used by PHS. He thinks it would be a good idea to adapt this form for Rye. Ms. Anderson agreed it was a good idea and asked the principals to work together to revise to meet their needs. She did not believe the Board needed to be involved further.

Mr. Grant drafted a thank you letter to be published in the Portsmouth Herald and Fosters thanking voters for their support of the school budget. The Board agreed it should be sent out. He would like Board members to review.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:30 p.m. to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session at 10:00 p.m.

**ADJOURN:**

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to adjourn at 10:02 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary