

Approved by the Rye School Board at its July 16, 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 June 23, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

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

Absent: Mike Schwartz

Administrators: Dr. George A. Cushing, Superintendent
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High
Patricia-Lane Richardson, Principal, Rye Elementary
Linda Walsh, Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator

Staff: Katie Jarvis, Kathleen Cole, Tom Southworth, Sheila Adams,
Susan Detwiler, Jeanne Brown

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Approval of public minutes - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the public minutes of May 20, 2009 were accepted with the understanding that additional notation regarding Board discussion specific to policy IHAM (Health Education and Exemption from Instruction) will be brought before the Board at the next meeting and then attached to the May 20 minutes. Vote: Unanimously approved

Communications - Dr. Cushing received a letter dated June 5, 2009 from the Association of Coastal Teachers (ACT) regarding negotiations and a second letter from ACT dated June 9, 2009 regarding a waiver. Both letters will be discussed later under New Business.

- Dr. Cushing received a letter dated June 18, 2009 from NEASC with commendations, highlights, and recommendations based on their recent visit. This will be discussed further at the July 16, 2009 retreat.
- Report from the Director of Special Education - There is a noted adjustment due to the fact that psychological testing costs should have come out of the general fund instead of special education as shown.
- PHS early release dates were a topic of discussion/concern at the recent SAU 50 Board meeting. PHS had 9 early release days on their 2009-2010 calendar but has alternatively voted to have 9 2-hour delay starts. This is thought to be a more effective solution for both

teachers and students. Mr. Grant asked if this delay would affect shared buses for Rye. Dr. Cushing said he will follow up on this.

- State budget update - On Friday, June 19, the Committee of Conference reached consensus on a balanced budget and voted to recommend adoption in both the Senate and House when both bodies meet on June 24. \$160 million in Stimulus money will be used to fund increases in the Adequacy formula (\$80 million each year). Catastrophic Special Education aid was cut another \$3 million for the biennium. Funding is now proposed at \$30.57 million in 2010 and \$31.43 million in 2011. This reimbursement aid program for severely handicapped children will be prorated at approximately 73% in 2010 and less than 70% in 2011. Building aid remains fully funded at \$44.94.

With respect to retirement and the state's share of local employer contribution rates, the proposed budget reduces the state payment on behalf of local political subdivisions from the current \$55.5 million down to \$53.78 in 2010 and \$46.84 in 2011. These funding levels correspond to reductions in the state share from the current 35% to 30% in 2010 and down to 25% in 2011. In addition, the budget eliminates a \$16.9 million liability it owes the NHRS medical subsidy account that is funded by public employers, including school districts. This drop in state funding requires the certification of new retirement rates to be effective this July, increasing the local share to offset the reduction in state payments. The new rates will shift approximately 0.60% onto the local teacher rate in 2010, and approximately 1.21% onto the local teacher rate in 2011. There will also be an increase on employee rates to account for the lost \$16.9 million state OPEB liability.

- Robin Ellwood - Dr. Cushing received a request from Robin Ellwood asking for Board support and a letter of interest from the Superintendent regarding collaboration on a large 5-year National Science Foundation grant proposal from the Leitzel Center at UNH. Highlights from the proposal entitled GEO-STaR (Graduate Engaged Outreach-Science Teachers and Researches include:
 - Partnership with 8 districts (middle and high schools) with two teachers per district, per year
 - Support of 8 graduate fellows from the UNH Natural Resources and Earth System Science (NRESS) PhD program each year. These fellows will work in the classroom with participating teachers and students.
 - Participating teachers will attend two, 3-day summer experiences and 2-3 single day academic year events during the year in which they take part in GEO-STaR
 - The broad content them of the project will be, "Climate-past, present, and future."
 - Each year will culminate with a new K-12 section at UNH's highly successful Undergraduate Research Conference. Students will visit UNH for the day, and present their scientific research in a juried poster session.

Dr. Cushing said Ms. Ellwood is looking for a letter of interest from the superintendent. There was unanimous Board consensus that Dr. Cushing should write a letter of strong interest regarding Rye Junior High's participation in this program.

Mr. Grant mentioned a Federal Supreme Court ruling regarding a parent placement of a special education student. He said the courts sided with the parents and he will look up the case again to provide further details for the Board.

CAT data - Mr. Southworth

Ms. Anderson said that in looking at the CAT data for 7th grade math she was reminded of the turnover of teachers that particular grade of students had the previous year(6th grade) and asked if we are doing something to provide extra math support for these students.

Mr. Southworth said that the 7th grade math teacher has planned to provide extra support for students as was done this year. He stated the bigger issue with math is computation skills; which keeps coming up as an area to be worked on. He is working with Mrs. Harte on computation and discussion has already started about creative ways to review practice.

Mr. Grant stated that we need to be fair on this. The CAT test was done this past spring and really tests the math skills for 7th grade. The NECAP—given in October-- would have reflected the multiple changes of teachers in 6th grade. He also noted that this is the second year in a row that the 7th grade math scores have dropped and this is of concern.

Mr. Pollet said there is emphasis on computation, math minutes, and they are working to put something into place to address areas of concern. Currently the CORE document is very long and it is now being broken down to align with GLEs.

Mrs. Walsh concurred that the math CORE document is long and she is working to hone it down. She has created a skills list for teachers and with computation she feels we can make decisions locally and create a mixture of activities for reinforcing skills with students.

Mr. Grant asked when mad minutes started in math at Rye Elementary. Mr. Southworth said mad minutes began mid-year two years ago. He said the students need review and practice. Mr. Pollet showed a copy of math challenges "Summer Counts" he sent home with students' report cards. It includes several simple activities students can do to keep their math skills fresh over the summer vacation. Additionally Mr. Pollet said RJH is looking to set up a summer math "camp".

Title I at RES - Mrs. Walsh

Mrs. Walsh distributed a handout regarding Title I at RES. It stated that at RES all Title I funds are currently used to implement the Math Support Program, which is targeted towards remediation. In the last few years the amount of funding has declined at a steady rate. Mrs. Walsh provided the following summaries:

Information regarding the current Title I Program

- The number of students who receive services under this program varies from 6 to 12 in any given year. These services require a specified number of hours spread out over the week and come with specified restrictions.
- The parent involvement policy includes written correspondence and a series of meetings held over the course of the school year. There is very little parent involvement because the pool of parents is so small for participation.
- Every aspect of the program must be documented and proof presented to the state regarding such things as students involved, time allocated for services, specific lessons taught, the parent involvement plan and more. In a visitation year, which is next year for Rye, the Department of Education will come to examine how the money has been spent, the services provided as a result of the funding, and the paperwork to back up all aspects of the program.
- The funding currently pays for approximately one day's salary for the Math Support Teacher.

Recommendation regarding Title I money in 2009-10

- There seems to be a disconnect between the amount of work required to implement the stipulations of the grant, and the amount of money received from Title I.

- Therefore, the administrative team would prefer that Rye does not accept the money this year.
- By not accepting the money the Math Support Teacher will be less of a record keeper and have more time to build the existing remedial program and focus more on the students. She will be able to focus all her energies on the students instead of paperwork, and in a less restrictive environment.
- The Math Support Teacher is supposed to attend monthly meetings at the state level. When she chooses to attend meetings, the students in Rye do not get instruction. This will no longer be a requirement.
- It has also been very challenging to have parent involvement, as stipulated by the grant, with such a small group of parents.
- The Math Support Teacher is so committed to being able to work more directly with students, instead of doing paperwork that she is willing to work only four days a week.

Ms. Richardson said there has been much discussion about Title I funding. While it bothers her for RES to say we don't want \$14,000 in Title I funding, it is clear that having the math specialist full-time has allowed her to make enormous progress with students.

Dr. Cushing stated that if declining Title I funding this year does not mean we can't apply next or any other year.

Mrs. Balboni clarified that Mrs. Walsh's reference to the "record keeper" in her handout was referring to the minutiae of details related to the grant as opposed to the data collection. Mrs. Walsh said that was correct.

Mrs. Balboni asked about the parent involvement noted on the handout and asked if it was stipulated a certain way in the grant guidelines. Mr. Southworth said there are stipulations and there are required meetings for parents of participating students and typically there would only be 2 or 3 parents at any given meeting. Currently the math specialist offers one-on-one meetings with parents.

Mr. Grant asked if declining Title I funding would have an impact on our District in Need of Improvement (DINI) status. Mrs. Walsh said we will receive the \$4,000 planning grant whether we accept Title I or not.

Ms. Anderson said she is in support of not pursuing Title I funding but she is not in support of reducing the Ms. Chagnon's schedule to 4 days a week.

Mrs. Balboni asked if we can keep Ms. Chagnon on full time and agreed that she is enormously committed to the students and the math program.

Mr. Grant agreed stating he can easily see improvement to Ms. Chagnon's credit, and that she works beyond the critical students needs.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to opt out of Title I funding and keep the RES math specialist at 100% for the 2009-2010 school year. Mr. Grant wanted to clarify that this is not at all in reaction to our DINI status. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Richardson said it has been a pleasure working with Mrs. Walsh and that she tackles things head on, hammers, things out, and moves things forward.

REPORTS:

Principals

Ms. Lane Richardson, Rye Elementary School

- Summer reading - Ms. Detwiler and Ms. Kennedy are working with the Rye Public Librarian to again support summer reading this summer. The theme is "Catch the Reading Bug".
- There were some terrific teacher to teacher proposals funded for this summer including: Character Education in the Classroom, Rachel's Challenge, NECAP Score Improvements, Grade 3 Curriculum work in science and language arts, Grade 4 team curriculum work, Closing the Gaps for grade two math, Science books (fiction and non-fiction) for grade five aligned with curriculum.
- Ms. Richardson thanked everyone involved with PTA for their contributions to the school. She thanked them all for their time and said the recent mother/son hike and father/daughter dance were great successes.
- Philanthropies - hundreds of books were collected and sent to Kenya, the student council spear-headed contributions to families first in Portsmouth throughout the year, and there was a recent \$520 check presented to Lighthouse Kids organization to help restore the lighthouse on Star Island.

Dr. Cushing recognized the recently published Talents by the Sea and said there were some remarkable pieces of artwork and writing.

Mrs. Moynahan also noted the poised 5th grade students at the recent Poet's Tea she attended at RES.

Mr. Chris Pollet, Rye Junior High School

- Mr. Pollet said the most notable happening at RJH is that the library is completely empty. He received word today that the library had to be ready for workers on Thursday, June 25th, and with that short notice Ms. Coombs, with the help of Mr. Fortier, cleared everything out and readied the space.
- Graduation was a huge success, students enjoyed the boat trip and Mr. Pollet thanked Christina Mackey and Patty Gormley for coordinating parents, keeping students organized and running such an efficient and well-run event.
- Handbooks were emailed to Board members for discussion
- Staff development - next webinar is "Making the Switch" and focuses on how to engage students through technology.
- Change to immunizations - Mr. Pollet discussed the complexity of getting new information to and from parents about recent changes to immunization requirements. Mrs. Balboni

asked if the SAU could host a clinic for updating immunizations for students. She also noted that Portsmouth High School is going to offer a clinic as they have two nurse practitioners on staff. Mr. Grant said we should consider a press release with Portsmouth Herald to get the word out.

Financial

Manifest

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of May 16, 2009 through June 1, 2009 in the amount of \$265,015.71. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of June 2, 2009 through June 10, 2009 in the amount of \$1,080,530.94. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of June 11, 2009 through June 18, 2009 in the amount of \$48,021.58. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Budgetary Considerations

Mr. Grant stated that it was Mr. Katkin's recommendation that \$115,000 for the energy study come out of this year's budget instead of \$100,000 out of this year's budget and \$15,000 out of next year's budget as was originally discussed. \$15,000 for the library construction out of this year's budget would come out of next year's budget.

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the Board approved the additional \$15,000 for the energy project to come out of this year's budget. Vote: Unanimous.

OTHER:

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Calendar of Policy Action June - payment of school district treasurer completed

Preliminary NEASC and survey data

Mr. Pollet said the goal of the survey was to help improve instruction and communication with parents and teachers. Mr. Grant said the only thing that jumped out at him was the higher number of skipped questions for the RJH surveys. He felt the number of skipped questions and "not enough info" responses was very high. Mrs. Balboni said that might actually be a positive indicator given that most parents who have something to say take opportunities like this survey to be heard.

Retreat agenda

Items include:

Math and DINI

Negotiations

Aligning school board goals with administrative goals

CAT questions and answers - done

Goal review –

Curriculum

1. Implement Learning Compact – ongoing, carry into next year
2. CORE Curriculum documents completed – September 2009
3. Investigated Adventure Based Learning – October 2009
4. Middle School preparation for college planning document for students and parents - done/ongoing
5. Implement fully school-sponsored Destination Imagination program – goal partially done

and removed

Communication

1. Improve the RJH report cards to be “standard based” to better understand what students have learned and reflect what a child has learned/mastered – looking at possibility of online report cards. Mr. Pollet will revise/rewrite goal.
2. Consolidate RES and RJH parent/teacher handbooks for 2009/2010 that can be used in both schools – done

Leadership and Organization

1. NEASC Accreditation – done
2. Annual survey/review of RES and RJH parents – done
3. Participate in selection process of PHS Superintendent – done

Budget

1. Negotiate new school bus contract – done
2. Increase identification for potential bidders for school projects – discuss at retreat to continue or not
3. Coordination of funding priorities of PTA, REF, and School Board – done/ongoing
4. Explore early retirement incentives – done

Assessment and Accountability

1. Update and create written job descriptions for K-8 – carry over
2. Review K-12 data metrics for tracking trends – done/remove goal
3. Review Student Information System – October 2009, ongoing
4. Improve communication process with parents around the identification of students for special education services – check with Director of Pupil Services
5. Continue to foster relationship with UNH to take advantage of their student internship program - ongoing

Ms. Anderson commended Ms. Richardson and her staff on giving the special student award at the RES award ceremony. She thought that was an important addition and encouraged more recognitions like that as it was clear how much this award meant to the student.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

Mrs. Cole added to earlier accolades for Ms. Chagnon and said she is invaluable to students and staff at RES.

Ms. Adams mentioned the webcast slated for Wednesday, June 24 and said it echoes Earth Day with interviews of the 9th grade students who worked on the robot that went under the ice with Ms. Ellwood in Antarctica.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Physical Plant Mr. Grant reported that while replacing the leach field the wrong size stone was put down. Therefore the work had to be excavated and the proper stone was put down at no additional cost to the district.

Mr. Grant said some people had asked about the excavation and work being done but he explained that the septic system was stressed and issues had to be addressed immediately.

Special Issues Nothing new to report.

REF - Nothing new to report.

PHS - Nothing new to report. .

PTA - Mrs. Moynahan reported the school is raising money for shirts for Rachel's Challenge

Rye Rec - Ms. Richardson reports everything seems to be all set with Rye Rec. The program was able to accommodate all students with the changes made so there is no

Communications - Done.

Technology - Nothing new to report.

Curriculum - Nothing new to report.

NEASC Accreditation - Nothing new to report

Track & Safety - Mrs. Moynahan distributed a letter she and Mr. Schwartz drafted to send to the Selectmen regarding this project. Mrs. Balboni was going to review the letter and send revisions to the Board for consideration. Dr. Cushing said he called Mr. Jordan the morning after the decision to not pursue the project was made.

Energy Committee - Mr. Grant said he wanted to go into more detail from the last interim meeting regarding the district's experience with The Jordan Institute. In general it has not been a particularly positive experience. Some of the cost estimates provided by Jordan Institute were not accurate. Jordan Institute provided an \$85,000 cost estimate for the building shell upgrade but the lowest actual bid was \$130,000. Another key component was that Jordan institute said we could achieve .22 cfm per square foot but that is not possible with a retrofitting project which is what this is. Jordan Institute said in phase 1 of this project would recognize cost savings in 2.2 years but it is more likely to be 4-5 years. We spent a lot of money with Jordan Institute and it was not an easy task, Mr. Grant said that because we only committed to Phase 1 we will have an opportunity to reassess before considering Phase 2 the more expensive phase and one with an even longer payback based on the original proposal. He reiterated that this was not wasted money but it is not panning to be exactly what we expected. There are also many other instances of poor communication and expectations not met. Ms. Anderson asked if the Board has provided feedback to Rye Energy Commission for their consideration before they commit to any projects with Jordan Institute. Feedback has not been provided but it was thought to be a good idea. Mr. Grant stated he would also let the Rye Selectman know.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dr. Cushing informed the Board that Laura Bond, interim art teacher at RJH, has been hired as a special education para-professional at RES for 2009-2010.

Nomination - Dr. Cushing placed Sarah Maloney into nomination for the budgeted 80% guidance counselor position at RES for the 2009-2010 school year.

Ms. Richardson said they had several good candidates of the 50 received and Ms. Maloney was covering a maternity leave at Hampton Academy this past year. Dr. Cushing spoke with the superintendent of that SAU and he stated Ms. Maloney is highly regarded and he would hire her in a minute if they had a position open for her. Mr. Grant said his only concern was it appeared that she had more experience at the higher grade level than at the elementary level. Ms. Richardson said that was discussed with Ms. Maloney and given that she is the mother of young children herself and has pre-school experience she does not anticipate any problems.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to accept Sarah Maloney's nomination to the budgeted 80% guidance counselor position at RES for 2009-2010. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Handbooks

Board members had provided feedback to principals electronically.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, to approve the RES Handbook as presented. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to approve the RJH Handbook as presented. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ACT letters

Negotiations - ACT requested meeting in August to agree on ground rules and an acceptable timetable for negotiations. They asked that the Board contact Kathy Tucker to set up a date for the first session. Mr. Grant told Ms. Brown that a copy of the letter was given to Mr. Schwartz who is now the Board representative, leading the negotiations with Mr. Grant being available for specific meetings.

Waiver - ACT submitted a waiver for Aaron Scogin who as a first year teacher was not aware of the procedure for notifying the business office of achieving an advance to a higher teaching stipend.

Ms. Anderson made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, to approve the waiver allowing Aaron Scogin's approval for Bachelor +15 for 2009-2010 school year. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant noted that we need to do a better job of communicating this procedure to new teachers. Ms. Brown said that Mr. Katkin has said this whole procedure is not necessary and it will likely come up during negotiations.

SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:*

Approval of public minutes - On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the public minutes of June 16, 2009 were accepted as amended. Vote: Unanimously approved

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to go into non-public session at 7:17 p.m. in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 [c] to discuss personnel. Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session at 7:32 p.m.

Dr. Cushing made the recommendation that the Board accept assignment of Michelle Blaisdell-Wirth for a 100% music teacher position at RJH and Andrea Papoutsy for a 100% music teacher position at RES.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, to accept assignment of Michelle Blaisdell-Wirth for a 100% music teacher position at RJH and Andrea Papoutsy for a 100% music teacher position at RES. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ADJOURN:

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Ms. Anderson, a motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary