

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its February 17, 2010 meeting.*

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The monthly meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at Rye Junior High School on January 20, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Michael Schwartz, Jeanne Moynahan,  
Peggy Balboni, Betty Anderson (via phone until 6:55 p.m. while en route to the meeting)

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

Staff: Kathleen Cole, Jeanne Brown

Visitors: Peter Sawtell, Rye Recreation After School Program;  
Joe Cummins, Larry Gormley, parents

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

Mr. Grant suggested, and the Board agreed, to hold off on approval of minutes until Ms. Anderson arrived at the meeting.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Dr. Cushing shared the following communications:

- January newsletter from the Rye After School Care Program
- Letter from Rye Recreation Department regarding space availability for the after school program next year – will discuss further under Public Comment
- Letter from David Flynn of NEASC indicating his report of the Rye Junior High School was complete and sent to Chris
- Request from parent regarding student whose family had moved to Portsmouth, will discuss under New Business
- Letter from Susan Detwiler indicating her maternity leave will begin March 2010 through the end of this school year

**REPORTS:**

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Cushing distributed Mrs. Lyons, Director of Pupil Services report; there were no questions from Board members.

Dr. Cushing spoke of the Introduction to Business course offered at Portsmouth High School with Bob Montville and a student presentation he recently attended. The students had to start a business in Portsmouth and had to perform all related research (business location, rent, overhead costs, etc.) associated with starting

a business and then make a presentation to a panel of local businessmen for feedback. Dr. Cushing said the student presentations were terrific and showed a lot of effort and detail on their part.

Dr. Cushing said the PHS guidance department presented to the SAU #50 school board members as part of the Secondary School Advisory Committee last night. A list of questions had been submitted to the guidance counselors from several SAU #50 board members. All of the PHS guidance counselors were present and the meeting started with a half-hour overview followed by questions and answers. Today guidance departments are much different than they were even just ten years ago as there are a wide range of issues being dealt with. On any given day a child can walk into the office with a crisis which can change the anticipated workflow of the day. Dr. Cushing provided board members an information folder from the guidance department with copies of submitted and answered questions, business cards and an open invitation to call with any further questions.

The state of the Portsmouth budget has been in the paper over the last several days. The school budget has been hit particularly hard with costs previously covered by the city now reverting back to the school budget. There will likely be more coverage in following weeks as the budget process progresses. Dr. Cushing will keep all informed with any anticipated changes at the school-level.

Mr. Schwartz asked Dr. Cushing if he could get a list of positions cut at PHS over the last 10 years. Dr. Cushing will follow up on this request.

### **Principal's Report**

*Rye Elementary School – Lane Richardson*

Highlights of Ms. Richardson's report include:

- A huge thank you to Holly Warden for coordinating the snow shoeing activity for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. It was a huge hit!
- Mrs. Detwiler has submitted a request for maternity leave beginning March 26<sup>th</sup>
- Tipi Dan came to the school on January 13<sup>th</sup>; he spoke about the value of cooperation while students assembled and took apart tipis
- Fourth and fifth grade students participated in a Geography Bee this week. It took thirteen rounds to get to the 10 finalists!
- Kindergarten teacher Maggie Hanna was recognized by her students for her recent participation in the Disney Half and Full marathons. Mrs. Hanna ran the half marathon with her husband and son and then she and her husband completed the full marathon. Mrs. Hanna came in 1,367 out of 22,000 runners. She was presented with a special cake honoring her accomplishment.

Ms. Richardson asked for Board approval to dispose of color monitors from RES computers that are outdated and no longer in use.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, permitting disposal of color monitors as requested by Ms. Richardson. Vote: Unanimously approved.

*Rye Junior High School – Chris Pollet*

Highlights of Mr. Pollet's report include:

- The French Club and World Cultures class raised \$577 with a recent bake sale for Haiti relief. An RJH parent's company made the generous offer to match the funds raised for this relief effort.
- Students are now collecting sleeping bags and tents to send to Haiti.
- A consultant is coming to the school to speak to standards-based report cards
- Students are working with local author, Deb Cross on a history of Wallis Sands. Students are working on illustrations and interviews and lending some technical expertise to the project.

Mr. Grant asked if there were any questions for Ms. Richardson or Mr. Pollet.

Mrs. Balboni asked when the NEASC report would be available electronically. Mr. Pollet said he would make sure it is.

## **FINANCIAL**

### *Manifest:*

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of December 11, 2009 through December 23, 2009 in the amount of \$1,489,254.90. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Grant noted books purchased through River Run Book Store instead of Amazon where the purchases may be more cost-effective.

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, a motion to approve the manifest of December 24, 2009 through January 14, 2010 in the amount of \$386,175.54. Vote: Unanimously approved.

### *Other*

The School District Deliberative Session is set for February 3, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. Snow date is February 4<sup>th</sup>. Filing period for those running for school district positions is January 20 – January 29, 2010. There are two open school board positions and one school district treasurer.

Dr. Cushing said signed warrants have been posted.

Ms. Anderson will work on the School Board Newsletter and send it to the Board members and administrators for Board review.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### *Calendar of Policy Action*

Dr. Cushing reports the principals are up-to-date on their professional staff evaluations.

Mrs. Moynahan said the policy committee is evaluating the calendar of policy actions as several actions are no longer relevant or follow different schedules.

### *Other*

None

### *Goals – survey update*

Ms. Richardson is gathering input from staff and noted there seems to be consensus for a shorter, more user-friendly format for the survey of parents.

Mr. Pollet is also getting staff input and noted the consistent comment to shorten the survey.

Mr. Pollet and Ms. Richardson have also been meeting regularly with Mrs. Lyons and Mr. Katkin to work on job descriptions.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

### **Policies**

IKAA\*\* - Interdisciplinary Credit

IHCD\*\* - Advanced Course Work/Advanced Placement Courses  
IK\*\* - Earning of High School Credit

Mrs. Moynahan stated three of the policies presented tonight pertain to the high school and the purpose in reviewing them would be to have a policy on the books until Portsmouth has adopted the policies. It has been learned that the Portsmouth School Board is currently reviewing/editing/adopting these same (IKAA, IHCD, and IK) and Mrs. Moynahan suggested, and the Board agreed, to table our review of these policies and wait to see the approved policies from Portsmouth.

**KB\*\* – Title I Parent Involvement**

Mrs. Moynahan recommended the Board review/accept the first reading of this policy even though Rye is currently not receiving Title I funds. She thinks it would be wise to have the policy on the books in the event we go back to receiving Title I funds.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to accept policy KB as first reading. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz commented on the language in policy IHCD which states guidance counselors and administration support advanced placement/course work as it pertains to high school students and wondered if that extends to eighth graders as they prepare for their high school selections.

**Physical Plant**

Mr. Katkin has started the process of converting to energy-saving lights in the gym. Mr. Grant encouraged him to get three bids for consideration.

**Special Issues**

Nothing new to report

**REF**

REF did not have a board meeting this month. There was a grant meeting, Mr. Pollet was invited to attend and answered questions about technology at RJH and spoke to the development of middle school students.

**PHS**

Nothing further to report.

Ms. Anderson entered the meeting at this point.

**PTA**

Membership stands at 176. The annual spaghetti supper is scheduled for April 8, 2010.

**Rye Recreation**

The after school program is going better than ever. Mr. Sawtell is doing a great job and is a very strong communicator.

**Communication**

February Newsletter – Ms. Anderson is working on this

Annual School District Report – Mrs. Balboni is working on this, principals have submitted reports already.

**Curriculum**

Nothing new to report.

## **Budget Committee**

Dr. Cushing said it has been brought to his attention that the professional development money for Rye teachers for 2009-2010 has already been used up. Mr. Grant suggested we hold on this until the February meeting when Mr. Katkin usually provides his first pass of unreserved fund balance.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

Maternity leave – Ms. Richardson and Dr. Cushing are working together to find a replacement for Sue Detwiler during her maternity leave.

Resident request – There was a request from Mr. Giles asking if his daughter could finish the year at RJH although the family had recently moved to Portsmouth. Historically this sort of request is granted for requests received after April vacation. After discussion and consideration of this unique request, the Board agreed to allow Mr. Giles' daughter to stay at RJH.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to allow the student to remain at RJH for the remainder of the year at a tuition cost to the parents from the period of January 20, 2010 to April 30, 2010 only. Vote: Unanimously approved.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Mr. Cummins spoke on several issues:

1. Trailblazers math – Mr. Cummins stated long division is not part of this math program though Ms. Richardson had told him it was. Mrs. Balboni assured Mr. Cummins that Ms. Richardson was correct and long division is covered in the fourth grade book of this math program.
2. Teachers contract – Mr. Cummins said the new agreement seems to be pretty well negotiated but he asked about inflation. Mr. Grant explained a difference between the current contract that expires June 30, 2010 and the new contract is that under the new contract, COLA does float, inflation is higher and this year we established an increase exclusive of COLA.
3. Science – Mr. Cummins asked if it is accurate that 65% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls were deemed not proficient in science on the last NECAP. He further stated this test seems weak and does not incorporate math as part of the science exam. Mr. Cummins asked what makes up 'proficient' status.

Mr. Grant said will confirm those NECAP findings as at face value he has concerns this information is accurate. He said although the Board does not control the NECAP test, they can influence curriculum.

Mr. Cummins asked if the Board has considered another test. He stated there is a school district in Massachusetts that saw their math failure rate on the MCAS tests go from 39% to 2% after implementing Singapore Math. Mr. Cummins realizes the burden of starting a new program but wishes it could be considered.

Ms. Richardson said there are many Massachusetts schools using the Trailblazers math program. She said Dr. Cushing recently discussed an article on Singapore Math at a recent Administrator's meeting. The article said the program required less critical thinking skills and creativity of the developing math mind.

Mr. Grant said he appreciates Mr. Cummins comments but said there isn't a single program that is the magic bullet. He credited Ms. Richardson with her efforts to augment the math program. He said students leaving RES continue to do well and are not behind in their math skills.

Larry Gormley was recognized and spoke about facility use. The school building/gyms are locked over the weekend and during school vacations. He feels the gym could be used during these non-school times. Kids

would like to use the gym on weekends and vacations. He said we should allow access to the gym for pick up basketball games and that supporting an open gym is a great asset to our area. Mr. Gormley said he has been told there are three concerns: insurance, custodial cost, and supervision. He said if it is a school-sponsored event then Primex would cover the insurance and the other two concerns are monetary issues. Mr. Gormley expressed frustration in trying to get this resolved. Mr. Schwartz said he supports the open gym. Mr. Gormley feels confident there are plenty of PHS students that ref basketball games on the weekend that would like to earn a few extra dollars by supervising an open gym period.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to allow Mrs. Moynahan to meet with principals, Dr. Cushing, and Mr. Gormley to resolved issues around the open gym request. Ms. Anderson stated that the policy is clear and that it is up to Mr. Pollet to resolve the issue and that Mrs. Moynahan shouldn't need to be involved. VOTE: Unanimously Approved.

Peter Sawtell, Rye Recreation After School Program was recognized. Mr. Schwartz said he has heard nothing but great things from parents regarding Mr. Sawtell and the after school program. Ms. Richardson said she is very happy with Mr. Sawtell coordinating the program and he has worked well with Mrs. Berry as the liaison at RES.

Mr. Sawtell said he enjoys the community and the great group of kids. He said he has received great feedback from parents and the space at RES is working very well this year.

Mr. Sawtell then spoke to the letter of request from Rye Recreation for space availability next year.

Mr. Schwartz said we already know that the school will need one additional classroom next year. Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Moynahan, and Ms. Richardson met to discuss space for the after school program. The shared room will be available but there will not be a second room that can be dedicated to the after school program.

Ms. Richardson said the PTA enrichment classes have really expanded and she has given a lot of thought to the after school program but cannot find an extra room for the program.

Ms. Anderson suggested the after school program's space request should be given precedence over PTA enrichment as the after school program is serving the needs of children of working parents.

Mr. Sawtell spoke to the convenience and importance of the school as the site for the after school program. He said with 25 children in a shared room it is a challenge to keep track of stuff and although he does his best to get everything back in order he says it likely causes frustration for the room teacher.

Mr. Grant thanked Mr. Sawtell for his presentation and discussion. He suggested the Rye Recreation committee assess the needs, space, and possible options.

The board After School representatives will report the options back at the next meeting. The Board thanked Mr. Sawtell for his presentation and efforts running this program.

Tom Southworth was recognized. Mr. Southworth discussed Rye student exit data from Portsmouth High School for the years 2005-2009. He said SAT scores are a strength of Rye students. A very high percentage of students go on to four-year colleges and other continuing education programs.

Mr. Southworth said the PHS guidance office has clipper ships hung with the names of schools students have been accepted to. He said core classes are most important for consideration at colleges noting the level, grade, and how many classes of each subject the student took. Rank is looked at relative to the given high school. Mr. Southworth said electives can be a bonus and three or more years of a foreign language is

helpful. He noted that fewer students take the SATs twice than in the past. He also noted that many schools don't count the writing component of those tests.

The Board thanked Mr. Southworth for his report.

The Board reviewed a letter from Andrea Papoutsy regarding school owned musical instruments and repairs. Ms. Anderson stated she brought this issue to Mr. Pollet last year when she received a bill for a repair to her child's musical instrument; she had thought the issue had been resolved for all parents and had not thought it needed to be brought to the Board level. Mrs. Balboni stated, and the full Board agreed, families who were charged for 'normal wear and tear' should be identified and reimbursed for those costs for bills paid last year.

Mr. Pollet said there is a need for rental options and more paperwork. Some students are more responsible than others. Ms. Papoutsy has recommended creating an official form for families who borrow a school instrument. She said an additional \$1,000 would be needed in the budget for annual repairs to secondary instruments loaned out if that is what the Board supports.

It was agreed to discuss this further at the February Board meeting.

#### **SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued:***

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of November 19, 2009 were approved with noted correction. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the public minutes of November 24, 2009 were approved with noted correction. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Ms. Anderson, the public minutes of January 11, 2010 were approved with the following clarification from Ms. Anderson:

Ms. Anderson stated, "I would like to explain an apparent contradiction that occurs in the January 11th public minutes where I said I could not vote for the teachers' contract and then I voted in favor of the motion to approve. Knowing the rest of the Board was voting in support of the contract for rational and valid reasons, over my objections to the salary increases, I voted in favor as a show of solidarity and support for the School Board, who I strongly believe negotiated in good faith, with the best of intentions for the teachers and the taxpayers."

Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, and seconded by Mr. Schwartz, the non-public minutes of November 19, 2009 were approved and sealed. Vote: Approved by Mr. Grant, Ms. Anderson, Mr. Schwartz, and Mrs. Balboni. Abstained: Mrs. Moynahan as she had recused herself from part of the meeting.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the non-public minutes of November 24, 2009 were approved and sealed. Vote: Unanimously approved.

On a motion by Ms. Anderson, and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the non-public minutes of January 11, 2010 were approved and sealed. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### **NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

On a motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the School Board entered non-public session at 8:43 p.m. on a unanimous roll call vote and in accordance with RSA 91-A:4 to discuss personnel.

**PUBLIC SESSION:**

The Board returned to public session on a roll call vote at 8:52 p.m.

**ADJOURN:**

Mr. Schwartz proposed a motion, seconded by Ms. Anderson, to adjourn at 8:53 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved.

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School Board Secretary