

*Approved by the Rye School Board at its April 21, 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 March 17, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:**

School Board Members: Michael Schwartz, Jeanne Moynahan, Peggy Balboni,  
Maggie Duffy-Durkin, Kirsti Marella

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

Staff: Kathleen Cole, Jeanne Brown, Sheila Adams, Phoebe Guarnaccia,  
Ron Fortier, River Bissonnette, Katie Jarvis, Sharry Sparks, Maggie  
Hanna

Visitors: Joe Cummins

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Dr. Cushing called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. He congratulated the DI teams from both RES and RJH for their participation and success at the competition held last weekend.

Dr. Cushing welcomed newly elected school board members Maggie Duffy-Durkin and Kirsti Marella.

*Election of Officers*

Dr. Cushing called for a nomination for school board chairperson. Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to nominate Mike Schwartz as school board chairperson. Dr. Cushing asked if there were any other nominations; hearing there were none he called for a vote. Vote: Unanimously approved.

The meeting was handed over to Mr. Schwartz.

Mr. Schwartz called for a nomination for school board vice-chairperson. Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Duffy-Durkin, to nominate Peggy Balboni as school board vice chairperson. Mr. Schwartz asked if there were any other nominations; hearing there were none he called for a vote. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz called for a nomination for school board secretary. Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Duffy-Durkin, to nominate Kirsti Marella as school board secretary. Mr. Schwartz asked if there were any other nominations; hearing there were none he called for a vote. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz thanked the board members for nominating and electing him as chair. He said that he is looking forward to the board working together and suggested the board consider rotating the chairperson position annually. He said he feels this would provide good balance and noted that other districts already do this.

Mrs. Balboni said she supports Mr. Schwartz's suggestion and said she believes the board consists of five equal members and rotating the chairperson enforces that and will allow for new perspectives.

There was full board consensus that the chairperson position be rotated annually at election time.

#### *Committee Assignments*

Board members had a copy of committee assignments for review and consideration. Mrs. Balboni distributed a list of committees broken down by those requiring regular board representation (standing committees), SAU-wide committees requiring a board representative from Rye, outside committees requiring a representative from the SAU board, and other committees that have come on an as-needed basis. Mrs. Balboni, Mr. Schwartz, and Mrs. Moynahan then provided a brief description of committees they have served on noting time and work commitments for each and those that may require a back-up person.

Mrs. Balboni said the only time-sensitive committee assignment is that of Secondary School Advisory Committee (SSAC) as it is scheduled to meet on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Duffy-Durkin and Mrs. Balboni both agreed to serve on the SSAC committee.

Dr. Cushing suggested the board members review the list Mrs. Balboni provided and wait until the April meeting to sign up for the rest of the committees.

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

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan and seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the public minutes of February 17, 2010 approved. Vote: In favor: Mrs. Balboni, Mrs. Moynahan, and Mr. Schwartz. Abstained: Mrs. Duffy-Durkin and Mrs. Marella both abstained as they were not board members at the time of the February meeting.

The non-public minutes of March 17, 2010 were circulated among Mrs. Balboni, Mr. Schwartz, and Mrs. Moynahan for review.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS:**

Dr. Cushing shared an email Mr. Katkin had received from Lucy Neiman (Rye Energy Committee) regarding that status of a recent EECBG grant submission. The email indicates that almost the entire grant was approved. Mr. Katkin will follow-up with Mr. Magnant and report back with more information.

Dr. Cushing called the board's attention to two other communications that were part of their packet: The March 2010 Newsletter from Peter Sawtell of the Rye Recreation After School Program and an informative itinerary from Mr. Fortier for the upcoming April vacation trip to Iceland he has coordinated.

Dr. Cushing circulated the MS-22 form provided by Mr. Katkin for signature by school board members and Mrs. Sparks (School District Clerk).

Dr. Cushing then said School District Treasurer, Mark Zartarian, was convalescing at home after a recent illness. He asked the board to consider nominating and appointing Elizabeth Strandwitz as a temporary replacement until Mr. Zartarian returns.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to nominate and appoint Elizabeth Strandwitz to serve as Temporary Acting Treasure of the Rye School District until presiding Treasurer; Mark Zartarian is able and desirous of returning to his elected post.

## **REPORTS:**

### **Director of Pupil Services Report**

Dr. Cushing distributed Mrs. Lyons, Director of Pupil Services report and asked Mrs. Lyons and Ms. Richardson to speak of the need to hire a special education aide at RES for an identified student that has moved into the district. Ms. Richardson said they tried to make this work with existing staff but could not as the new student requires the services of a 1:1 aide.

Mrs. Moynahan asked the estimated cost to hire an aide for the balance of the year. Mrs. Lyons said it would depend on where the person would fall within the RESPA agreement.

Mrs. Duffy-Durkin asked if we pay the same tuition for a Rye student to attend Robert Lister Academy as Portsmouth High School. Mrs. Lyons explained that SAU 50 pays a proportionate share of tuition under the agreement we have with Robert Lister Academy (formerly PASS).

Mr. Schwartz asked if RES will need the 1:1 special education aide for the 2010-2011 school year as well. Mrs. Lyons said that will depend on whether this student returns to RES.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, for Ms. Richardson to hire a 1:1 special education aide for the remainder of the 2009-2010 school year. Vote: Unanimously approved.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Cushing spoke to two handouts the school board members had received.

*How to Choose a School Board Candidate: What Every Voter Should Know* an article from the NH Association of School Psychologist's Protocol provided a summary of the responsibilities and decision-making of school board members as well as characteristics of an effective school board.

Highlights from the article include the following:

#### *Responsibilities of school board members:*

- Establish a vision for the community's schools
- Set up and maintain an effective and efficient organizational structure for the district which allows the superintendent and administrators to manage the schools, teachers teach, and students learn
- Hire and evaluate the superintendent and adopting policies that affect the school.

#### *Questions to consider with regard to effectiveness of school board*

- How does the school board make decisions? Do they approach each decision with an open mind?
- Do they make strategic choices for the well-being of the district?
- Does the board exhibit a healthy group dynamic?
- Do members show respect and trust for each other?

*Adequacy and the bills related to the "Collar"* is an article from the March 15, 2010 NS School Administrators Association from Dr. Mark Joyce. There is currently a bill in the House (HB1677) which would extend the 'collar' on adequacy payments for the next two years. In the Senate SB 465 which seeks a two year extension of the collar. This bill is still in the Senate Finance Committee. Removal of this collar will mean the state needs to raise an additional 70.9 million dollars a year to fund the approved definition of adequacy; this will likely result in the return of donor towns which will affect Rye as well as Newington and New Castle. Dr. Cushing spoke of the unfairness of donor towns at a recent Superintendent's meeting. Dr. Cushing said simply stated the town of Rye collects the state set education taxes from Rye residents; school budget costs come from those funds; the balance of those funds are the amount the town of Rye would then "donate".

Mr. Schwartz suggested setting up a meeting with Rye Selectmen to work together on this important issue.

### *Storm updates*

Dr. Cushing provided a report after two recent storms: (and).

#### *Friday, February 26 – Sunday, February 28*

- Numerous power outages due to fall wires and trees were reported in all SAU 50 towns. The schools lost power for only a brief amount of time.
- Dr. Cushing was in contact with Bud Jordan throughout the weekend and said he was an invaluable point person to determining overall conditions of the roads and town in general.
- Dr. Cushing came down Friday, Saturday and Sunday to check on the schools and participate in conference calls with Governor Lynch and the head of NH Public Service.

#### *Saturday, March 13-Monday March 15*

- The rains from this storm created a lot of residential flooding.
- Road closures kicked in just as the buses started to roll from the schools but all students got home safely.
- RJH sustained some water damage in the principal's office and the library. This will be addressed further under the facility report.

### *Business Education Collaborative*

Dr. Cushing provided highlights from a recent meeting of the Business Education Collaborative:

- Two PHS students took 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> prizes at the state auto tech competition
- PHS will host its first Career Fair on April 13<sup>th</sup>
- Business Education will make presentations to both RJH and GCS junior high students.

## **Principal's Report**

### *Rye Elementary School – Lane Richardson*

Highlights of Ms. Richardson's report include:

- Elections on March 9<sup>th</sup> went well
- Town Moderator, Bob Eaton provided a civics lesson for several classes at RES
- Mrs. Balboni's DI team came in 1<sup>st</sup> place at last weekend's competition and is moving on to the state level competition, Mr. Moynahan's team placed 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Bissonnette's team from RJH is also moving on to the state level.
- Currently there are 36 children registered for kindergarten for the 2010-2011 school year; only four are registered for the half-day program.
- Equipment disposal – Ms. Richardson noted three additional items submitted by Ms. Prince that were to be part of the equipment disposal.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Duffy-Durkin to dispose of the three additional items per Ms. Prince's email of March 15, 2010. Vote: Unanimously approved.

- RES had a lock-down drill today and Ms. Richardson reported that the students were amazing and did not make a sound during this important drill.
- RES collected \$1,083 for pennies for peace

Mrs. Lyons noted there will be a transitional meeting with local preschools and all SAU 50 kindergarten teachers on March 24 at RES. Mrs. Lyons reports a strong response to the invitations that were mailed out and is looking forward to this meeting.

Ms. Richardson informed the board that due to increased technology demands over the years at RES she would like to have a network assessment done of the school using \$2,500 previously designated for a Comcast update. There was full board consensus for Ms. Richardson to use the \$2,500 for a network assessment instead of the Comcast update.

**Principal's Report** *continued*  
*Rye Junior High School – Chris Pollet*

Highlights of Mr. Pollet's report include:

- The 8<sup>th</sup> graders are in the process of selecting their PHS courses. PHS counselor, Mrs. Donovan, met with the students on March 11<sup>th</sup> and will hold an informational session during PHS's open house.
- Mrs. Costanzo has held two nights at RJH for parents/students to discuss freshman year course selections.
- Mr. Pollet and Dr. Cushing both met with a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student who has some industrious ideas for use of the land behind RJH. The student is going to work with Mr. Pollet to gather more information and prepare for a presentation to the board at a later date.
- USO night is March 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 -8:00
- Mr. Pollet played a video of the March 9th story, SPCA Sleep Project, from New Hampshire Chronicle (WMUR) highlighting a science project by three RJH students at the NHSPCA. Under the guidance of Ms. Ellwood, and as an extra credit project, the students sought to test their theory that music could have a calming effect on the dogs at night. The video can be seen at <http://www.wmur.com/chronicle/22726654/detail.html>.

The board members, and whole audience, applauded the video. Mr. Schwartz offered kudos to these three very motivated students and to Ms. Ellwood for inspiring them.

**Financial**

*Manifest:*

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of February 11, 2010 through March 1, 2010 in the amount of \$323,414.36. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of March 2, 2010 through March 12, 2010 in the amount of \$358,493.45. Vote: Unanimously approved.

*Softball field:*

As follow up to a concern about the condition of the softball field at RES, Mr. Katkin has received bids to repair the fields. Mr. Fortier said the low bid (\$3,000) was to simply rake the fields and set the bases; the high bid (approximately \$9,000) was far more extensive and included re-cutting the outfield, building up the balance of the field, and setting bases. The board felt it was important to invest the money to get the softball field in top condition for the safety of the players.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to approve up to \$10,000 for the upgrade of the softball field at RES. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

*Calendar of Policy Action*

Done

*Other*

As follow up to an earlier discussion, Mr. Schwartz said he will contact the Selectmen to see which of their meetings would be a good time for members of the Rye School Board to attend to discuss school building use, Rye recreation, and donor town. Mr. Schwartz will follow up with the board.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:**

Resident, Mr. Joe Cummins, asked why the parent school surveys were not anonymous. He felt the board might receive more feedback if they were anonymous and that perhaps some people did not respond honestly for fear of a negative response being held against them or their student.

Dr. Cushing said that sometimes follow-up is needed to either get more information or work toward a solution to a problem and that cannot be done if the respondent does not identify themselves.

Mr. Schwartz said there was an active board debate about whether the surveys should be anonymous or not.

Mr. Cummins asked what the Robert Lister Academy provides that the Rye schools do not. Mrs. Lyons clarified that the Robert Lister Academy is an alternative to Portsmouth High School.

Mr. Cummins noted that at the recent candidate night it was erroneously stated that the state doesn't require computational authenticity as part of the math curriculum; he wished board members who knew this statement was false had corrected the misstatement.

## **STANDING COMMITTEES:**

### **Policies**

The policy committee is currently revising the Rye's calendar of policy action and beginning a re-review of all policies.

### **Physical Plant**

RJH Library – Mr. Pollet reported extensive water damage to the library and his office from the recent storm. Witcher Builders have been contacted as has Primex.

### **Special Issues**

Special Issues meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2010. Jeanne Moynahan and Kirsti Marella will both attend.

### **REF**

Annual gala is planned for May 22, 2010. (Funds to be raised for the purchase of a C.O.W. (computers on wheels) for RES.

### **PHS**

Mr. McDonough will speak to the Portsmouth budget at the beginning of the March 30<sup>th</sup> SAU 50 board meeting.

### **PTA**

There was a very successful bake sale at RES as part of Election Day. Currently there are 207 PTA members.

### **Rye Recreation**

New commission members are being interviewed (two openings).

### **Communication**

Mrs. Balboni asked board members to review a letter she drafted thanking Rye residents for supporting the school budget.

### **Curriculum**

Portsmouth is currently working on their master plan.

The Professional Learning Advisory Committee met last week at the SAU 50 office to discuss the May professional development day and the logistics of handing off the Learning Compact to the students' next teachers. Mrs. Lyons noted that she will seek feedback from teachers on the May professional development day.

### **Budget Committee**

Nothing new to report

## NEASC

Nothing new to report

### **Emergency Management**

The schools have had one drill, another is coming up and the final drill will be 'graded'. Mrs. Moynahan will report further after that final drill.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### *Nomination of Professional Staff*

Dr. Cushing spoke to the nomination of teaching staff for 2010-2011.

At the elementary school he noted that Mrs. Cole was retiring and thanked her for her service. Open positions include a teacher to replace Mrs. Cole's position and a new teaching position. Dr. Cushing also noted the RES guidance position was increased from 80% to 100%.

At the junior high school he noted that Mrs. Costanzo was retiring. There is an open position to replace Mrs. Costanzo's position. The guidance position at the junior high was also increased from 80% to 100%.

Dr. Cushing then submitted the nomination of the teaching staff stating, "In accordance and in compliance with RSA 189:14a, 189:39 and 189:39-b it is my pleasure to place into nomination the following names for election to certified positions for the 2010-2011 school year in the Rye School District. In accordance with the District policy, GVPA, my nomination list includes the position of the teacher, percent employed, and salary. Please realize that the position assignment next to the certified employee's name may change before the start of school."

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Duffy-Durkin, Dr. Cushing's nomination of Rye teaching staff for 2010-2011. Vote: Unanimously approved. Mrs. Moynahan abstained from the vote related to the Director of Technology position.

#### *Calendars – 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years*

The board reviewed the draft 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school calendars. The calendars had been reviewed already by the principals.

Mrs. Balboni said one thing she has heard from teachers is the need for more professional development (PD) days and wondered if we should consider working more time into the calendar for that purpose. Mrs. Cole spoke on behalf of the second grade teachers noting how much they got out of the meeting with all second grade teachers across the SAU.

Discussion followed about the possibility of half days or full days for professional development. Mrs. Duffy-Durkin said half days often pose problems for working parents and can be stressful for both teachers (pressure to get work done in shorter school day) and students (morning learners vs. afternoon learners). Mr. Schwartz said there has been board consensus in the past against half days.

Ms. Richardson said she feels the teachers accomplish more with a full day devoted to PD.

Mrs. Balboni noted Portsmouth surveyed the teachers to determine the PD needs. It was agreed that if needed the Rye calendars could be revised if needed once PD needs are determined at the administrative level.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Marella, to adopt the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school year calendars. Vote: Unanimously approved.

#### *Kindergarten tuition request*

The board reviewed a request from RES teacher, Ms. Boulay, asking that her daughter attend kindergarten at RES for the 2010-2011 school year on a tuition basis.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Marella, to allow Ms. Boulay's daughter to kindergarten at RES for the 2010-2011 school year for the tuition rate of \$5,000. Vote: Unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Resident, Joe Cummins said he felt it was ungracious of previous board members to infer that students attending St. Patrick's School, or other parochial schools, did not effect the Rye school budget and that the return of any of those students would have any impact on the school budget.

*The meeting recessed at 8:45 p.m.*

*The meeting reconvened at 8:50 p.m.*

Mr. Schwartz asked the principals if the principal updates they create for parents and the report the board report they produce monthly could somehow be merged to one document to make it easier for them. Mrs. Balboni suggested attaching the principal's board reports to the minutes. The principals both stated their written reports are currently geared to the intended audience. Mr. Schwartz asked the principals to consider having their board reports available to the community.

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

On a motion by Mrs. Balboni, and seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, the non-public minutes of February 17, 2010 were approved and sealed. Vote: In favor: Mr. Schwartz, Mrs. Balboni, and Mrs. Moynahan. Abstained: Mrs. Duffy-Durkin and Mrs. Marella both abstained as they were not board members at the time of the February meeting.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the School Board entered non-public session at 9:00 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 9:15 p.m.

**ADJOURN:**

Mrs. Moynahan proposed a motion, seconded by Mrs. Marella, to adjourn at 9:20 p.m.

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School Board Secretary