

Approved by the Rye School Board at its October 21, 2009 meeting.

**RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

The monthly meeting of the School Board of the Rye School District was held at Rye Elementary School on September 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members: Ian Grant, Michael Schwartz, Jeanne Moynahan,
Peggy Balboni (arrived at 6:25 p.m.)
Betty Anderson via telephone (in St. Louis on business)

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

Staff: Kathleen Cole, Bridget Hughes, Megan Gage, Tom Southworth,
Monica Young, Jeanne Brown, Sheila Adams, Phoebe Guarnaccia,
Sarah Maloney, Michelle Wirth,

Visitors: Peter Sawtell, Director Rye Recreation After School Program
Laura Brown, PTA Representative

Resident: Joe Cummins

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF:

Ms. Richardson introduced new Rye Elementary School staff member Sarah Maloney, Guidance Counselor

Mr. Pollet introduced new Rye Junior High School staff member Megan Gage, Special Education Paraprofessional/one-on-one aide for special needs student

Mr. Grant welcomed the new staff and said everyone was excited about them being part of the team.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan and seconded by Mr. Grant, the public minutes of August 26, 2009 were approved by a roll call vote. Abstained: Mr. Schwartz abstained as he did not attend the August 26, 2009 meeting.

The non-public minutes of August 26, 2009 were circulated among Board members for review.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Dr. Cushing read a request from Carrie Trimarco, speech pathologist at Rye Elementary School for an extended leave after the birth of her child in December. Ms. Trimarco is asking to work up until the December holiday recess and extend her leave through the rest of the 2009-2010 school year. She would like to return to work for the 2010-2011 school year.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to approve Mrs. Trimarco's extended leave request as detailed in her letter of June 16, 2009. The motion was unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

As a follow up to questions raised at last month's meeting, Dr. Cushing read a letter from Sharry Sparks stating that the compensation request for two teachers who moved RJH library contents after school was not a conflict for RESPA.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Dr. Cushing attended the recent Commissioner's meeting where Dr. Jose Montero, NH Director of Public Health provided an update on the flu.

- Novell (new) flu will require 1 immunization
- H1N1 has not mutated and is about as severe as seasonal.
- NH is not tracking H1N1 cases as they are treated just the same as seasonal flu are.
- Flu-related absences are being tracked with daily online form submissions by school nurses
- H1N1 vaccine is due the end of October, 100,000 doses are expected with another 80,000 weekly thereafter
- There are no established special cleaning recommendations. The normal procedures should be followed by all custodial staff.

EEE

A three year old child from Candia was recently diagnosed and recovering from EEE

Dr. Cushing has been in frequent contact with Dr. Gail Snow and it is recommended that people use repellent spray containing DEET

Mr. Grant asked Dr. Cushing what the thought process was on Rye serving as an immunization sight for flu/H1N1 vaccines. Dr. Cushing said that Portsmouth High School is the designated point of distribution and they are working with the support of Portsmouth Hospital. He also said that people are encouraged to go to their own doctor for the immunizations and that flyers will likely be sent out about the immunization clinic at PHS.

Learning Compact

Dr. Cushing spoke to the SAU 50 opening day handout. He said every teacher will complete a parent/teacher/student goal sheet for at least two of their students with the goal of doing so for all students next year.

Additionally data from the current student data sheets will be merged with the whole child data to create a more complete form to be transferred from one year's teacher to the next. Dr. Cushing said he is going to propose a change to the traditional SES Professional Day. Administrators are proposing this professional day be moved to the Friday before Memorial Day weekend and be dedicated as a student data transfer day. The transfer of this valuable information from one year's teacher to the next is an important component of the Learning Compact and our Follow the Child initiative.

Mr. Schwartz asked if the teachers would be meeting in 'same grade' groups on the student data transfer day. Dr. Cushing said no, the purpose is to record what is known about their student for next year's teacher.

Southeasters Meeting

At a recent meeting of superintendents from southeastern, NH, the superintendents toured Great Bay Learning Charter School (GBLC) in Exeter. This is an activity-based charter school for grades 8-12 with open enrollment. GBLC provides a flexible, student-centered, smaller learning environment. Currently the state pays \$5,400 for each student to attend. The actual cost is \$8,100 with Exeter District making up the difference. The school is a great alternative for kids who are bright but don't fit into the traditional school mold. Dr. Cushing proposed a visit to the school for any board member who wants to see the facility first-hand and learn more about it. He feels the \$2,700 per student cost (not covered by the state) is a worthwhile

investment for the District if there are Rye students who are interested. He said GBLC is an important option for parents looking for an alternative school for their child.

Mr. Schwartz asked how the District could contribute to the cost for a student to attend a charter school but not contribute to the cost of a student attending other charter, public or private out of district schools. He was concerned about the precedent it would set and asked if it would be allowed as part of the AREA agreement. Dr. Cushing said this is something we would have to look at.

Mr. Grant asked how parents find out about Great Bay Learning Charter School. Dr. Cushing said it is listed on the state website and many parents find out about the school in their course of research when looking for an alternative for their child. Mr. Grant suggested we be more proactive in informing parents.

DIRECTOR OF PUPIL SERVICES REPORT

Dr. Cushing distributed Mrs. Lyons, Director of Pupil Services report as well as supporting back up as a follow up to Ms. Anderson's questions.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Rye Elementary School – Lane Richardson

This year, RES is implementing a geography theme with daily questions at morning announcements and answers the next morning.

Curriculum nights are set:

Grades 1 and 4 – September 10

Grades 2, 3, and 5 – September 17

Ms. Richardson reported that Peter Sawtell, Director of Rye Recreation's After School Program has been a great communicator and has the year off to a smooth start.

Ms. Richardson thanked Laura Brown and the PTA for providing bug spray. The PTA fall fundraiser is slated to begin Monday.

First grade enrollment

Ms. Richardson said there are 7 new 1st graders this year. There are three 1st-grade classrooms: two with 18 students; and one class (taught by Ms. Young) with 19 students. Currently the two 18-student classrooms have a teacher's aide and Ms. Young's class does not.

Ms. Young said she is finding it challenging without an aide supporting her in the classroom with this number of students.

Ms. Balboni said her son was in Ms. Young's class with the same number students but they were fortunate enough to have a class aide. Ms. Balboni feels there is clearly a need for a class aide with this number of first graders.

Mr. Schwartz asked if it would make sense to look for a certified teacher to work with Ms. Young to provide additional skills and support. He mentioned this could lead to a full-time position for next year if an additional classroom was required next year if an additional classroom was required next year.

Ms. Richardson explained that would cost an additional \$10,000 - \$12,000 beyond that of an aide.

Ms. Young felt a classroom aide would be a great support to her.

Mr. Grant thought realistically an aide might cost \$20,000 and a teacher might cost closer to \$50,000-60,000.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to hire a classroom aide for Ms. Young's first grade class for the 2009-2010 school year. Motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.

Ms. Richardson asked if a substitute could be used until the job is posted and the classroom aide is hired.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to use a substitute aide to support Ms. Young's class until a permanent aide is hired.

Mr. Grant noted a fictitious 'persistence of year' award should go to Denise Wheeler who coordinated the Isle of Shoals field trip for RES students. The trip had been cancelled three times due to inclement weather and yesterday the students attended the long-awaited field trip. He had heard from students that it was a great trip.

Ms. Richardson said Ms. Wheeler did a wonderful job and it was a very successful trip. Ms. Balboni noted it was a beautiful day and the students really enjoyed themselves and it was great seeing the kids busily sketching and participating in the scavenger hunt.

Mr. Grant thanked REF for their flexibility with funding this trip; we were able to use funds rolled over from last year when the trip was originally supposed to happen.

Rye Junior High School – Chris Pollet

The new school year began with 200 students at RJH. Mr. Pollet held a school-wide assembly to welcome new students, talk about expectations, and outline opportunities.

On September 8th the students viewed President Obama's speech on the importance of education. The speech was watched in the cafeteria. The students were very attentive and the President's message was one we (and many parents) have been sharing with kids daily.

There was a moment of silence on September 11 in remembrance of the victims of the 9/11 attacks. Mr. Pollet said it was interesting talking to sixth graders who weren't yet in school and the impact of that tragic day.

RJH students are making pinwheels in art class for International Peace Day. The pinwheels will be displayed on the school's front lawn from September 21st – September 25th.

A Harvest Festival has been scheduled for Thursday, October 29 to celebrate a successful first year with our community garden.

FINANCIAL

Manifest:

Mrs. Moynahan proposed, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, a motion to approve the manifest of August 25, 2009 through September 10, 2009 in the amount of \$322,456.44. Motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Finalized Goals

All Board members received a copy of the final Rye School Board goals for approval. Mr. Grant noted the addition of items i-iii under goal 3 for Curriculum, Instruction, and Curriculum Assessment.

Mrs. Moynahan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, to accept goal #3 as modified.

Discussion: Mr. Schwartz clarified that, when looking at metrics, the focus should be on improving from one year to another rather than trying to reach a certain percentage. He said low ratings under 'highly satisfied' responses might simply reflect the need for better communication about a subject rather than truly not being satisfied.

Mr. Grant stated that in many areas ‘highly satisfied’ ratings were in 70-80% range but in these 3 areas parents indicated under 50% which he interpreted as some indication of need for improvement and that at least this allows us to focus on some areas and helps prioritize those areas that need more attention.

Mr. Pollet said the language in the survey itself should be looked at so we are better able to discern gray areas. He suggested we ask parents for specifics if they have a ‘not satisfied’ response to any question.

Mr. Grant asked if there was any other conversation regarding the motion on the table. There was none. The motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.

Calendar of Policy Action

Done

Job description update

Dr. Cushing provided a handout from Jim Katkin detailing the timetable and process for creating job descriptions.

Compensation request for library move

When presented at last month’s meeting the question came up if the request to pay two teachers for work covered by the RESPA contract created a conflict for RESPA. Dr. Cushing received a letter from Ms. Sparks, on behalf of RESPA, stating this request was not in violation of article 5.7.1. It was requested that in the future, if appropriate, this type of work would be offered to RESPA members prior to the event or project.

Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, to reimburse Mary Coombs and Ron Fortier for packing and storing library contents as detailed in Mr. Pollet’s June 24, 2009 memo.

Roll call vote – In favor of motion: Mrs. Balboni, Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Grant; Opposed: Ms. Anderson, Abstained: Mrs. Moynahan.

Athletic Director job description

Dr. Cushing met with Mr. Fortier and they reviewed the Athletic Director job description (as written in 1993) and the Rye School Board minutes from 2006 regarding previous decisions in reference to this position and responsibilities thereof.

Mr. Fortier and Mr. Pollet are working on a revised, comprehensive job description for the Athletic Director position.

Mrs. Balboni and Dr. Cushing will meet as follow up and there will be further discussions at Rye’s budget session.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

Mrs. Cole thanked the Board for supporting Ms. Young’s request for a classroom aide.

Mr. Southworth provided a brief update on PHS and grants:

He noted the current senior class is relatively small. Mr. Schwartz asked about the 32 students from Rye and their class rank. Mr. Southworth stated each class has a different profile, he further noted this class had high SAT scores.

Mr. Southworth said grants are going well and he is coordinating efforts with Mrs. Walsh.

Mrs. Balboni asked for confirmation that Title IIA grants do not have anything to do with being a District in Need of Improvement. Dr. Cushing confirmed this and stated Title IIA grants pay for substitutes while teachers attend Professional Learning Committee meetings. He said these grants save the district a lot of money.

Mr. Cummins asked Mr. Southworth if the SAT scores of Rye students were low. Mr. Southworth said that, while this class is not as strong academically as prior years; the SAT scores were very high.

Mr. Sawtell commented about the value of the Great Bay Learning Charter School and, as a non-traditional learner himself, he feels it is very important to have such an exciting option for students.

Metrics

Mr. Schwartz had asked Board members to take home the metrics handout and review.

Mrs. Balboni asked if sports and other extracurricular activities were being tracked in high school. Mr. Southworth said they are not as of yet, but it is something they are working on.

Mr. Schwartz pointed out that on page 6 they broke out honors and advanced placement and added a column for percentage continuing their education.

Mr. Southworth noted a lot of students are keeping Great Bay Community College as an option.

Mrs. Balboni suggested the 'total number of students' be included on page 6.

Mr. Schwartz said that on page 8 he was attempting to incorporate data from the parent survey. Dr. Cushing and Mrs. Walsh are working on page 9 and 10 as it relates to the Learning Compact.

Mr. Schwartz thanked Mr. Southworth for his work on metrics.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Policies

IJOC - Volunteers**

As follow up to last month's Board meeting, Ms. Richardson explained the new volunteer form in a cover letter to all parents. Ms. Richardson has not received any subsequent questions or feedback from parents.

Ms. Richardson thanked Mrs. Berry for the wonderful job she did organizing volunteer-related forms in an excel spreadsheet and binders for each teacher's reference. She commented on the value of this easily accessible system.

Visitor participation at Board meetings

Dr. Cushing distributed a draft of a notice to be given to visitors about participation at Board meetings. Both Greenland and Newington have a policy in place and it is printed on the back side of posted agendas.

After review, Mr. Grant made a couple of suggested edits. Mrs. Balboni requested more time for review and suggested the Board discuss at next month's meeting. All were in agreement.

Physical Plant

RES & RJH - Mr. Grant stated the energy costs were \$10,000 under budget for both schools.

RJH Library – Mr. Pollet said the renovation has been moving quickly once the insulation and wiring were done. One major change from original plan is the dimension of the opening to second floor; originally sized for 11' x 17', it is now 11' x 11' and still provides a nice open feel. Mr. Schwartz noted the reason for this

change was to provide better table space and foot traffic space. Mr. Pollet said the builders are within days of their schedule. Ms. Coombs is making an adjustment regarding the placement of the circulation desk using previous existing materials.

Mr. Grant and Mr. Schwartz both commended Mrs. Coombs, Mr. Katkin and Mr. Fortier for their efforts with this renovation.

Mr. Schwartz thanked REF for their \$5,000 contribution for furniture.

Mr. Grant said he sent an e-mail to Mr. Goldman, chair of the Rye Budget Committee to set up a meeting regarding the 2008/09 school budget summary review.

Mr. Katkin told Mr. Grant there have been eight building aid requests submitted.

Special Issues

Special Issues meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

REF

No meeting this month. Grants request for the fall cycle are due November 1, 2009.

PHS

Freshmen Orientation day was held August 27th. There was a changed format in that they had a cookout for students.

The first football game was last Saturday.

PTA

The next meeting is Wednesday, September 23, 2009 at 3:30 p.m. in the cafeteria. Meetings will be the fourth Wednesday of the month going forward. Currently there are sixty-nine PTA members. Staff membership forms were sent out before the start of school.

Rye Recreation

Mr. Schwartz said the new director, Peter Sawtell is energetic and a welcome addition. Mr. Schwartz met with him to talk about the Memo of Understanding. Ms. Arthur expressed support of the memo and stipend, but expressed concern about the \$1,500 coming out of their funding as the town provides little-to-no financial support.

Mr. Schwartz said Mr. Sawtell will come to the initial September Board meeting each year and plans on attending the January and May board meetings as well.

Mr. Sawtell said he appreciated the administrator's support in maintaining continuity between the school and the after school program.

Communication

None

Curriculum

The Portsmouth curriculum meeting is tomorrow.

Professional Development – the new plan is finalized.

Budget Committee

Nothing new to report

Energy

Done and can be removed from future agendas

Mr. Schwartz mentioned Kim Reed is again coordinating Rye's Safe Routes to School Day for Wednesday, October 7, 2009 as part of International Walk to School Day.

NEW BUSINESS:

Add a paraprofessional position for first grade class – done.

Adventure Based Learning (ABL) public session – Dr. Cushing stated Mrs. Walsh is looking into the value of this program. He said funding for it will not be budgeted for next year as he does not want to rush a decision. Further, he wants Ms. Ellwood's request for a paid sabbatical to stand on its own. He will wait for a firm proposal for a sabbatical from Ms. Ellwood and then react to it. Once he and Mrs. Walsh have evaluated an ABL program, then at a later time it would be appropriate to have a public presentation regarding ABL. If the Board supports Ms. Ellwood's sabbatical and later decides to implement an ABL program, Ms. Ellwood could run it. If Rye doesn't support ABL, she would return to her position as a science teacher. Dr. Cushing also stated that there is a binding contract that if a teacher does not come back and teach for two years they are responsible for repaying the district.

Mr. Grant clarified that the Board has the option to grant a paid or unpaid sabbatical. He thought the intent was also for the Board to see where the budget is as part of its review to approve the sabbatical for a cost of \$65,000.

Mr. Schwartz said he feels the ABL and sabbatical decisions should be separate; but if ABL is something the administration supports, the administration should pursue it rather than wait for a grant that may or may not come through or base ABL solely on Robin's pursuits. Mr. Schwartz asked if a sabbatical should be something that furthers goals of district.

Next year's budget -- Mr. Grant asked Board members for their thoughts for the Administration with the approaching budget season.

Ms. Anderson feels we should keep the budget in line with what was done last year and try to keep the budget to a zero percent increase.

Mr. Schwartz suggested the administrators present a 0% increased budget and then options with a 1% and 2% increase. Mrs. Balboni agreed it would be helpful to have this preliminary information. Mr. Grant said the big picture is the economy is still terrible; N.H unemployment stands at 6%.

Mrs. Balboni said staff positions are a big piece; we will need to determine if we need to hire a classroom aide or teacher next year.

Mr. Grants said we need to manage our conservative budgeting in certain non-core curriculum areas that have been over budgeted in the past and look to Jim's direction to guide us. He believed that achieving a 0% total budget increase over last year was achievable in light of certain savings, bond payment decreases, building aid, smaller class into PHS. He stated we had many hundreds of thousands of dollars in the last budget year that were put to the library and other purchases that could go towards new priorities for 2010/11 and still be at 0%.

Mr. Grant asked if there was Board consensus to say we want to look at 0%, 1% and 2% budgets.

Mr. Schwartz said his only concern is that he wants to make sure a 0% budget allows for needed teachers and curriculum and considers saving in other areas such as utilities, fuel or other areas that might generally have a surplus. Mr. Grant believes we can do those within a 0% budget. Mr. Schwartz suggested that we create reserve funds for items such as fuel so that we can be more conservative in budgeting and thus not end up with a surplus in these areas.

Ms. Richardson said additionally there could also be a need for a second new teacher (Kindergarten). Ms. Anderson said her general feeling is to achieve 0% budget and include the hiring of two new teachers. There was full Board consensus to work toward the goal of a 0% budget increase and allow for the hiring of two new teachers at RES.

SAU 50 Board Meeting is scheduled at Newington Public School for September 23, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT *continued*:

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, and seconded by Mr. Grant, the non-public minutes of August 26, 2009 were approved by a roll call vote. Abstained: Mr. Schwartz abstained as he did not attend the August 26, 2009 meeting; Ms. Anderson abstained as she was participating in the meeting via phone and unable to read the hard copy of the non-public minutes.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

On a motion by Mrs. Moynahan, seconded by Mrs. Balboni, the School Board entered non-public session at 7:50 p.m. on a unanimous roll call vote and in accordance with RSA 91-A:4 to discuss consideration of the sale of real estate.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board returned to public session on a roll call vote at 9:35 p.m.

ADJOURN:

Mrs. Balboni proposed a motion, seconded by Mrs. Moynahan, to adjourn at 9:35 p.m.

School Board Secretary