

Approved by the Rye School Board at its October 17, 2007 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 September 19, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

School Board Members:

Ian Grant, Michael Schwartz, Gary Dodds,
Betty Anderson (arrived at 6:30) and Peggy Balboni

Administrators:

George A. Cushing, Superintendent
Chris Pollet, Principal, Rye Junior High

Staff

Tim Moynahan, Kathleen Cole, Jeanne Brown, and Tom Southworth.

Residents/Visitors

Brian Sullivan, Amy Suchocki, Laura Brown. Sally Baybutt,
Joe Cummins.

5:30 pm Dr. Cushing introduced the new staff to the Board. Mr. Grant welcomed them and there was a reception break for introductions and conversation.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Grant called the meeting to order at 5:50 p.m.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Mr. Schwartz proposed, and Mr. Dodds seconded, a motion to approve the School Board public minutes of August 15, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved.

Communications:

- Dr. Cushing received a letter regarding a bus issue that was discussed later in the meeting.
- Dr. Cushing received a communication from Ms. Moynahan regarding PTA membership.
- Dr. Cushing handed out a letter he would like to send out to the highway department. He is inviting the crew to lunch at RJH with the students. The date has not yet been determined.
- Dr. Cushing referred to a letter from Safe Routes in support of the grant.

REPORTS:

Superintendent:

- Dr. Cushing handed out the following material: Education Adequacy Report, Special Education Report from Mrs. Lyons, a newspaper article regarding the high school drop out law, and a 5 year follow up progress report from the NEASC High School Commission.

- Dr. Cushing spoke about the recent incident at PHS. He stated Mr. Collins spoke to the staff and students and encouraged the students to speak to an adult if they hear of anything dangerous or illegal occurring. Mr. Collins told Dr. Cushing that there was not a large group of people watching as reported and that the incident occurred without any warning. He further stated that there was supervision in the area. Dr. Cushing commented that he is impressed at how the PHS principal has been handling this situation. Mr. Schwartz stated that we should look into starting some communication regarding these types of incidents with the students at RJH.
- Mr. Southworth reported on the Adequate Yearly Progress, NECAP results. Our district scored in the 90's in each area. The key score to evaluate is how proficient students scored in each area. He reported the Rye district is in good shape.
- Mr. Southworth passed out high school exit data he had received. 83% plan to go to a four year college. SAT scores were good. 7 students from Rye scored in the top 10 of their class, 35% in the top quarter and 63% in the top half. Mr. Grant asked if a summary could be put on the website.
- Dr. Cushing spoke with Mike Morrison who informed him that the mosquito population is on the decline and he does not believe we will need to spray again this year.

Ms. Anderson entered the meeting at this point.

Elementary School

- Ms. Richardson's monthly report was passed out.
- Mr. Grant stated the curriculum night he attended at RES is the best he has been to. Dr. Cushing agreed.
- Ms. Balboni and Mr. Grant both stated that we should be sending out better communication as to what certain fundraisers are for. In addition, it was discussed that the administration review time being spent to promote the fundraisers during the school day. All Board members agreed.
- Mr. Grant also asked about the additional "\$5 requests" we make of parents for items/programs that are curriculum based and if there was a way we just pay that through the budget. There was also a discussion regarding payments for Merrowvista and other trips. It was agreed that the Administration would document these for review during the budget process.

Junior High

- Mr. Pollet said RJH has a new 7th Grade student bringing the total number in 7th grade to 82.
- Curriculum night will be held 9/27/2007 from 6:30 to 8:00. The parent's will meet with each grade level and Unified Arts teams.
- Elise Catalano has started as the permanent 8th grade math teacher and is doing a great job.
- Mr. Pollet passed out an overview of skills from Ms. Coombs. They have taken library out of the UA rotation and will be integrating the curriculum by highlighting skills and bringing students to the library in classes.
- My Voice survey will be distributed in early November and there is discussion on what would be the best way to have students take this survey.
- Mr. Pollet passed out a flyer on the "500 Club". This is a program developed by Piper Cronin and Ann Rafferty that has students and staff tracking their walking, biking and running with a goal of 500 miles by the end of the school year.

- Mr. Grant stated he has been hearing good things about Mr. Pollet in his position as the new principal at RJH. He asked Mr. Pollet how Spanish classes were going at RJH. Mr. Pollet replied there are 38 students taking Spanish and that it was going very well.
- Technology update: Mr. Moynahan passed out an update of the Rye District Technology Report. Items discussed were: budget process for next year, machines being re-imaged, laptops being built and distributed to grade level teams, new e-mail system, mass e-mail communication software and the new websites for the district.
- Mr. Grant stated he noticed that many of the navigation links on the newly designed/launched website were not working and in his professional opinion asked why it was launched if it was not fully operational. Mr. Moynahan stated this was a SAU office decision and not a Rye decision. Mr. Grant asked how this was going to be resolved going forward that Rye's needs should not be dictated by the SAU. Ms Anderson agreed. Dr. Cushing stated that now that the initial coordination of the District's web sites was done, that going forward, Mr. Moynahan would make the decisions for the Rye sites.

Financial

Manifest –

Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of August 15, 2007 through September 4, 2007 in the amount of \$163,936.65. Vote: Unanimously approved. Ms. Anderson proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodds, a motion to approve the manifest of September 5, 2007 through September 13, 2007 in the amount of \$227,961.16. Vote: Unanimously approved.

- Dr. Cushing passed out a memo from Mr. Katkin detailing accounts in a deficit and asked school board members to read before the next budget cycle.
- Dr. Cushing stated they had advertised several times for a facilities manager in the Rye district and have been unable to find a suitable candidate. As a result we will be working with the staff we have presently and will re-instate Drew Petsel as the acting head custodian. They are currently advertising for the acting head custodian position at RES. Mr. Petsel and Ms. Prince took on the duties as head custodian over the summer and Dr. Cushing would like to give them each a salary adjustment in the amount of \$500. Mr. Dodds made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Balboni. Vote: Unanimously approved. Dr. Cushing stated that the principals will oversee the custodial positions at their school and meet with them once a week.
- Dr. Cushing requested permission to use part of the Professional Development budget that can be directed by the principals to hire Ms. Jacquie Reese as a professional development coach for the Rye District. Ms. Anderson asked if this had been reviewed by the union. Dr. Cushing replied that it has been and that they are in support. Ms. Brown expressed her agreement. Mr. Dodds asked if there was a job description. Dr. Cushing replied that there was. Ms. Anderson made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Vote: Unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Progress on Goals:

- Dr. Cushing reported the Calendar of Policy Action for September has been completed.

Bussing:

- Mr. Grant said the changes in the bus routes have gone well. There were some additional minor changes after school started on the B-2 and D-4 routes. A letter was received at the SAU from a resident on Random road requesting the bus be able to go down that road to pick up students. Mr. Grant stated that the bus committee did not change that route. The bus went

down Random Rd. to pick up a kindergarten student in the past when there was a mid-day kindergarten bus for half-day kindergarten, but that no longer applies, under the current kindergarten structure. Mr. Grant also noted that the letter overstates the distance from the home to the bus stop. Both he and Mr. Katkin measured it and it is .35 miles. The Board would have to vote to change the current policy from a ½ mile, to less than a ½ mile, or if it is the last stop on the route and did not impact time, the bus could go down a road to drop off. After discussing various options, Mr. Schwartz made a motion to approve a modification to the policy, seconded by Mr. Dodds that the Superintendent has the discretion to make an exception to the ½ mile requirement when it does not impact other students or cause a delay in the bus getting to the schools. Vote: Unanimously approved.

RECOGNITION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS:

- Joe Cummins questioned why some of the homework for students on the RES website is not updated. Mr. Grant replied that some teachers like to use the website to list homework and others teachers utilize the agenda book students have. Mr. Cummins asked what the school budget was for bussing. Ms. Anderson replied that this year it is approximately \$250,000. Mr. Cummins asked about training students in the use of an abacus. Ms. Anderson stated that the Rye district used to do that. Ms. Balboni opined that such teaching is no longer done because it is not part of the Trailblazers program.
- Jeanne Moynahan stated that the PTA membership numbers are up from last year.
- Concerning the recent high school incident: Dr. Cushing noted that some of the media reports regarding the schools can be negative at times and he would like to find a way to get more factual information out to the parents and community. It was agreed that the Rye schools would work with Portsmouth in getting accurate PHS information out in the Rye community.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: (cont.)

Goals:

- Arts & Music Committee: Mr. Pollet passed out a synopsis with findings from this committee which included Jan Yost, Ms. Richardson and RJH staff and parents. The committee looked at other schools in the area and broke down art and music at the elementary and junior high level. The report listed the strengths and concerns for each area and listed recommendations. Sally Baybutt stated that one part of this process that made it difficult was that the procedure was not clearly defined. She recommends that this process could be improved by giving specific guidelines to follow. She further stated that the discussion revolved around the program and not the people, therefore not giving the whole picture. Ms. Balboni asked about theater production at RJH. She would like to see that program come back to the junior high. Ms. Baybutt stated that this was listed as a strength at RES, but that it requires a lot personnel. Ms. Anderson stated that presently there are only 6 or 7 seven Rye students at PHS that are in band and that the numbers used to be much higher. Ms. Balboni stated that block scheduling has created this problem. Mr. Grant asked Mr. Pollet what the next step for this committee would be. Mr. Pollet replied that they will take this template and move forward.
- Mr. Grant and the Board reviewed and made the following changes to the 2007/2008 Rye School District Goals and Action Plan.
 - Curriculum:
 1. Completion date 10/2007.
 2. Proposal completed.

3. Dr. Cushing stated this is a high priority for the administrators and that they would be able to provide examples, but that they do not have something written out for each student. Mr. Grant stated he realized it is not spelled out for each student and what they were doing individually. He suggested that he and Mr. Pollet sit down together and work on the wording for this goal.

4. Technology: Completion date: by budget time and ongoing. Mr. Grant asked Mr. Moynahan to identify issues monthly.

b. Perform realistic assessments on skills at RES and RJH to PHS. How: update. When: Budget time and ongoing. Assess 8th graders 1st and 6th graders last.

o Communication:

2. Improve teacher comments at RES and RJH: How: updates. When: Mr. Pollet will meet with staff and submit partial report by middle of the year and implement 9/2008.

o Assessment and Accountability:

2. When: 12/2007. How: feedback.

3. When: 1/2008.

4. How: Curriculum night and report cards.

When: First report cards

Mr. Dodds made a motion, seconded by Ms. Balboni to approve the School Board's goals for 2007/2008. Vote: Unanimously approved.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

- Physical Plant: Mr. Dodds reported that Mr. Katkin has not signed off yet on the roofing work done at RES. There is a window on order at RJH and the lines for the blacktop are still being worked on.
- Special Issues/Principal Advisory Committee: The first meeting of this committee is still being set up. There will be parents and teachers on the committee and in the fall and spring an open forum.
- REF - Mr. Schwartz reported the annual REF golf outing will be held October 1, 2007. Grants are due by the end of October.
- PHS - Ms. Balboni reported the following:
 - The secondary advisory committee will meet October 3, 2007 at 5:00 pm in Newington.
 - The AREA meeting will meet October 10, 2007. Mr. Pollet will be attending this meeting.
- PTA: Nothing more to report.
- Rye Rec: No meeting this month.
- Communications: Mr. Schwartz met with Ms. Richardson and Mr. Pollet. Both schools have a focus on communication and how to improve it with the use of e-mail and phone messaging systems. Mr. Pollet said at RJH they will no longer hold Parent/Teacher conferences in the way that was done previously by signing up for 5 minute meetings in the gym. Parents will be able to meet in a variety of ways; with teachers as needed individually and/or as grade level teams. Ms. Anderson asked how this would be communicated. Mr. Pollet replied a letter would be mailed home and it will be posted on the website.
- Curriculum: No meeting.
- NEASC: David Flynn will give a presentation at RES on October 5, 2007 for all teaching staff at RES and RJH.
- Peer Schools: Mr. Grant reported there will be a meeting on October 17, 2007 at RES.

- Athletics: Ms. Balboni reported the first meeting this year will be on October 1, 2007 at RJH. Mr. Fortier reported there are 125 students in the athletic program at RJH.
- Policies: EHAB– (first reading) this policy will be revised and discussed at a later date. EHAA – (first reading) to be revised and returned. GBE: Ms. Anderson would like to revise and present again. GBEBB: after a few revisions this policy will be adopted as a first reading. Ms. Anderson made a motion to accept, seconded by Ms. Schwartz. Vote: Unanimously approved. Information and draft policies for the Use of School Facilities were passed out to the board. Dr. Cushing asked that these be looked over by the board and be ready to discuss at the next meeting. Ms. Balboni stated that the security check for volunteers needed to be addressed.
Destination Imagination: Dr. Cushing stated that they have drafted a policy listing the responsibilities of the DI Coordinator and Manager. Ms. Anderson again asked for the rationale of why we fund the DI program and not other programs at the school. Mr. Schwartz suggested the wording be changed to general fundraising.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Ms, Anderson reported that the first meeting for RESPA negotiations was held today. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday at 8:30 am.
- The November Rye School Board meeting will be held one week earlier than normal on November 14, 2007 so as not to conflict with the Thanksgiving holiday.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Schwartz proposed, seconded by Mr. Dodd's, a motion to go into non-public session at 9:45 p.m. Vote: Unanimously approved on a roll call vote.

PUBLIC SESSION:

The Board re-entered public session at 9:58 p.m. Mr. Schwartz made a motion, seconded by Mr. Dodds to approve and seal the non-public minutes of August 15, 2007. Vote: Unanimously approved.

ADJOURN:

Mr. Schwartz made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms., Anderson at 9:59. Vote Unanimously approved.

School Board Secretary