

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
AUGUST 26, 2008**

School Board Members Present:

Christopher Book
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Roberta Dress
Peter Fagan
Peter Forshay
Gina Fucci
Cindy Kilic-Murray
Nicholas Ouelette

Members Absent

Collin Fingon
Karen Gartner
Peter Mello

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Peter Folaros
Wil Cunningham
Ellie McGarry
Bob Johnson
Paula Albro
Jay Slenker
Kristen Hubert
John Rice
Robin Browne
Bill Olsen
Lyle Jepson
Andrea McQuade
Patricia Aigner

Motion by Fucci/Fagan to convene to executive session at 6:15 pm for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimously passed by those in attendance.

The Board came out of executive session at 6:55 pm.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Clerk Courcelle noted the absence of Commissioners Gartner, Fingon, and Mello.

Motion by Fagan/Book to accept the minutes of the June 17, 2008 regular school board meeting with one correction: Page 5, top line was changed to read, "...distributed the RIS Memory Book."
Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Motion by Fagan/Forshay to accept the minutes of the Aug. 12, 2008 special school board meeting with one correction: Christopher Book was not present. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Written Communication - Commissioner Forshay read a letter from the Rutland Alderman President praising the RAD Kids program and asking the School Board to expand the program into the schools and making it a part of annual physical education requirements. Superintendent Moran said she spoke with Detective Lamoureux about this and recommends the Board talk about it further at an upcoming meeting. She said it is important to study all the curriculum before adding anything else. Board members asked for this to be discussed at a future meeting.

Oral Communication - Ms. Moran said she received a letter from the State Secretary of Human Services thanking the school district for housing between 60-70 state employees at STC during the time that the Asa Bloomer Building was unusable due to flooding. Ms. Moran said the staff was very helpful and this

is a great example of the community pulling together.

Back to School Report - Mr. Courcelle said he visited RIS with his daughter today and found a very welcoming and open environment. He said the staff makes themselves readily available and that gives a good feeling to parents. Ms. Moran said today was a spectacularly successful opening. First day celebrations were held in all buildings and were well attended. Ms. Moran encouraged that level of parent participation throughout the entire year. Bus drivers asked the community to be reminded to honor stopped buses. Ms. Moran said Alert Now was used for faculty last week but not yet for families. It is important we get updated information from all families first. A test of the system will be held next week.

Learning Lab Report - Mr. Courcelle said at the June 17 meeting, the Board approved moving forward with the Learning Lab. Ms. Moran said when the plan was approved, it was approved that the school would enter into a collaborative agreement with other schools. The contract is now ready for approval. The building work is underway and the lease begins Sept. 1.

Ms. Moran said the plan is to turn the furnishing of the house into a learning project for the students. They will decide what is needed, ask for donations, screen donations, thank people for donations, and plan the layout with teacher support. Once operating, the students will organize an open house and community celebration. They are learning how to be self-sufficient. Ms. Moran said youngsters are eligible to stay in school until aged 22 and many do.

Ms. McGarry said the staff is excited and anxious for the learning lab. They have been working on creating the curriculum they want to follow to have students turn the empty space into what they want. Student count will range from 30-50. She thanked the Board for supporting the initiative. Ms. Moran said the staff will be with students, who will come and go during the day as appropriate. There will not be staff stationed there. This will be a laboratory. Students will access the building by walking out the main gate. Ms. McGarry said she has met with coordinators from other school districts and there is interest for some of their students but there is no head count yet. There was discussion about the Collaborative Agreement. Ms. McGarry said she knows other schools are interested. She described other positive programs that can come out of the collaborative. Rutland City will not get the state reimbursement without a collaborative. She said now is the time to formalize the collaborative. Ms. Moran said there is no problem with reimbursements.

Learning Lab Collaborative Agreement - Ms. Moran said this is a formal collaborative agreement used to site a specialized program in one place.

Motion by Fagan/ Forshay to approve the creation of and Rutland City Public Schools' participation in a Special Education Learning Lab Collaborative for the purpose of cost sharing the 12 Stratton Road property with other participating school districts with the amendment on page 6 of the document, offered by Commissioner Fagan.

Ms. Kilic-Murray said she fully supports the program but does not remember talking about the collaborative. Ms. Moran said when the program was first discussed, they said that the collaborative would be needed. This is a standard operating procedure and a vehicle for reimbursement and for other school districts to take part. Mr. Forshay asked if there have been discussions with other districts and Ms. McGarry said there have been but she is not at liberty to name them until the other Boards have agreed.

Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Motion by Cooke/Fagan to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 388 dated Aug. 22, 2008, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

The appointments, family/medical leave, department chair appointment and resignations were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Hiring Update - Ms. Moran said the professional staffing is complete. There is some work to be done on SLP coordination. There was a large number of new hires this year replacing a very large number of retirees. The hiring committees have done a great job.

Performance Contracting Planning - Ms. Moran reviewed the history of the performance contract. Two years ago, the district engaged Johnson Controls and just as we were going to enter into a contract with them, the state put a moratorium on construction aid. We were one of two districts in the state ready to begin. It does not look like the state will lift the moratorium. Ms. Moran said the feeling now is that even without state aid, we will realize significant savings with a performance contract and we will accomplish many improvements to the buildings. There are two options, a ten year and a twenty year. The ten year would be a lease and would require Board approval. The twenty year option would require voter approval. Commissioner Cooke said the Building Committee would like a full board decision.

John Rice said he met with Johnson Controls and has learned about the audit performed two years ago and reviewed the change in environment in the past two years regarding energy costs. There are also some other components which could go into the program such as renewable energy opportunities. Mr. Rice said the initial costs associated with improvements were based upon prices two years ago but he believes the payback outweighs project costs. Mr. Cooke said he went through a similar project to this in the school district in which he works and there have been significant savings. He believes it is important to look into this as Rutland City taxpayers are facing increasing taxes and there will be benefits year after year. Ms. Moran said if financial targets are not met, Johnson Controls has to cover the differences. Mr. Cooke said there will also be overall comfort improvements in the building.

Ms. Moran said that regarding Johnson Controls guarantee, if we do not realize the savings guaranteed, they either pay the difference or adjust the problem so it is working correctly. They guarantee a dollar savings. Commissioner Fagan said he is a proponent of performance contracts. Commissioner Book asked if the state might lift the moratorium on state aid. Ms. Moran said she has spoken about this in Montpelier and explained the situation and she does not believe they will make a change. Mr. Forshay asked about the difference in projects between the ten and twenty year programs. Mr. Rice explained some of the differences and said the projects with the best returns are in the ten year plan. Ms. Kilic-Murray asked what would happen if energy costs drop significantly. Ms. Moran said one of the non-financial returns is that we will have healthier buildings.

Mr. Fagan asked the planning assumption for oil and Mr. Rice said it was between \$2 - \$2.25 two years ago and now the figures were a bit over \$4. Mr. Fagan asked about the cost projections and Mr. Rice explained that the cost of financing was included. Mr. Fagan said he is in favor of doing this and would like to explain to the taxpayers what it will cost. Mr. Book asked about first doing a ten year plan and

then doing another ten year after that, if we liked it. Mr. Rice said there are economies gained on implementation and there would be a delay on savings on items chosen to be delayed.

Ms. Moran said that Mr. Rice has done some performance contracting in another career so he has good experience. Mr. Forshay asked about the changing behaviors which might occur with a twenty year project, eradicating some of the savings projected on paper. He said he supports a ten year approach without more information on the twenty year option. Commissioner Fucci asked if there is a factor in the twenty year approach to consider that the buildings will be twenty years older and will need other attention by then. Mr. Rice said he does not think that level of detail is included but he does not yet know all the factors.

Mr. Courcelle asked for a sense from the Board regarding moving forward and if that was favorable, for what term. Commissioner Dress said she favors the ten year plan as did Mr. Book. Mr. Forshay said if Johnson Controls is promising a savings of over \$6 million after an investment of \$4 million for the twenty years, that changes the risk. He said he supports the ten year approach but would like to understand the guarantee better. Ms. Fucci said she thinks the ten year is more prudent because energy is so evolving. Ms. Kilic-Murray said she would need more information to decide. Mr. Fagan said he considers the twenty approach because of a 9-fold savings to the schools but he is not adverse to the ten year approach. Nicholas Ouelette said he thinks that if there are guaranteed savings for twenty years, that should be the approach. Mr. Rice said that Johnson Controls guarantees their numbers. He has discussed each item with them and believes their projections are correct. They have a successful track record. Ms. Moran reminded the Board that the projections are two years old.

Mr. Courcelle said the twenty year approach would need to go to voters. The ten year option would be a lease and would not require voter approval. He said it is clear the board is unanimous about moving forward. The district should be commended for moving forward on this even without state support. Mr. Fagan asked which method would cost us the least amount of money. Ms. Moran said she does not have that information. She said all other districts in the state who have done this have done leases. The administration was asked to bring back to the next meeting, the rate of return on a ten year lease versus a capital expenditure. It was noted that by choosing the ten year option, if the state lifts the moratorium on aid, we could do more. In ten years, there will be new energy opportunities. Mr. Courcelle said this should show the Rutland City taxpayers that the Board is taking their fiduciary responsibility seriously and doing what it can. The administration should be commended for bringing this forward. Mr. Cooke said it should be noted that the board has not been waiting to do this but has been pro-active. Mr. Williams had a plan and addressed many of the things. His crew has been able to do many things in terms of energy savings measures.

Announcements

- Ms. Moran pointed out Summer Tapestry and Academy programs artwork on display at Longfellow. Approximately 600 student took part in summer programs in the schools.
- There will be a celebration of the new Alumni Field and Track on Friday at 5:30 pm prior to the soccer game with a ribbon cutting. Ms. Moran reviewed the restrictions on the new field. She said it is for practice and play under supervision and asked that it not be used for rollerblading, golfing, frisbee or dog walking. She asked that there be no wheeled vehicles on the track.
- The exterior security camera system is almost complete.
- The STC Dollhouse capital improvement project is complete and looks great. The Dollhouse is open for lunch and the food is terrific.
- STC Power Mechanics program can recycle power equipment for members of the community.

The community was reminded of open houses at all schools.

Building Committee / Alumni Field Committee - Mr. Cooke thanked Ms. Fucci for all her work and time on the Field project. Ms. Fucci said there were so many people who worked so hard on the project. She said that now is the time for celebration. She does not yet have a new financial status but said that people can still contribute and donations are welcome.

Mr. Forshay said he has had citizen interest in unsupervised use of the field and asked if there will be opportunities for general citizens to use the field for sport related uses. Ms. Moran said only with advanced permission of the Athletic Director and Director of Buildings and Grounds. She said otherwise, people should not be accessing the field unsupervised.

Mr. Cooke welcomed John Rice and said he is looking at things with fresh eyes.

Mr. Fagan thanked the student volunteers at RHS this morning. He also thanked Mr. Trombley and RHS driving instructors for their professionalism and dedication.

Old Business - None

Motion by Book/Fagan at 8:35 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Unanimously passed by those in attendance.

The Board came out of executive session at 8:45 pm.

Motion by Cooke/Book to adjourn at 8:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary