

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
OCTOBER 12, 2010**

**School Board Members Present:**

Peter Mello  
Christopher Book  
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.  
Wayne Cooke  
Richard Courcelle  
Roberta Dress  
Peter Fagan  
Peter Forshay  
Rob Towle  
Blake Bohlig

**Members Absent**

Collin Fingon  
Erin Shimp

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Peter Amons  
Wil Cunningham  
Lyle Jepson  
Ellie McGarry  
Bill Olsen  
Bob Johnson  
Jay Slenker  
John Rice  
Kristin Francoeur  
Susanne Engels  
Jessica Henderson  
Patricia Aigner

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted the absence of Commissioners Shimp and Fingon.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

Motion by Towle / Cooke to accept the minutes of the Sept. 28, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
MINUTES  
09/28/10  
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

**WRITTEN &  
ORAL  
COMMUN-  
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

**District Action Plan**

Motion by Book / Towle to approve the District Action Plan as presented. Passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**EDUCATION  
REPORT**

**Action Planning Overview**

RIS - Mr. Slenker reviewed some targeted goals and results from last year's action plan and said there were gains on the NECAPs assessment. He highlighted the RIS Action Plan for this school year. The school was divided two years ago by Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and this year, 100% of the staff members are participating in PLCs. Another goal was to reduce planning room referrals from recess and the playground and Mr. Slenker explained the recess changes involving structured activities. There has been a 54% reduction in referrals from the playground. Recess is now held before lunch and not only are there fewer referrals, students are eating more at lunchtime. Mr. Slenker said RIS revamped E-block to include Response To Intervention (RTI) and there is additional support for students in the 25th% percentile or lower.

**MOTION:  
APPROVE  
DISTRICT  
ACTION  
PLAN**

**ACTION  
PLANNING  
OVERVIEW  
(RIS & RMS)**

RMS - Mr. Cunningham highlighted significant outcomes from the 2009-2010 school year. He expects an increase in NECAP assessments this year although the bar has been set higher. This year, he feels there will be a decline in referrals. They continue

to have PLC work and 100% of teachers are participating. RMS students are always either transitioning in or out of the school and Mr. Cunningham explained those challenges. Teachers are working on enrichment block opportunities as well as remedial targets for certain students. Ms. Francoeur said the Action Plan this year has two major goals: literacy and math. Goals are tied to individual students and she reviewed the tools being employed to meet the goals. She said there is a strong emphasis on anti-bullying. Peer mediation is very strong and well accepted by students.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Commissioner Towle said he is glad to see referrals decreasing in all the schools and urged the Board to support these measures when needed.
- What is Ace Block? Mr. Cunningham said it stands for Adaptive Classroom Environment and the schedule was explained. It will change after the October break to include targeted intervention for some students and other opportunities, such as economics, for other students.
- Is there a T.A. and do students get a break during the day? Commissioner Cooke said he believes students need a break during the day. Mr. Cunningham said there is a T.A. once weekly. RMS has lost recess with the new schedule. He said teachers are urged to make sure students have a chance to get up and out sometimes. Students have non-core academic classes in the middle of the day and these are usually classes where they move around more such as tech ed, information technology, music, chorus, etc.
- How many 8th graders are there and what do you plan to do once you get the data? Approximately 145. Ms. Francoeur said they will be comparing data to last year's scores and looking for growth. Students are being told individually about their past results and what they can do in the future. Mr. Cunningham said they are looking at subcategories which will help inform what needs to be pinpointed.
- What does "one scale score point mean"? Mr. Cunningham explained measuring student progress on the NECAPS and explained scale score points.
- How often are the assessments? And if students are referred for RTI, when does that happen? Ms. Francoeur explained the scheduling of the AimsWeb assessments. All students will have common assessments in literacy and math. The third gate is teacher input. What are teachers seeing? Commissioner Fagan asked if it is possible to see the results of the Aimes-web assessment, without adding work, before the end of the year? Ms. Francoeur said they will be crunching the numbers in terms of how they effect the action plan. Mr. Cunningham said it is a combination of assessments. Teacher input is daily instead of relying on one test day.
- Mr. Mello said Mr. Cunningham alluded to the challenges with a two-grade middle school. The emphasis of what happens in 6th and 9th graders is just as important to bridge middle school work.
- A lot of districts are looking at a grade 6- 8 middle school. Is it a dialogue for the future? Ms. Moran said it has been discussed and we understand the research but practically and physically, it would not work for us.

Personnel Report - None

Watkins Building / Porter Place - Mr. Rice reviewed the situation at the Watkins building and discussed the age and condition of the building. He described the space at Porter Place and reviewed its benefits. He said one possible detraction to the location is that it is on the other side of the railroad tracks. He has reviewed all commercial and industrial properties available in the City and Town. Ms. Moran said the Building Committee has talked about this and has recommended that it go to the Board at this point. Mr. Rice said Watkins is a needy building and he would rather take an appropriate action now before there is an emergency.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- If Porter Place works out, how long can we reside there? Mr. Rice said it would be a lease and something else better might become available. This would be an initial lease with an option to buy in the future.
- Commissioner Dress said as a member of the building committee, she highly recommends this move. She fears that something will happen at Watkins and it will cost a lot of money. She said she is fiscally conservative but this is money we need to spend.
- How do the buildings compare regarding employee convenience and comfort? Mr. Rice said the health and safety of the crew would be much better at Porter Place. In 1974 when we started using Watkins, the maintenance department focused on a maintenance crew and two buses. The focus has changed and we now have 20 buses and most of the crew are bus drivers.
- This is a triple net lease. Who pays capital improvements? Mr. Amons said the landlord. Ms. Moran said the property is on the tax roll.
- Mr. Amons further explained the costs. The rent on the building at Porter Place would be \$36, 000. There would be an additional \$6,000 in reimbursement of taxes and insurance. This would be a new expense. Mr. Amons said the analysis shows that utilities would be similar to Watkins.
- What would we do with Watkins? Drain the water, turn off electricity? Mr. Rice said he did not detail the transition other than the logistics. Ms. Moran said a goal would be to sell Watkins and possibly Dana if that is what the Board wants.
- Would this be the wrong facility if we decided to contract out busing in the future? Mr. Rice said a big advantage to Porter Place is the interior heated space to work on vehicles. Operationally, Porter Place is a better environment, with or without busing. Mr. Rice said there will be a trial run during the break next week to make sure all the buses fit at Porter Place.
- Mr. Mello said he would like a strong recommendation from the Building Committee and he asked for them to meet before the next Board meeting. Mr. Cooke said on the surface, he supports this but he is looking at this in terms of the challenges we face.
- Mr. Fagan thanked the Watkins neighbors for supporting the operations there.
- The fuel oil tank at Watkins is from 1961. How old were some of the other tanks we replaced and their costs? Mr. Rice said Longfellow's oil tank was from 1959. Success oil tank was from 1959. The cost to replace them was about \$55,000 each. The Watkins replacement is estimated at \$38,000. Mr. Rice said he would not put a new tank in the ground.
- Mr. Mello said as we go into budget planning, he would like a recommendation from the Building Committee.

Brian Fitzsimmons said he is a 30 year taxpayer in the City and works for the school district. He has worked in the building for ten years and said right now is not a good time to buy anything with the talk about laying people off. He said the building at Porter Place is great but he does not think the area is great. He recommended fixing the roof at Watkins and to wait until the Allen St. property sells before buying anything. Mr. Mello asked the Building Committee to research all implications.

### Budget Planning Overview

Contextual Overview - Mr. Amons explained that the budget is made up of 60 budgets. Everyone was asked to "flatline" everything. If that was not possible, people were told they had to communicate with him. The budgets are due back on October 22 and they will be prepared for school board review on November 23. The budget includes revenues from a variety of sources as well as all the expenses. Mr. Amons said the balancing figure is our tap on the education fund. He reviewed the formula for determining that amount. There were Board questions and discussion about the future of some of the revenues. Mr. Amons described the link between the property education taxes and the state education fund.

Challenges for Change - Ms. Moran reviewed recent laws meant to effect FY11 budgets. We are effected by "Challenges for Change" and "Voluntary School District Mergers." The law, "Supervisory Union Joint Agreements, Duties, and Responsibilities" does not apply to us. Mr. Amons said Challenges for Change is a reaction to a decline in taxes being collected by the state. The Department of Education has requested supervisory units cut their education spending with a cumulative decrease of \$23 million on the education fund. The Department developed a formula based upon the past few years trends and figures. Low spending districts were hit with lower targets and he sees it as a deficiency in the formula.

Ms. Moran said the target for Rutland City is a 2.27% cut, which is \$607,000. That does not include year over year inflation, which is projected at \$1.2 million. She said compliance is voluntary and we do not know what will happen if we do not comply. We must report to the Commissioner by December 15 if we will comply and he will report to the Legislature in January. Ms. Moran said over time, we have been frugal spenders and we think we are disadvantaged by the formula.

Mr. Mello said regarding the commentary he wrote in last week's Rutland Herald, it was pointed out to him that it seemed to take the position that all board members agree that we should not try to meet the Challenge for Change target. Mr. Mello said he cannot support "just saying no" but he did not imply that and did not mean to imply that. The title in the commentary was not his title. His title was "Challenge for Change" and the editor changed it to "City schools reject arbitrary cuts." Mr. Mello wrote that it is unlikely that we will make recommendations for budget cuts which would effect to any great degree the quality of our education. He did not mean we will not comply. He said we have difficult decisions to make. Mr. Mello said he hopes other board members did not feel that they were misrepresented and he apologized. He said there is difficult work ahead and he was trying to comment on the scope of the process.

Mr. Amons said the Department of Education is developing language for us to respond by December 15. They want information for the legislature to use. Mr. Amons explained the numbers he estimated in order to get to the \$2 million target.

- Target cut to RCPS education funding - \$607,000
- Estimated inflation on FY11 \$45 million budget (we will not know for sure what this number is for several weeks) - \$1,200,000
- Changes in revenue - (not yet forecasted but estimated at) - \$193,000
- Total potential budget cuts to meet target is \$2,000,000

Ms. Moran said we are unsure about federal revenues. We are hearing more about competitive grants. Small rural states are usually disadvantaged during competitive grants. There is not yet a determination from the state regarding the \$19 million in federal funding allocated to Vermont. She said we need to continue to present the most responsible budget as possible.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- With special education, we would see only about 44% in savings. Transportation would be a 60% savings. Ms. Moran said if we cut special educators, we are not saving dollars for dollars but only 44%.
- Inflation estimate, how much is linked to potential grant money? Are there more chances of a 1:1 scenario than 1:.44 reduction? Ms. Moran said generally, anything locally funded represents 100% savings but many people are in a variety of accounts. There is not a simple answer now.

Process to Date - Ms. Moran said the budget is being prepared earlier this year. A complete enrollment analysis is prepared first. We will follow the usual budget process although accelerated by Challenges for Change. Input has been sought from all faculty members, leadership teams, and parent collaboratives. Three staff forums have been scheduled. Mr. Bliss and Ms. Moran have talked directly and privately with every staff member who may be effected by cuts. All levels are being examined in every job category and department. There are some areas which would have otherwise been recommended for cuts due to enrollment. Ms. Moran said if we were to adhere to new state class size guidelines, we would have to reduce some class sizes. If we come to having to put into place all the recommendations, they are drastic. She said they have looked at teaching staff at all grade levels and there are some areas the Board would not want to see cut. They are also looking at all non-teaching areas. At the next Board meeting, they will present a tiered approach with ranking and ordering. Ms. Moran said it is premature to comment on the effects at any one level. Commissioner Courcelle said the Board will need a substantial amount of time for this dialogue in upcoming meetings. Mr. Forshay said even if Rutland City had a different resolution on the recommended cut from the State, that is not the biggest impact in the process. If we were asked to make more minimal cuts, such as 1% instead of 2.7%, we still would have \$200,000 in cuts plus the inflationary impact. It is still extremely severe.

Superintendent's Report - Ms. Moran asked the student representative to distribute the list of Student Senators and Committee Representatives. Blake reviewed the list of Student Senators and explained the School Improvement Grant committees. She said the committee representatives report to the executive board. She is a member of the executive board.

Policy Committee - Mr. Book said the Policy Committee has worked on five policies and he reviewed them. He said after a lot of time and thought, the committee came up with a revised Field Trip policy which prohibits international travel except to Canada by ground travel. There is an addition of "global partnerships." Mr. Mello said the Policy Committee has had input from students, the Student Senate, parents, faculty members, etc. Mr. Courcelle said after the first reading, the Board will wait for two meetings before the second reading of the Field Trip policy in order to get more feedback. He said this has been a significant endeavor which took more than a year-and-a-half to develop. This replaces a policy crafted in 1988. The policy does not imply that international travel is not important nor does it discount its value. As a proposal, it states that the district does not want to be in the business of sponsoring international travel. This is not an indictment or commentary against international travel as an enrichment activity but the recommendation is to not encumber the school with the risks and liabilities which come with school sponsored travel. Mr. Courcelle read the paragraph in the policy regarding global partnerships, which will be considered.

COMM.  
REPORTS  
  
POLICY  
COMM.  
  
DISCUS-  
SION OF  
FIELD TRIP  
POLICY

Typographical errors were made to the policies. Mr. Cooke asked about the global partnerships in the Field Trips policy. Will they be by technology? Or would the board consider foreign travel and perhaps grant it on individual basis? Ms. Moran said the intent is for the potential of school-to-school partnerships. For example, Mr. Rosenberg might develop a partnership with a school where he did his Fulbright in Germany. Students may be able to travel to that school and spend a week in school. That would be a direct school to school relationship; not a trip with touring and sightseeing. Mr. Cooke asked if that should be articulated in terms of definitions for future administrators and board members. Mr. Book said if a partnership was established, a policy would be established with the parameters. Mr. Forshay said he would not relish supporting the policy although he thinks it is a prudent decision and the right approach. He said the committee has recognized the value of international travel and it will be disappointing to see that terminated in this style. However, he said it is prudent. Mr. Book said the committee wrestled with that.

MOTION:  
APPROVE  
FIVE  
POLICIES  
FOR FIRST  
READING

Motion by Forshay / Towle to approve for first reading the following Policies:  
#5115 Comparability  
#6450 Workers Compensation  
#6150 Health Examinations  
#8440 Field Trips  
#8470 Minimal and Optimal School District Average Class Size  
Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

New and Old Business - None

NEW & OLD  
BUSINESS

Motion by Forshay / Book at 8:17 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.

MOTION:  
EXECUTIVE  
SESSION

The Board came out of executive session at 8:25 pm. Motion by Cooke/Book to adjourn at 8:26 pm. Passed.

PUBLIC  
SESSION

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted  
Janet Mondlak, Recording Secretary