

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
NOVEMBER 9, 2010**

**School Board Members Present:**

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

**Also Present:**

Superintendent Mary Moran  
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss  
Peter Amons  
Wil Cunningham  
Lyle Jepson  
Ellie McGarry  
Bill Olsen  
Glenn Olson  
Bob Johnson  
Jay Slenker  
John Rice  
Ted Guilmette  
Susanne Engels  
Cathy Farman  
Pam Reed

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The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Mello noted all Commissioners were present.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

Motion by Towle / Forshay to accept the minutes of the Oct. 26, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:  
MINUTES  
10/26/10  
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

Oral Communication - Ruthellen Weston, a Rutland City taxpayer and parent of a RHS student, said she is concerned about proposed budget cuts. She said Rutland City schools have already made sacrifices and is a low spending district. Budgets have passed twice under voter approval. She is troubled by cuts to crossing guards and the Industrial Arts class. She suggested better regulating the heating units in buildings, buying buildings rather than renting, cutting administrative salaries, and raising employee contributions to health care.

**ORAL COMMUNICATION**

**TAXPAYERS CONCERNS ABOUT PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS**

Vicki Vest, a parent of a RHS drama program student, said she is disappointed to see the drama program in Tier II for a proposed cut. Students would have come down tonight but they are rehearsing for their next performance. 85 students were turned away from taking drama this year because of the reductions. She said each term, Ms. Archer's class attracts more students and many are turned away. She said there are a lot of people disappointed in the proposed cut.

UVM Teachers of the Year Recognition - Sherry Kamyk - Elementary Teacher at Northeast - Mr. Johnston introduced Ms. Kamyk, a first grade teacher at Northeast. He reviewed her exceptional accomplishments and passion for teaching. Ms. Kamyk thanked her colleagues for support and encouragement. Jay Wilson - Mathematics Teacher at RHS - Mr. Olsen introduced Mr. Wilson and reviewed his achievements and inspiration. Mr. Wilson thanked the board, administrative and taxpayers for their support and said he feels honored and humbled. The teachers were congratulated.

**UVM TEACHERS OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION**

STC Budget Presentation - Mr. Jepson said Stafford Technical Center is responsible for the budget to both Rutland taxpayers and those in the sending schools. This budget has been through a number of review processes and it will go to the Regional Advisory Board in the coming weeks before coming back to this Board for final approval.

Mr. Jepson reviewed the review process and said the finance committee felt strongly to come up with a zero increase budget. Stafford's enrollment has decreased a small amount. He reviewed how they achieved a zero increase budget proposal, which was not an easy task. Some of the proposals include:

- Cut Outreach Coordinator - services will be reassigned or will drop off.
- Cut two programs with low enrollment in the past six years: architectural engineering design and computer technology.
- Cut the 8th grade Exploration Program.
- Reduction in paraeducators. This has already happened due to attrition.
- Combine some sections in the academic courses offered at Stafford.
- Cut two accounting sections
- Cut the leadership training program
- Reduction in district wide field trips
- Delay some maintenance
- Cut a library paraeducator position
- Make small cuts to supplies and equipment

Mr. Jepson explained how the Perkins Grant funds are allocated. He reviewed two new programs being proposed: Cosmetology and Heavy Equipment Operation. He said most of the Regional Advisory Board members have seen the proposed budget.

Board members discussed some of the changes. What are the trends which led to reducing two programs but adding two others? The two programs being cut are high powered. Ms. Jepson said they looked at the economy and trends. Many more people are enrolling in courses to learn a skill to help them in their job rather than for fun. Students see there are skills they might need, whether they go to college or not. For example, there is a lot of road work being funded with stimulus money and so there is a need for heavy equipment operators. Changes are in response to the economy. He reviewed the types of heavy equipment which will be trained and said it would be a second year part of the CDL training program.

Mr. Jepson invited Board members to look at the renovations going on at STC and said many people on the job are local workers. Mr. Cooke asked if the two courses being cut would fit into the evening division at STC. Mr. Jepson said Stafford offers customized training for business and industry. They are looking into ramping up the GE training program again. Commissioner Dress thanked them for doing the hard work and being pro-active with reductions. Mr. Mello said the STC budget will come back to the Board for action at the next meeting.

RCPS Budget Discussion - Mr. Mello summarized where the Board is with the budget process. He said he has a serious issue to responding to the Challenges for Change target. It is a suggested target. He said he is not sure the legislators who voted on it are necessarily clear of the impact. There needs to be a response to the Commissioner by December 15. Mr. Mello said Rutland City is a low spending district and highlighted the

district's position state-wide on costs. He said the impact of a \$2.5 million cut on a low-spending district is significant. He said Board members have a responsibility to the community. Economic times are very difficult and difficult decisions need to be made; but not because there is a suggested target but because it is the responsible thing to do. Mr. Mello outlined next steps for discussion.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- How did we get to \$2.5 million when the state asked for \$607,000? Ms. Moran said the number came from the \$607,000 plus \$1.2 million in inflation and \$200,000 of lost revenue. Mr. Amons said inflation is from contracts, wage increases, etc. The \$1.2 million is an estimate and he will have an accurate number on Nov. 23. The targets are delineated as the tap on the education fund. They asked us to tap the for \$607,000 less. With inflation, the \$2.5 million was projected to be how much less we would need to spend in order to ask the education fund for \$607,000 less. He has a firmer number now on potential lost revenue, which lowered the target to \$1.8 million.
- Commissioner Courcelle said he thinks the cuts are draconian and meeting the target would be ludicrous. He said he thinks we need to set aside the Challenges for Change for now and develop a budget that is sensible. He said the legislature would have to decide, if the money is not there, what they would do.
- There was discussion about communicating with the Commissioner. Board members agreed it is responsible for the Board to look it all over and then make decisions.
- Mr. Cavacas said we need to be fiscally frugal to the taxpayers but he disagrees with the target. He said if cuts to the budget could be made without damaging programs and with maintaining the integrity of our academics, that is fine.
- Changes to administrative priorities: Ms. Moran said the budget is continuously being reviewed. There are recommended cuts which would happen anyway. There has been an incremental decline in enrollment. She explained work done to buildings which has helped maintain heating. She said there are two proposed cuts she is not comfortable with: 1) Cuts to Library Aides and s) Cut in nursing staff for RIS and RMS. The three nurses there also cover Success. They serve more than 900 students. The proposal would cut three nurses to two.
- Ms. Moran said the RMS reductions are enrollment driven. The high school cuts in each department, English, Math, Science and Social Studies, are due to an incremental decrease in enrollment over the past few years. They feel they could reduce without eliminating course offerings. Ms. Moran sad she is deleting the recommendation to cut a World Language teacher (Tier IV). They could not staff the program 7-12 with a reduction.
- Could the four teachers on the bottom be handled through retirements or attrition? Ms. Moran said one is a retirement. Dual licensure applies only in World Language but not in the other subjects.
- Please explain the impact, contractually, on reducing four high school teachers and if there is an impact on elementary teachers. Ms. Moran said the seniority list is by licensure and assignment.
- What would the class sizes be if there was the reduction in teachers K - 6? Ms. Moran said it would mean all class sizes at Northeast and Northwest would be about 20 students with an RIS average class size of 21.5. They are mostly at 18 students now. Ms. Moran said this is not something she would readily

recommend. She said few of those positions would be lost due to attrition. Mr. Courcelle said a state target for class size is 14 students and we are already significantly higher. Ms. Moran said the state minimum is 14, and there is an optimal class size of 18. To meet the state optimal class size, we would have to reduce class size in several grades.

- Commissioner Fagan said he is fine recommending a class size of 20-21 students. He does not see it as a large size, even at the primary level. He said he would talk first with Kindergarten, where they wanted to keep the classes at 15 or 16. He thinks there could be savings here without impacting anything.
- Commissioner Book said he is uncomfortable with those size classes at Northeast and Northwest. Those students are starting out and he thinks they need help.
- Mr. Cavacas said he would be uncomfortable with the size at NW, a checkmarked school.
- Commissioner Shimp said some classes are already at 18+ students. She said with extra adults in the classrooms such as with co-teaching and paraeducators, she does not think those size classes are a problem.
- Mr. Cooke said he does not like to see higher numbers in the primary grades but with co-teaching and other supports, he could see it.
- Ms. Moran reviewed the numbers at the elementary levels. She said these recommendations are on Tier IV.
- Commissioner Fingon said he is uncomfortable with the whole presentation. What are the cuts we need to make? Recommending 35 positions without losing many students? Rutland City has already done the job at keeping costs low. There are many schools with smaller class sizes than 18 students. He said RHS is receiving money for being on the list. Cutting teachers will not help NECAP scores or attract students. To put 21 students in elementary classes will have a negative effect on the education. He said he does not agree with meeting a number from the state. He has no problem with making cuts as a response to enrollment. He does not want to see us sacrifice our educational program to meet a target. Without a drastic drop in enrollment, he cannot see cutting that many people.
- Mr. Cavacas said he agrees with Mr. Fingon. We have met with two other supervisory unions and discussed working together for education and economic development.
- Ms. Moran said on November 23, there will be a firmer budget to present. There could be potential ratification on December 7.
- Mr. Mello asked what it would take, in terms of dollars, to make cuts totaling approximately the total of the first two tiers: about \$1.068 million. Mr. Amons said throughout the budget, some items are decreasing, such as STC expenses.
- Are we reworking the tiers? Mr. Mello said he thinks it is time for that.
- Do we have to present to the State a number or a budget? Mr. Mello said no. But if we are not going to meet the target, he thinks we should tell the State the range we might be in.
- Mr. Cooke said the Administration needs to make decisions. Ms. Moran has mentioned things they want to reconsider. He would like to know what they are.
- Will there be a change in the carry forward on the revenue side? Mr. Amons said he expects it to be equal so there will not be an impact.
- Commissioner Dress said she would rather see some of the K-6 teachers kept

on and reduce or eliminate other things which are nice but not necessary to academics such as gym floors, busing. We will not need to replace the Watkins tank now.

- Mr. Cavacas said he thinks we need to look at activities and athletics. He does not agree with cutting academics while sending a Premier bus for the football team to MA.
- Ms. Shimp said the arts are very important and we need to keep those specialties.
- Mr. Fagan said he thinks the arts and theater are very important and have had a big impact on his son in the schools. He has also heard that students have had a hard time signing up for drama class. We need to keep the arts in the schools.
- Mr. Book said he is uncomfortable cutting from crossing guards.
- Please explain the volunteer coordinators. Ms. Moran said there are three of them. They help with increasing volunteerism in the schools, with field trips, PTCs, organizing activities, etc. They provide energetic support to the K-6 program.
- Mr. Towle said he is concerned about drastically increasing class sizes, but some of the K-6 teacher money can be used to offset volunteer coordinators or crossing guards. Ms. Moran said she would like to look elsewhere. Those teachers are on the last page of the last list for a reason.
- Ms. Shimp said the volunteer coordinators provide a value to the schools, children and parents. Mr. Courcelle said they are paid a pittance.
- Mr. Forshay said he is reluctant to subscribe to cuts sometimes voiced. He agrees more and more with the position to make some cuts but not the entire reduction proposed to meet the Challenges for Change amount. He could see cuts to target a level budget with as few staff reductions as possible to reduce program impacts.
- Mr. Mello asked if most Board members are comfortable with that; a zero level budget. He asked the Superintendent to reconfigure the recommendations.
- Mr. Courcelle said he wants to hear from the Administration the budget changes as a result of changes and shifts made and then the recommendation for a zero increase budget.
- Blake Bohlig said athletics, activities and theater provide an “out” for so many students. She recommended cutting in each item instead of eliminating entire activities. For example, cut one or two games for each team.

Ms. Moran said the budget timeline has been accelerated in order to respond to the Commissioner by December 15. She asked the Board’s thoughts for ratification. She said in the past years, the budget has been brought to the Board at the first January meeting and ratified at the second. Mr. Mello said that is his thinking.

Motion by Towle / Forshay to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 433 dated Nov. 5, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:  
PERSONNEL  
MEMO 433**

The family medical leave of absence and appointments were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

Business Report - None

**BUSINESS  
REPORT**

Announcements - Ms. Moran announced upcoming legislative breakfasts. She also pointed out student artwork being displayed at Longfellow.

**SUPERIN-  
PENDENT'S  
ANNOUNCE-  
MENTS**

Policy Committee - Motion by Forshay / Book to approve the second reading of the following policy as presented: #8440 - Field Trips

**POLICY  
COMM.**

Mr. Fagan said he reluctantly supports the policy. He understands why it is necessary. There was discussion on the wording of several sections in the policy but no changes were made. It was pointed out that airplane travel (in the U.S. or Canada) is not being prohibited by the policy. Blake said the Student Senate Executive Board has reviewed the policy and they understand it and agree, although it does limit some fun. She said they understand its intent and they are in favor of the proposal.

**MOTION:  
APPROVE  
SECOND  
READING  
OF POLICY  
# 8440**

Motion passed unanimously.

New Business - Mr. Mello said there was a meeting with representatives from Rutland South and Rutland Central. Two outcomes of the meeting: 1) The districts want to see if there are opportunities for sharing resources such as transportation or other types of purchasing. 2) The small group will not be deciding on consolidation but will broaden their scope. They will solicit input from regional groups such REDC and the Chamber. It will lead to a larger community type of meeting.

**NEW  
BUSINESS**

**REGIONAL  
MEETING**

Old Business - None

**OLD  
BUSINESS**

Motion by Fagan/Forshay at 8:08 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 8:45 pm.

**PUBLIC  
SESSION**

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

**ADJOURN**

Respectfully submitted

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Janet Mondlak  
Recording Secretary