

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
NOVEMBER 23, 2010**

School Board Members Present:

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

Member Absent

Peter Mello

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Peter Amons
Lyle Epsom
Ellie McGarry
Bill Olsen
Kristen Hubert
Pam Reed
Jessica Henderson
Ted Guilmette

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
Clerk Courcelle noted the absence of Commissioner Mello.

**CALL TO
ORDER**

ROLL CALL

Motion by Towle / Cavacas to accept the minutes of the Nov. 9, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
11/09/10
MEETING**

Written Communication - None

**WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Oral Communication - None

Stafford Technical Center Budget Ratification - Ms. Moran reviewed the process for the STC budget. She said that Commissioner Cooke is the school board representative to the Stafford Regional Advisory Board. The STC budget was presented two weeks ago. Mr. Jepson said there has been quite a bit of public discussion about the programs being added and those being dropped. The programs slated for elimination are due to enrollment. There have been plans for years to add Cosmetology and some of the building renovation are being done to accommodate it. The programs being eliminated are not being dropped in order to add new programs.

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

**STC
BUDGET
RATIFICA-
TION**

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Does the elimination of the computer program change the availability for Stafford students to access cutting edge technology and prepare for the workforce? Mr. Jepson said technology is used in every one of Stafford's programs. Computer skills are not just learned in computer class. The Cisco networking academy was dropped because not enough students enrolled. There has to be student interest to continue the programs. There are lots of computers in the school and there is still computer training available at STC; it is integrated into other programs. Ms. Moran said the major renovation at Stafford is infused with technology with state of the art improvements. Students and former students are working on networking and IT.

- Are you concerned with dropping two programs attractive to college bound students? Will that diminish the interest of college bound students to STC? Mr. Jepson said they have had to look at what is driving the economy and what students are looking for regionally. The two programs being dropped now have 12 students. The programs being added can serve 32 students. Stafford still has a number of programs which are attractive to college-bound students.
- Commissioner Towle said he has been familiar with the Stafford programming for years. The programs not being utilized need to be eliminated for now. If there is a major need in the future, a program can be brought back.
- Commissioner Cooke said the RAB Board and STC administration have studied all these things. The recommendations come with anguish. It is not easy for them to make the cuts, as well as cutting the other personnel who have served the school well. If there is new interest, programs can cycle back.

Citizen input:

- Ron Pulcer of Rutland Town said he works in IT and he discussed how important that type of training is for students. He discussed his training and background and said students need to be trained in these fields. Mr. Courcelle said Stafford has the ability to respond quickly when training is needed.
- Ruthellen Weston of Rutland City said it would be a mistake to totally eliminate these programs. She said it is a different skill to use a computer than to fix a computer. She suggested being able to offer these types of classes in the evenings.

Commissioner Fingon said this is a public education system and if enrollment is down, the Board needs to think about that. The school is not discouraging students from these types of programs. He said he worked on computer networking as an independent study in Rutland City Schools as a student in the 1990s.

Steven Briggs said he is the computer technology teacher at STC. He thanked the Board for allowing him to serve as an instructor at STC for 14 years. He has heard from a lot of former students in the past few weeks and they are very passionate about the program. The program has been a springboard for many young people. He highlighted where some of his former students are working in the region and country and said many have had great success. Mr. Briggs said he thinks Mr. Jepson is one of the best administrators he has worked with. He said the state and the country have seen a decline in computer enrollment studies in college and high schools while other countries have increased. He said he thinks with adequate promotion to the youth of the county, the program could be filled. He reviewed the networking that will be involved with the new hospital improvements and how important it is in everything we do.

Mr. Jepson said Mr. Briggs brings the passion that the Board has helped create to the STC brand. He said the expectation of the public is to create the passion. The brand includes college-bound students attending Stafford. He said the public also has the right to expect that the budget will balance. There are hard choices. Mr. Towle said Stafford offers opportunities for businesses to ask for special programs or training to be developed. Commissioner Shimp asked if there is this type of computer technology being offered in the evening program. Mr. Jepson said there are about 80 offerings in the evening division each year of which about 40 run. They are enrollment based.

Motion by Forshay / Towle to accept the FY 11 Vermont State Equipment Grant in support of equipment purchases at Stafford Technical Center in the amount of \$28,235.29. Passed unanimously.

STC
BUDGET
MOTIONS

Motion by Forshay / Towle to accept the Carl D. Perkins Grant for FY12 for use in support of the operation of Stafford Technical Center with an anticipated award amount of \$282,891.00. Passed unanimously.

MOTION:
ACCEPT
STC FY11 VT
STATE
EQUIPMENT
GRANT

Motion by Forshay / Cavacas to approve the FY12 Stafford Technical Center Budget as presented by the Regional Advisory Board with total expenditures of \$3,946,768.00 in an assessment figure of \$3,816.00 per student to sending towns. This figure may be reduced proportionately to any increases in state funding. Passed unanimously.

MOTION:
ACCEPT
STC FY12
PERKINS
GRANTS

Draft FY12 Budget Presentation - Mr. Courcelle reviewed the budget process to date. Ms. Moran said after the last meeting, the administration reworked the tiers. Some of the items recommended are due to a gradual decline in enrollment. Mr. Amons reviewed the proposal and the key elements included in the draft budget, the expected tap on the education fund, expected revenues, and the Challenge for Change request from the State. He said the draft budget has a few key assumptions including the addition of the FY11-ARRA-funded network administrator job, \$42,000 addition for Porter Place, wage increases which reflect contracts and 3% increase for health insurance. Ms. Moran said the "cut list" has been revised after many discussions.

MOTION:
APPROVE
STC FY 12
BUDGET AS
PRESENTED

DRAFT FY12
BUDGET
PRESENTA-
TION

Ms. Moran highlighted many of the items on the first tier of cuts. Some items are maintenance. Items #10-21 are based upon the gradual decline in enrollment. The reductions amount to 13 positions, of which three are accomplished through retirements and ten job losses. Tier #2 items are "things", not "people", except for one day custodian who is retiring. Ms. Moran said the administration is not recommending tier #3 items, but they are provided at Board request. The items on the final page are things which were eliminated from the original administrative "cut list". Based upon more analysis and input, the administration is asking those items to *not* be considered for cuts.

Mr. Courcelle said if the Board set a budget identical to FY11, there would need to be \$418,573 in cuts. To tap the education fund for the same amount as in FY11, there would need to be \$752,996 in cuts. To meet the Challenge for Change request, there would need to be \$1,359,996 in cuts.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- The VPA has talked about restructuring athletic divisions. Can there be a north / south split to save money? Ms. Moran said the VPA is involved in discussions but a north / south split cannot work because most of the Division I schools are in the north. There would be safety issues.
- There was further discussion and clarification on the impacts of the tier #1 cuts, items #10-21 regarding the teachers retiring and the other positions being cut.
- Tier #1, items #14-21, would there be elimination of a program or programs? Ms. Moran said only the MS Industrial Arts program. The position is being eliminated due to a retirement. All other programs will be maintained and Ms. Moran explained some of the logistics.

- Will there be difficulties meeting student schedule requests at the high school with the reductions? Ms. Moran said there will still be 1000 students in the high school and they each take 6-8 classes a year. She said depending on what students request, there should not be problems. However, not everyone gets every course they request. The average class size at RHS will be 17.1 after the reductions. It is still a very low figure.
- Mr. Fingon said he does not like Challenge for Change. He thinks in this fiscal environment, it is important to level fund or reduce our request from the education fund but he does not like cutting for any reason other than enrollment. He is comfortable with tiers #1 and 2, even though they will be hard.
- Regarding the \$132,000 debt service for STC, is that interest and principal? Mr. Amons said it is both interest and principal. This year we will make an interest-only payment.
- Commissioner Dress said when the ARRA-funded network administrator was hired, the Board was told it was a one year position. Ms. Moran said when all the ARRA-funded positions were brought forward, they were for one year. At this time, the network administrator is the only position being absorbed. The school psychologist and several other programs are not being continued. Ms. Moran said we believe we cannot run the system without a network administrator. Ms. Dress said if it was presented that way, it would have been OK but she did not hear that. She said she does not know if she would have voted for that person.
- Some of the items on tier #3 were on the tier #1 previously. Why were they moved? Ms. Moran said part of the process was to put out suggestions and get input. When we looked at the impact of volunteers coordinators, library aides and RHS home-school coordinator, it was decided to move them to tier #3. There was a lot of input regarding field trips and families and teachers do not want to see them eliminated. Textbooks moved and were reduced because we are not spending as much on books due to technology.
- Regarding the school bus on tier #3, how many buses do we buy? Ms. Moran said annually, we plan to replace two buses on a rotating plan. We have between 20-22 buses.
- How many assistant principals are there at RIS? Ms. Moran said there is one principal and two assistants for 625 students. All the assistant principals are also licensed in special education and they manage the special education programs in those schools. Most other schools have special education coordinators.
- Mr. Book said he agrees with Ms. Dress on the ARRA-funded network administrator. He said we did not have it a few years ago and he thinks we can live without it again. Mr. Amons said it was said clearly at the time that if we would want to keep the network administrator in the future, we would cut elsewhere to make it happen. He said we are cutting 13 positions. Mr. Book said for him, there would have to be a cut coming from tier #3 to add in the network administrator.
- When we look at grants, revenues, and paying for positions, do we look at each pot of money and where it is coming from and who can it fund? Which jobs? Mr. Amons said the information can be put together. But it is all assumed in these recommendations.
- What is the difference in the rental of facility for almost \$60,000?? Mr. Amons said Rutland Mental Health had been paying rent on the space they were using at Success.

Citizen input:

- Cindy Kilic-Murray of Rutland said she will help with Budget Buddies as long as there are no cuts beyond tier #1. She is sad about the ten teachers losing jobs although she likes the average class size at the high school. She asked about RMS. Ms. Moran said it is harder to say because the program is teamed, but it is about 15-18 students. She said if there are elementary cuts, those classes would be about 20-22 students each. Ms. Kilic-Murray said our schools have students in poverty and RHS is a checkmarked school. We need to maintain the integrity of the program and she said class size has a lot to do with it.
- Ruthellen Weston of Rutland City said she is glad to hear the Board is leaning against meeting the Challenge for Change target. There will be a new governor soon with different priorities and there is the \$19 million. She recommended waiting until more is known from the state. Ms. Weston said she thinks taxes should be raised in order to pay for things that are important. She recommended cherry-picking from the tiers. She would like to see programs, teachers and secretaries kept. She said she really wants to see shop class kept and theater and music are really important for students. She asked why there are not more cuts in sports or driver's education. She suggested asking taxpayers for more money and if the budget is voted down, then eliminate items.

Synopsis of class sizes with the different tier cuts.

- K-6 - an average of about 20-22
- RMS - this is difficult to figure because of the teams; about 15-18
- RHS - average of 17.1

Ms. Moran said currently, K-6 classes average approximately 18 students.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Could the literacy coaches be grant funded? Ms. Moran said it is all in the budget. There are parts or all of people which are fully grant, partially grant, or SIG funded. There are not separate categories.
- Do we know class sizes around the state? Ms. Moran said she does not think there is an accurate resource.
- What will the network administrator cost? Ms. Moran said approximately \$65,000 with salary and benefits.
- Could there be part time or job sharing for some of the programs? For example to offer the Industrial Arts class. Ms. Moran said it is hard to do and could cost more because of pro-rating benefits. Ms. Moran said she has presented recommendations from the administrative team. Do we replace someone being laid off with someone new? Ms. Moran said the music teacher elimination is due to declining enrollment, there will still be a program. What about the ELL program? Ms. Moran said that is enrollment driven. The ELL teachers are K-12 and we will still have one.

PERSONNEL

Motion by Fingon / Towle to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 434 dated Nov. 19, 2010, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #434

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

There was discussion about the salary increase for coaches. Ms. Moran said there is a 3% increase. There was discussion on the grid used to determine coaches' salaries: years experience, size and exposure of program, amount of travel, and number of games. Ms. Dress said she will vote against the motion because she questions whether RHS needs two snowboarding coaches, two cheerleading coaches and some of the other coaches. Ms. Moran said some of the jobs and salaries are split, one salary cut between two people. Ms. Dress said there is a lot in the winter coaching appointments she objects. Mr. Fingon asked if the coaches salaries could be level-funded. Ms. Moran said these are budgeted for this year. She said it could be discussed but not in this context. Mr. Fingon asked why the Board is rubber-stamping it. Mr. Courcelle said if the Board votes affirmatively, they will be approved. If the vote is negative, it will go back. Mr. Fingon asked for an amendment.

**PERSONNEL
cont.**

The motion to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 434 dated Nov. 19, 2010 was withdrawn by Fingon / Towle.

**MOTION
WITH-
DRAWN FOR
PERSONNEL
MEMO #434**

Motion by Towle / Book to approve Sections A and B(1), Licensed and Non-licensed sections of the Personnel Memorandum No. 434 dated Nov. 19, 2010. Motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #434
SECTIONS A
& B(1)**

Motion by Towle / Forshay to approve B(2) of the Licensed and Non-licensed sections of the Personnel Memorandum No. 434 dated Nov. 19, 2010.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #434
SECTION
B(2)**

Mr. Cavacas recused himself.

Mr. Fingon asked if the salaries could be frozen. Ms. Moran suggested that it not be done at the table. She asked for direction if the appointments are not approved. She said it is a change in the middle of the year. Mr. Cooke said he agrees conceptually but we have had coaches paid in the year under one set of guidelines and he thinks we should continue.

Motion passed with two no votes (Fingon, Dress) and one abstention (Cavacas).

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Business Report - None

**SUPERIN-
TENDENT'S
ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

Announcements

- Thanks to everyone who contributed to celebrations, festivals, etc. Happy Thanksgiving to everyone.
- Rutland Public Schools had the largest number of miles for the October Walk-About award. Thanks to everyone
- Congratulations to Pamela Reed for completing the VT Leadership Institute at the Snelling Center.
- Peter Amons was awarded a Service Award at RDEC's annual meeting.
- During the fall athletic season, RHS was the highest scorer in sportsmanship in soccer, field hockey, and girls soccer.
- Legislative breakfast will be held November 29 at 7:30 am at Longfellow.

Committee Reports - None

**COMM.
REPORTS**

New Business

**NEW
BUSINESS**

Mr. Cooke asked the administration to put the discussion of coaching contracts on a list for future discussion. He said conceptually, he agrees with looking at a freeze during these economic times. Ms. Moran said it to the Athletic Committee. It was clarified that the request is for all athletic and co-curricular coaches / advisors. Ms. Moran said teacher leader stipends are fixed and do not change from year to year. They are not included.

**REFER
COACHING
STIPENDS
TO
ATHLETIC
COUNCIL**

Old Business - Happy birthday to Commissioner Shimp.

**OLD
BUSINESS**

Motion by Towle / Book at 8:21 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 9:10 pm.

ADJOURN

Motion by Book / Cooke to adjourn at 9:10 pm. Passed.

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary