

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
JANUARY 11, 2011**

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 Epton
Ellie McGarry
Bill Olsen
Patricia Aigner
Bob Johnson
Jay Slenker
John Rice
Cathy Farman
Susanne Engels
Jessica Henderson
Glenn Olson
Wil Cunningham

**CALL TO
ORDER**

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

ROLL CALL

**WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATION**

Written Communication - Acting Clerk Forshay read a letter to the Board from a middle school student asking that the Tech Ed program not be eliminated. The student wrote about all the good things about Tech Ed class and the program and how much they enjoy it and learn from it. The student wrote they have many friends and know of many other students who also really like the program. The letter asked the School Board to vote to keep Tech Ed.

**RE:
INDUSTRIAL
ARTS
PROGRAM**

Oral Communication - Ruth Ellen Weston of Church St. submitted a petition to the Board with more than 100 signatures in support of the Industrial Arts program. She started collecting signatures a week ago.

Ernie Clerihew, RMS Industrial Arts teacher, urged the Board to continue to fund the RMS Industrial Arts program. He said he is retiring but does not think it is in the interest of the students to eliminate the program. He understands the district will be getting \$447,000 from the Federal Educations Jobs fund and that this is money that is supposed to prevent educator layoffs. He asked about the status of the Industrial Arts program in light of this new funding. Mr. Courcelle said it will be discussed later during the budget talks.

**MOTION:
MINUTES
12/14/10
MEETING**

Motion by Towle / Fagan to accept the minutes of the Dec. 14, 2010 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**EDUCATION
REPORT**

FY 12 Budget Ratification - Mr. Courcelle reflected on the process of building the FY12 budget. He reviewed the Challenges for Change request and said we responded to the Commissioner saying we would reduce our draw on the education fund by

**FY 12
BUDGET
RATIFICA-
TION**

approximately \$200,000 from our tap last year. Mr. Courcelle reviewed how we build our budget, which is based upon an incremental budgeting process.

Mr. Courcelle said Mr. Clerihew mentioned the +\$400,000 the State has indicated we will be getting from the federal government. He asked Board members to listen to the caution we have been hearing from Montpelier regarding what is looming for FY13. Board members have heard that FY13 will be an even harder year with respect to the fiscal condition of the State. Mr. Courcelle said when the State provided the Challenges for Change target for Rutland City, it was a large cut, especially since we are a low spending district. He said what we do this year will set the tone for the FY13 budget. The state may direct a particular cut for FY13 which might be deeper than FY12.

Mr. Amons said since the last meeting, we have received tax rates, although they are not yet finalized. There are 11 steps to get to the tax rate which shows on tax bills and Mr. Amons explained those steps. He presented a worksheet based upon the budget discussed at the last meeting and the latest tax information with an \$.87 tax assumption. It shows an increase of \$.0049 in the tax rate on tax bills. Mr. Amons reviewed the process the state used based upon the Challenge for Fund results. The State collected about 20% of what they had targeted. Ms. Moran said based upon this information, the taxes on an average house valued at \$150,000 would increase \$7.35 a year.

There were questions and discussion from Board members:

- Some school districts, such as Burlington and Essex, have asked for an additional \$1 million tap on the education fund. Rutland City has to compensate for the \$200,000 less tap on the education fund but also for these two large districts.
- The municipal budget is a dollar spent for a dollar taxed. Education taxes are paid to the State. We will make the decision on the best information we currently have but other school districts' spending patterns effect us.
- There is a good chance the tax rate will become \$.88. If it does, all the numbers change.
- Mr. Amons said the State has received \$19 million from the federal government for education job retention. They divided it using the same formula as the tap on the education fund. Our share will be \$447,000, which will have to be used for wages. It can be spent during FY12 and FY13. Mr. Amons said of the \$447,000, we could take out \$93,000 for FY12 and flatline taxes year over year. If the tax rate was \$.88, it would take \$394,000 of the \$447,000 to flatline taxes.
- Commissioner Cooke said he would like to have a 0% increase. He agrees that FY13 will be harder than FY12. He said he thinks there is a good chance the tax rate will be \$.88.
- Mr. Amons said the Board needs to vote on the expense part of the budget tonight. They do not have to decide on the revenues until June 1. He said the State has told him to use \$.87 and that advice came in today.
- Commissioner Fagan said he spoke to people in the Statehouse today and while there was no firm answer, he was told we should use \$.87. He believes there needs to be a 0% tax increase and said there would be an opportunity to make adjustments as the year progresses, if appropriate.
- Commissioner Cavacas said he agrees that the budget increase should be 0%. He believes FY13 will be worse and does not think the Board should use any of

the \$447,000 for FY12 because he thinks it will be needed in FY13.

- What about the contingency? Mr. Amons said it is budgeted at \$250,000 and he would be comfortable to reduce it because in the past few years, we have not spent it all. He said the \$93,000 could come from a reduction in the contingency line item in order to get to 0%.
- What about the carry forward? Mr. Amons said if there is anything left over in contingency, it automatically becomes surplus and carries over. He is forecasting \$800,000 of revenue carrying over, which is a drop of \$200,000 from the previous year. The contingency amount is not pulled out as a separate concept but included in the overall surplus.
- A school bus is another thing we can cut. Each bus is budgeted at \$90,000. We can look at revenues as we move forward.
- Mr. Courcelle said he is concerned with taking too much from the \$447,000 because of the projections for FY13. He said the board has made difficult discussions. The budget reduction is even greater with inflation factored in. There are tough choices and he thinks the Board will be revisiting them in FY13.
- Are we discussing reducing from the Tiers, rather than taking the \$93,000 from contingency?
- Commissioner Fingon said he is comfortable with the cuts on page 1 of the Tiers. They are close to the 0% budget increase; \$7 a year increase for someone with a home valued at \$150,000. On a million dollar home, it is \$49. He does not want to go further into the Tiers or take the money from the federal grant. He said he thinks that no matter what we do this year, the State will ask for more cuts next year. He said the Board has worked hard and brought the budget down close to 0%. These are recommendations from the Administration and he is not comfortable cherry-picking.
- Mr. Courcelle said the cuts are already deep into Tier 2. What do we need to do to achieve 0%. Ms. Moran said there would have to be \$93,000 more in cuts.
- Mr. Cavacas said he thinks the Board needs to hit 0% increase and he agrees with Mr. Fingon about the Tiers. He said he is comfortable cutting from contingency. In a year, we will have an idea about FY13 and can tap into the \$447,000 grant for the rest of FY12, if appropriate.
- Mr. Courcelle said contingency is a reserve in case we have an unanticipated major expense, such a building failure. The Board needs to be cognizant of what contingency is for. Mr. Cooke is the Chair of the Building Committee and they would have to be aware that contingency would be \$150,000 instead of \$250,000 if that was the line item being cut.
- The \$447,000 grant is an earmark to be used for salaries.
- Mr. Fagan said he would go along with reducing the contingency line item but is concerned about potential situations, such as the one we had at RMS. Could we delay the purchase of a second school bus until partway through the year and we know how the contingency is doing? Mr. Amons said he does not like delaying bus purchases because it leads to more expensive situations for the future, but it could be done.
- The grant from the State is to be allocated over two years, not more than that. Anything we do not plan to use in the first fiscal year, we should plan on using in the second fiscal year.
- How conservative was Mr. Amons in projecting revenues for next year? If the revenue figure increases, that would help. Mr. Amons said he is not conservative

at all. He feels he needs to provide the most accurate projection he can. He said he feels it is already stretched.

- What about the reimbursement for special education? Might that change? Ms. Moran and Mr. Fagan both said they feel that it is a good discussion, but they do not think there will be any change at this time. Mr. Fagan explained how much the Legislature has already “shorted” the education fund.
- What does Mr. Rice think about delaying the bus purchase? Mr. Rice said it can be delayed but the Board should be aware that delaying these purchases leads to increases in expenses in the future.
- Commissioner Dress said she is not comfortable taking the money from the contingency fund because with the reduction in some items from Tier 2, some of those items might need to be done. Ms. Dress explained she is not running for the Board again because personally, she cannot afford to live in the City anymore. She explained how hard her financial situation has become with the very high taxes. She asked Board members to not raise taxes. She said we are cutting frills for the students but she has cut frills from her life. She asked Board members to keep the increase at 0%, if not lower.
- Mr. Courcelle said the Board is conscious of the effect on the residents. State education funding makes it problematic for school boards. He said the Board’s decision is based upon best information we have but we do not have all the figures or know what the legislature will do.
- Commissioner Towle reviewed the figures in Tier 1 and Tier 2, up to line 12, and said he feels there is a miscalculation which will be \$40,400 to the better than we are calculating. The numbers were reviewed and discussed. To reach a 0% increase, this should reduce the amount the Board needs to cut to \$53,000.
- Mr. Courcelle said to get to 0% increase, the Board can approve a budget totalling \$44,475,281, which means finding an additional \$93,000 in revenues or they could approve a budget in the amount of \$44,382,281 and decide to lower expenditures by \$93,000. These scenarios would hold the \$447,000 from the federal grant in abeyance until FY13.

Motion by Cavacas / Fagan to approve an expenditures budget for FY12 in the amount of \$44,382,281, which is a 0% increase for the education tax rate on tax bills from FY11.

**MOTION:
TO
APPROVE
AN
EXPEN-
DITURES
BUDGET
FOR FY12**

There was further discussion:

- Is it possible to get a clarification on the \$40,000 miscalculation before deciding? Mr. Amons said it will take him more than a few minutes to clarify the numbers.
- On Tier 3, #5, 8 and 9 and 10, are those extras? Ms. Moran said #5 is a full time staff position. #8 and 9 are a combination of a number of teacher leaders. It is a modest stipend added together. #10 is for two full time positions partially grant-funded and partially locally-funded. She said #8, 9, and 10 are all pivotal to the school improvement process and are not considered extras. How is #10 different than the SIG grant funded positions? Ms. Moran said these have been in existence since before the SIG funding. The funds cannot be used to supplant existing positions. The two literacy coaches are important to the work we have been doing K-6.
- Mr. Cooke said he fears the tax rate will increase to \$.88. Mr. Courcelle said if that occurs, we would have the ability to use the federal grant of \$447,000 to backfill. Mr. Amons said the action the Board is taking gives the most flexibility. There is a

cut of \$93,000 in expenses and it leaves the \$447,000. The Board can use that money if that have to, to buy down a tax increase if the tax rate is \$.88.

**FY 12
BUDGET
RATIFICA-
TION, cont.**

- There are many taxpayers who have lost jobs or taken paycuts. There are people really struggling. Even \$20 on \$100,000 valued house is significant.
- There was discussion on the wording for the ballot. Mr. Courcelle reviewed that tonight is just an approval on the expenditure budget. He reviewed the time line for the budget vote and for upcoming meetings.

**VOTE ON
MOTION TO
APPROVE
EXPEN-
DITURES
BUDGET**

Motion for an expenditures budget for FY12 in the amount of \$44,382,281 passed with one no vote (Book)

Community Outreach and Budget Buddies - Ms. Moran said there has been an active citizen group to conduct informational work in the community between now and town meeting. Former Board members Ms. Kilic-Murray and Ms. Fucci have agreed to work on this and it would be nice to have a Board member involved. Mr. Courcelle said the purpose of the meetings is to provide information and answer questions. It is not advocacy.

**COMMUN-
ITY
OUTREACH
& BUDGET
BUDDIES**

Legal Warning for Budget - Motion by Cavacas / Fagan to approve the Legal Warning as attached with the amount of \$44,382,281 inserted. Passed.

**MOTION:
APPROVE
THE LEGAL
WARNING
FOR THE
BUDGET.**

Motion by Towle / Forshay to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 437 dated Jan. 7, 2011, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #437**

The retirements, resignations and family / medical leaves were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Ms. Moran said of the retirements, two of the positions will be filled and the others will not. They were accounted for during the budget process.

Motion passed by all those in attendance.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Business Report - Ms. Moran said the FY 12 tuition rate needs to be set. The memo shows tuition at area schools as well as large schools elsewhere in the state. Rutland High has the lowest tuition of them all. Mr. Fagan read the list of the schools and their tuition rates.

**MOTION:
SET FY12
TUITION
RATES**

Motion by to Book / Towle to approve the recommended school year tuition rates for FY12 in the amount of \$11,575 for Secondary (7-12), \$7,600 for Elementary and \$20,000 for Success. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

Bid Award - Mr. Rice said this was approved already and was awarded to a local vendor several months ago. The vendor was unable to locate the vehicle at the cost with our specifications and it was rebid. It is the same package but with a 2011 vehicle. Bids came in a little lower. There are three bids and the recommendation is for the lowest bidder.

**BID AWARD
FOR A
CARGO VAN**

Motion by Book / Fagan to award the bid for the replacement of the cargo van to G. Stone Motors for \$19,799 as presented. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

**MOTION:
APPROVE
BID FOR
CARGO VAN**

Announcements

- Congratulations to Student School Board Representative Blake Bohlig for being accepted early decision to Duke University.
- Compliments to Patricia Aigner and Jack Clay who were chosen to be presenters at the upcoming International Technology Conference.
- Ms. Moran commended all employees for meeting and exceeding our pledge to United Way. It was a difficult campaign this year but employees pledged \$8500 and raised \$8805 district-wide. Thanks to the key people in each building.
- There are concerts coming up for all K-2 students at Northwest. As part of a program with a Southern Vermont Arts Council grant, all students participated in writing a class song, and decorating a song book.
- RISE students from Ishidoriya, Japan will be arriving in Rutland on Jan. 17. They will be coming to Northwest School on Jan. 21. They will also be shadowing age-mates. They will be presenting things to our students about their culture.
- On January 13, there will be the second of three Principal's Teas at Northeast. The topic will be Primary Mathematics and guest speaker will be Mathematics Coach, Dana Johnson. Also at Northeast, Spirit Day is January 14. Teacher Summer Stoutes will be hosting a series of three Parenting Workshops focusing on Parental Involvement. The first session will be on January 19. The PTC movie night is January 21 featuring Toy Story III.
- RIS held grade level assemblies regarding the campaign about "Take a stand against bullying". The entire school stood in unison against bullying and how to combat bullying in their school. Their annual Grocery Bingo will be January 26.
- The annual 8th Grade Open House is scheduled for Wednesday, January 19th beginning at 6pm in the gymnasium. There will be presentations on academic programs, tours of the building, and opportunities to meet with co curricular advisors and athletic coaches.
- The Unpredictables entertained the folks in the Paramount who were waiting to give blood at the Gift of Life Marathon. They also performed on the radio before the holidays.
- The RHS Tri-M Music Honor Society recently donated food and gifts for the holiday season to one local family through the RRMC's Adopt-a-Family program. About three-quarters of the cost for the Adopt-a-Family baskets was earned through sales of Tri-M's "2010-2011 Winter Celebration" CD.
- Legislative updates will be forthcoming.
- The newsletters from the Howe Center Campus and the Tapestry program were distributed. The Howe Center recently graduated seven students. They all have post-secondary plans and will participate at graduation in June.

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

Committee Reports - Policy committee meeting this Thursday.

**COMM.
REPORTS**

New Business

Mr. Courcelle encouraged residents to run for a seat on the Rutland City School Board. He said petitions need 35 signatures and are due on January 24.

**NEW
BUSINESS**

**SCHOOL
BOARD
SEATS OPEN**

Old Business

Network Administrator Position - Ms. Moran said there is an information enclosure from Patricia Aigner. Mr. Fagan thanked her for her work outlining the amount of things that need to be done in the technology department.

**OLD
BUSINESS**

**NETWORK
ADMINI-
STATOR
POSITION**

Peter Mello's Letter to Shap Smith and Peter Peltz - Informational in packets.

**LETTER TO
LEGISLA-
TORS**

Motion by Towle / Book at 8:07 pm, after a recess, for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel, legal contractual 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 8:30 pm.

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

Motion by Book / Cooke to adjourn at 8:30 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary