

**RUTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS
NOVEMBER 29, 2011**

School Board Members Present:

Peter Mello
Christopher Book
Hurley Cavacas, Jr.
Wayne Cooke
Richard Courcelle
Peter Fagan
Collin Fingon
Jamie Pemrick
Erin Shimp
Kate Thomas
Rob Towle
Caroline Corsones

Also Present:

Superintendent Mary Moran
Assistant Superintendent Rob Bliss
Peter Amons
Kristen Hubert
Lyle Jepson
Bill Olsen
Kristin Francoeur
Glenn Olson
Jay Slenker
Ellie McGarry
Patricia Aigner

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 Fagan / Towle to accept the minutes of the Nov. 8, 2011 regular school board meeting as written. Motion passed unanimously by all those in attendance.

MOTION:
MINUTES
11/08/11
MEETING

Written Communication - Ms. Moran read a letter from Larry Lattanzi with thanks for his retirement party and for his 17 years working in the school district.

WRITTEN &
ORAL
COMMUN-
ICATIONS

Oral Communication - None

SPECIAL
RECOG-
NITION

Special Recognition - Mr. Olsen said Adam Rosenberg has been given a unique opportunity as he was invited to attend a conference in Austria next week at the Salzburg Global Seminar. The Seminar deals with issues of global significance and the conference is about Social and Educational Mobility. Mr. Rosenberg will be representing RHS as a practitioner and it is a great honor. Mr. Rosenberg said he sees what he will be doing there advancing and enhancing his work here because of the socioeconomic climate in Rutland and Vermont. Both Commissioner Villaseca and Superintendent Moran have suggested resources he can take with him. The purpose of the session is to set some policy recommendations and he would like to bring them back and perhaps implement them here. Through the School Improvement Grant, a goal is to bring all students up to standards and this is a connection. Ms. Moran said Mr. Rosenberg is one of 60 young professionals from around the world to be invited to this prestigious event. Mr. Rosenberg was congratulated.

EDUCATION
REPORT

RHS Program of Studies - Mr. Olson said the Program of Studies is a continuation of the school improvement work. The teachers were invited to highlight two important segments of the Program of Studies. He reviewed some of the year's changes and explained how changes come about, such as curriculum additions. There are a number of housekeeping changes, mostly done to more accurately represent what we are actually doing. There are no staff changes involved. Not everything listed will actually run; there has to be enough interest.

RHS
PROGRAM
OF STUDIES

Mr. Olsen said Ms. Kravitz and Ms. Wallstrom have have spent time developing exciting new opportunities for students. Ms. Kravitz explained the Global Studies concentration, which will be a “major” in the high school curriculum. Students would elect to take the courses which are interdisciplinary and globally focused. It encourages them to take action on their learning and will be trying to solve real world problems. She said all freshmen will automatically be in this track and then students can decide to continue in this line. Juniors or seniors would do a capstone project in which they would be engaged in real research that is globally important on a topic they are interested in. They would also encourage more students to pursue more world language classes. The capstone project could be local or global. Examples include something similar to the water project the freshmen team did this fall or looking at current issues in Africa. How can a student in Vermont do something about it? Ms. Kravitz said what Adam Rosenberg is doing ties in with this.

Ms. Wallstrom will be teaching a class called New England Landscapes. It will be taught over a semester with an optional YES plan and potentially a summer program. She is waiting to hear on a funded internship opportunity for the summer work. The class focus is field based study of local geology through chemistry, biology and physics. It will be open to juniors or seniors and students would learn the skills they need to do field work. The campus would be the laboratory to practice techniques. She described some of the work students would do and then what the YES plan would entail. Ms. Wallstrom also explained the potential summer program which is proposed for working with Princeton University and can be linked with Castleton State or UVM in the future.

Commissioner Thomas said she is very impressed with the new programs and thanked the teachers. Mr. Olsen emphasized that this work is the continuation of School Improvement Grant work. These teachers have been working with others to put it all together and the new course and program are good examples of what the school is trying to do holistically. Mr. Mello said he is impressed with the overall comprehensiveness of the Program of Studies. There is a lot of commitment and hard work involved.

Motion by Towle / Cavacas at 6:55 pm for the board to convene to executive session for the purpose of discussing contractual matters, the premature release of information regarding those subjects which would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Passed unanimously. The Board came out of executive session at 7:10 pm.

**MOTION:
EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

Draft Budget for Discussion - Ms. Moran said this is a preliminary discussion. The draft budget has been shared with staff and she and Mr. Bliss will continue to meet with staff to answer their questions. Mr. Amons said there is no information yet on the tax rate. This first draft budget shows a budget-to-budget increase of 1.75%. He said 1% of the budget equals \$443,000. That is how much is needed to move up or down one percentage. Mr. Amons said this draft continues all programs and current status with no changes in either. The health insurance increase is estimated at a 5.5% increase. Wage assumptions reflect all settled wage contracts.

**DRAFT
BUDGET
FOR DISCU-
SSION**

Mr. Amons presented the expense items showing a proposed change of more than \$20,000 from the current budget.

- We have been told to budget between a 3-5% increase in health insurance

premiums. Other employers are reducing health insurance benefits and accordingly, some of our employees are picking up our plan instead of opting for the buy-out. This increases our costs. Also, there seem to be more employees moving from single or two-person plans to family plans. The total increase is 6.5% which is one half of the \$775,000 increase.

- Salaries and benefits make up about 80% of the district's expenses. Assumptions are made per settled labor contracts.
- There are increases in Other Professional Services, which is every expense associated with buying outside services.
- Electricity had been underbudgeted this year so it is increased for next year. This does not necessarily mean we are using more electricity. Mr. Amons said we had underbudgeted this past year; he had not kept up to date with some of CVPS' increases.
- We burn about 170,000 gallons of fuel oil in a year. We had been burning about 200,000 gallons before the energy performance contract. This line item is up \$60,000 from budget to budget because the price per gallon increased.
- Our tuition to Stafford Technical Center is increasing because we are paying for extra students. The tuition is based on a six semester average.
- We are now fully funding the city pension. It just goes up now as payroll increases.
- Building improvements of \$24,000 represents carpeting, paving and removing of asbestos tile from the catwalk at RIS.
- The total IT budget is up about \$15,000 and this year it is more network and less new computers.

Mr. Amons reviewed the proposed budget expense reductions:

- There are fewer teacher and administrator retirement incentives. This line decreases by \$23,000.
- Travel expenses are reduced as more professional development is being done in-house with trainers coming in rather than people going out.
- Desktop equipment
- Tuition is decreasing approximately \$78,000. When families move in to the district with a special needs student already receiving outside services elsewhere, we continue the service. But Ms. McGarry's department works hard to bring the student into the system which reduces the tuition expense. It can fluctuate year to year.
- Equipment is dropping \$80,000; it is mostly at STC. Mr. Amons reviewed that this line item includes all different types of equipment such as SmartBoards, projectors, furniture, etc. STC's expenses in our budget because it is included in the total the voters approve.
- It was noted that John Rice's expenditures are spread throughout different line items including Equipment, Supplies, Building Improvements. There was discussion on the STC expenses. Mr. Amons said our true incremental expense for the Tech Center is shown as tuition to STC for our students. He also said all Salaries are included in the Salary line item, including those which are grant funded; everyone who gets a paycheck regardless of where the money comes from. At the next Board meeting, Mr. Amons will present the revenues. Commissioner Fagan said it appears we are double counting the equipment for STC. Mr. Amons said we are not; it will become clearer when the revenues are

- presented at the next meeting.
- The long term debt is decreasing. One bond is for building the high school in 1993 and the other is for renovating the elementary schools in 2003. Effective July 1, 2014, there will be no more payments on the high school bond. Mr. Amons said that might be a time to look into working on some items from John Rice's \$2.6 million list. Mr. Rice has also suggested that starting in 2013, money be set aside annually in a sinking fund for replacement of the artificial turf at the high school. The turf has a 10-12 year life and will cost \$600,000 to replace. Commissioner Fagan asked about the possibility of refinancing the elementary school debt to a lower interest rate and Mr. Amons said the Vermont Bond Bank is working on that. Ms. Moran said we did that with the high school and saved a lot.
- Mr. Amons reviewed the energy performance contract. The lease increases each year which is supposed to be in line with decreases in energy costs. We used 29,000 gallons less of fuel oil. He is not sure about electricity kilowatt savings. Johnson Controls will be analyzing it and will either pay us or making adjustments. He said we are still trying to figure that out on the electric bills. There was discussion about the electricity bills. Mr. Amons said the reason for the increase in the budget figure is not because of increased usage but because he did not catch up with some of CVPS' increases and we had underbudgeted last year. When Johnson Controls does the kilowatt usage study, they will add in the changes we have made since then and discount that.

Mr. Mello said this is a first draft budget. There is no reduction in staff or cuts in programs. The budget increase year-to-year is up 1.75%. We do not have other numbers, such as the actual tax base number, the CLA or the base, which is part of the formula. Mr. Mello commended Mr. Amons for the complete and well-done presentation. He said the Board was given the information in a clear way which was easy to understand.

PERSONNEL

Motion by Cavacas / Towle to approve the Licensed and Non-licensed section of the Personnel Memorandum No. 453 dated Nov. 21, 2011, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

**MOTION:
PERSONNEL
MEMO #453**

The family medical leave, appointments, and retirements were reviewed by Superintendent Moran. They are attached.

Motion passed unanimously.

**BUSINESS
REPORT**

Mower Bid

**MOTION:
MOWER BID**

Motion by Cooke / Towle to award the purchase of the Toro mower with front frame mount for a total amount of \$28,664.84.

Funds for this purchase have been previously approved from 2012 contingency in an amount not to exceed \$32,000. Ms. Moran said Mr. Rice is pleased with what this equipment can do and its versatility.

Passed unanimously.

Announcements

- Ms. Moran said there were excellent Thanksgiving events at all schools.
- At Northeast, the kindergarten classes are involved in a holiday greeting card activity with 50 other kindergarten classes throughout the U.S. Having constructed cards reflective of our State the cards were then sent out to classes in all fifty states and two American air bases in the Middle East. Northeast has a guest Artist in Residence this week, Ilene Blackman, who will be joining Mrs. Hart, the Music Teacher.
- The RMS Term 1 Honor Roll and Student of the Quarter Assembly takes place Friday, Dec. 2 in the RIS Auditorium.
- Ms. Moran announced a \$10,000 anonymous donation from someone from the class of 1957. The money is to be dedicated to the RHS Howe Center Campus to provide scholarship for students after they complete RHS. The donor has been making this gift for the past few years and he was thanked.

**SUPERIN-
PENDENT'S
REPORT**

**ANNOUNCE-
MENTS**

Building Committee - Mr. Cooke said the building committee talked about Watkins. The counter-offer was shared. There has been some postponement on the part of the Housing Trust. We have not heard back anything and the building remains on the market. Mr. Cooke said there was a metal building at Watkins which we agreed to give to the City. It is in the process of being moved. Mr. Rice and his crew have winterized and secured Watkins. It is being checked daily to make sure it is secured for the neighborhood. Mr. Cooke said the building committee also discussed Dana. The building is also being secured and winterized. They are working with the City to make sure everything is out of the building. Ms. Moran said the committee will probably have a recommendation on Dana at the next meeting.

**COMM.
REPORTS**

**BUILDING
COMM.**

New Business - None

**NEW
BUSINESS**

Old Business - Mr. Mello recently spent time at RHS with Caroline Corsones observing teachers in unique situations. Caroline reviewed some of the things they observed. She said they sat in on teachers working together to improve student learning and to better align the courses. They looked at tests, teaching styles, etc. Mr. Mello said it was done in a collegial way. They are paying attention to what makes a difference for students. Mr. Mello said they also sat in on a math class, a civics class and in the lab. They saw the teacher in the lab giving one-to-one instruction and focused attention.

**OLD
BUSINESS**

**RHS CLASS
OBSERVA-
TIONS**

Motion by Towle / Fagan to ratify the Rutland School Staff Association contract has agreed upon.

**MOTION:
RATIFY
RSSA
CONTRACT**

Mr. Fingon highlighted the agreement. He said it is for three years, FY 12-14. The average salary increase is 2.93%. Employee pension contributions increase from 4% to 4.2% to 4.4% over the three years. Health contributions will increase 10, 11, and 12% over the three years.

Passed unanimously.

Mr. Mello thanked and congratulated staff relations and the RSSA for their work.

Motion by Cooke / Thomas at 7:58 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 8:15 pm.

**PUBLIC
SESSION**

Motion by Cooke / Cavacas to adjourn at 8:15 pm. Passed.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted

Janet Mondlak
Recording Secretary