

Richmond School Board Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2009

Present: Jon Milazzo, Julie Waite, Steve Znamierowski, Scott Lowe, Kristin Fortin, John Alberghini, Joanne Machia

Guests: Diane Wester, Helene Arnold, Lisa Eriksson, Stephen Ackerman, Raechel Barone, Julie Crenshaw, Dave Thomas, Willie Lee, Joan Mangiulli

Public Comment:

- Helene Arnold read the letter she submitted while the board was looking into the interim principal. Her intent was to re-visit the idea of creating an overall vision for the school. Rachel Barone added that the goal is progress in the school but questioned if the visions of the teachers and students are being met or even addressed. Kristin suggested that we establish a meeting with David and begin a dialog to determine what is being done. Steve added that we be sure to include the thoughts off all the parents and greater community.
- Willie Lee said he wanted to express his hope that RES is keeping pace with technological advances and providing the best technology resources for staff and students. He said his wife is an educator in Essex, and classrooms there are equipped with smartboards and projectors.

Negotiations Update: John said the district negotiations committee and representatives of the teachers' union will be meeting on November 4th. The meeting will be facilitated by mediator Ira Lobel and will focus on getting the next contract negotiation off to a good start.

Superintendent's Report: *Facilities Assessment:* John explained that he and Kristin have interviewed several firms in order to find one to conduct a comprehensive facilities assessment at RES. He noted that the district will be saving approx. \$65,000 this year due to staffing and/or benefits changes that were made since the budget was approved. Part of this savings will be spent on paying for a substitute for a teacher who is currently on medical leave, but John said there will be enough left to cover the cost of the facilities assessment. The fee will be \$14,800. John noted that Kristin has extensive professional experience with construction, and they both feel there are too many unknowns about the condition of the building to move forward with any capital improvement projects. John said he and Kristin recommend Dore and Whittier to conduct the assessment, which would take about three weeks to complete.

Update on HINI: John said information seems to change daily, and right now, there doesn't seem to be a huge spike of illness. Julie Crenshaw said she is available to speak to parents, and she also encourages them to contact their pediatrician if they have questions. She also said it seems likely that the CESU vaccination clinics currently scheduled will be delayed, but nothing is definite at this point.

Income from YMCA: John said he wanted to follow up on a question about rental income from the YMCA's after-school program. He explained that \$1500 has actually been the fee for the past several years, not \$2000 as was shown in the budget.

2010-2011 Budget Discussion: Joanne Machia presented the first draft of the 2010-2011 budget. She explained that many of the numbers are still preliminary estimates at this point, but

more concrete information will be available in the months ahead. Joanne said staff salaries are estimated to increase 2.9% because some less experienced were hired over the spring/summer. Health insurance premiums have been projected to increase 10%, and oil has been estimated at \$3.00 per gallon.

Kristin observed that many of the budget items are fixed expenses. Scott asked about the costs for snow removal, which seem to have increased substantially. Joanne said the district only received two bids the last time the contract was put out for bid, and one bidder was from the Morrisville area. She said she was concerned that this might pose a problem given the fact that the school needs to be plowed out early in the morning.

Dave Cobb had prepared some information on projected enrollment in advance of this evening's meeting. Projections show that the enrollment will increase by 9 students compared to the current year. Recommendations from Dave would be to maintain the same staffing level for next year, though he is aware of class size. Most classes are 18-20 students right now, but that is still within the range of school quality standards. If the enrollment were to increase more than expected, there may be a question of adding an additional staff person. Dave also said he sees a need for an increase in secretarial services, and recommended an increase from .6 FTE to 1.0 FTE. The cost for the additional salary and benefits would be \$6000. Dave also identified a need to repair the convection oven in the kitchen and possibly to purchase a food processor. The food processor would enable the food service staff to more easily process foods from local sources. Dave also suggested the board consider budgeting funds for the purchase of several listening stations which would allow students to listen to a story while following along with a printed book. The cost for the stations would be spread over two years: \$1600 this year and \$1280 in FY '12.

John noted that this year's budget picture presents a tremendous challenge for Vermont schools, and the education fund may not be solvent if school budgets increase. He said he has really encouraged principals to find areas where they may be able to shift funding instead of adding additional funding. John said he has never seen a tight financial situation like this in his career. Dave Thomas observed that since inflation is actually negative, it would sense for school budgets to decrease to 98% of the previous year's amount. Dave also said he thought the district had already invested in a facilities assessment a couple years ago, and he questioned the need to repeat the assessment. Board members explained that the previous assessment was not complete, and they said the district did not pay for the service at that point. The board asked Joanne to come back with a budget that shows a 0% increase for the next draft.

Consent Agenda:

- **Principal's Report:** No discussion/questions on the written report.
- **Previous meeting minutes:** The minutes from the Sept. 16, 2009 meeting were approved.
- **RES Warrants:** Warrants in the amount of \$116,536.60 were approved for payment.
- **Committee Reports:**
 - Curriculum: No recent meetings
 - Policy: The consensus among CESU school boards is that this committee will remain as a standing committee and continue to meet on a regular basis.
 - Transportation: No recent meetings

- Executive: Jon said the committee has reviewed the first drafts of the special and central office budgets. He and John also presented a document which outlines the process for conducting a study on school governance. John explained that almost 95% of efforts to consolidate school districts around the state have failed, and he said he feels the state will need to provide some sort of financial incentives for towns that would see their tax rate increase in order for the consolidation efforts to be successful. John explained that statute mandates a planning committee be formed to explore the possibility of consolidating districts, and the RES board would appoint one member to the committee. Dave Thomas said he is a proponent of consolidating districts, and he added that he sees the selection of the school principal as a major factor in setting the tone and future direction of a given school. He noted that each school could still be involved in selecting their leaders and other staff even if the individual school boards did not exist.
- Jon said he is serving on an ad hoc committee focusing on special education. He explained that the committee is looking at ways they might streamline procedures or explore possible funding scenarios. Jon said it is CESU's decision to assess special education costs based on equalized pupils rather than what is actually spent in each individual school district. One of the goals of the committee will be to encourage individual districts to be more aware of their spending.

A motion to accept the consent agenda was made by Scott Lowe; seconded by Julie Waite. The motion passed.

Action Items-Facilities Assessment: *A motion was made by Kristin Fortin to authorize the superintendent to hire Dore and Whittier to perform a comprehensive facilities assessment at a cost not to exceed \$14,800; seconded by Scott Lowe. The motion passed.*

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 17th at 6:30 P.M. in the RES library. Note the change from the usual Wednesday evening meetings. Agenda items will include budget discussion.

A motion was made by Steve Znamierowski to adjourn into executive session for the purposes of discussing personnel; seconded by Scott Lowe. Motion passed.

8:35 Steve made a motion to go into executive session regarding personnel. Kristin seconded.

8:48 Kristen made a motion to come out of executive session, Steve seconded.

8:48 Julie made a motion to adjourn, Steve seconded.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Turner

Unofficial until approved