Rivendell Interstate School District – Board Meeting Minutes
Rivendell Academy, Orford, NH
Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Members Present: Allen Avery, Margaret Gladstone, (Fairlee); Harry Black (Vershire), Doug Tifft (at-large), Juliette Bianco, Carol Sobetzer, Mel Emerson (Orford); Heather Fahy, Beverly Ash (West Fairlee)

Administrators and Staff Present: Noelle Vitt (Head of Schools), Paul Fassler (Head of MS), Gail Keiling (SME Principal/Head of Elementary Program), Bob Sampson (Head of HS), Nicole Saignor (Consultant for Curriculum Coordination & Assessment)

Others Present: Cicely Richardson (Journal Opinion), Penny Mitchell (student representative)

I. Call Meeting: Carol Sobetzer called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

II. Approve Board Minutes of December 5, 2006: Action: Motion was made to approve the minutes of December 5, 2006. Margaret mentioned the joint letter to 6th grade parents as a reminder. Approved.

III. Public Input: None

IV. Communications and Reports: A. Report of the Chair: Carol mentioned the great meeting she attended with Paul and Bob regarding the decision making model that is in place. The long range planning report will be distributed and a meeting scheduled. Carol would like to see changes to the Board agenda, specifically discussion and action and is open to suggestions as to how to maximize the meetings. B. Report of Head of Schools: Noelle mentioned an article in the Valley News from Mary Welch thanking the Academy for the senior meal. Noelle deferred to Bob and Nicole for their reports. Noelle spoke about the grant that she worked on with Nicole in the spring and the Dartmouth science camp work will begin in the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th grades. Hank, Gabi and Noelle met with the web designer last week and are awaiting content to be received by all of the schools. Gabi, Hank, Bob and Noelle will be attending a technology conference next week. Paul and Gail are working together on the transition. Gail has been especially active at WSE these past couple of weeks as Mary has been out with some medical issues. Noelle believes that we are in good shape to report out to the communities on Wednesday evening. Noelle has been working with the Executive Committee on the responsibilities of the Head of Schools. Penny Mitchell introduced herself and is interested in being a student representative and will be plan on attending meetings in the future. This responsibility may be shared with another student. 1) Curriculum Consultant: Nicole reported that the current state is uneven in mathematics testing which focus on skills, problem solving and concepts. The goal of her work is to assist the teachers in getting the most out of the materials, focusing on instruction, working on developing local assessments, which are required by the state, that follow certain strands at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Nicole is meeting with teachers twice a week in the classroom. Doug questioned whether our students are not as engaged as other schools, such as not completing homework. Nicole did not feel that this was the case, nor the biggest obstacle. Nicole spoke about schools with vastly improved math scores and relates it to student engagement in the classroom. Mel asked what the timeframe looked like and if structures are in place for continuity. Nicole said this would be variable based on the teacher, students, etc. On the elementary level there is a ½ time consultant and a model like that would be preferable. Also a place where kids who are struggling could go to get additional support. Nicole said that she does feel we have some disengaged students, even those who understand the concept while other students “catch up.” Paul spoke about the common rubric being utilized by the Middle
School math teachers. 2) **Head of High School:** Bob summarized his report. Margaret asked about the Honors courses and whether there would be something in the Program of Studies regarding the requirements for these classes. This should be in place by spring. Juliette inquired whether we have career clusters. Bob replied that to a certain extent suggestions are made by career choice/interests. Doug inquired about the changing of credits needed to graduate and Bob explained that by Senior year many students could have earned the required credits, excluding Senior Project and English and it is difficult to keep these students engaged. The other option is to require more credits to graduate, which would involve carrying a full schedule all four years. This would allow for more offerings/opportunities, “beefing up the schedule” and more rigorous offerings. For this year ahead only some minor changes are anticipated. Carol suggested more discussion at a later date regarding some of the bigger changes to the schedule with the Board. Juliette mentioned the names of our courses not being easily recognized by colleges. She also inquired about how honors courses are designated on transcripts. At the current time they are indicated with an “H” next to the course name.

**C. Reports of the Committee Chairs:** 1) **Negotiations Committee:** The committee met on January 8th and will again meet again on January 31st. A financial proposal was delivered to the REA and they expect to hear back by the meeting on the 31st. 2) **Community Engagement Committee:** The flyer was mailed and the committee has been working on getting ready for Report Out night. No date scheduled for the next meeting. Carol spoke about having a discussion with administrators regarding the goal of homework expectations. 3) **Finance Committee:** The budget advisory committee will be receiving an updated budget. The first copy they received was in error due to the business office. Meeting updates: The budget advisory committee meeting has been changed from January 18th to January 23rd at 7:00 p.m. The finance committee will meet on January 21st at the District office. It is scheduled on February 13th for the Board meeting to adopt the budget. Allen spoke about the aging population in our towns and that the value of real estate in Fairlee and Orford is comparable to towns south of us making it difficult for young families to move to the area. “The future of Rivendell is in Rivendell’s hands.” Steps have already been taken to improve the reputation of the 6-12 school. No cuts have been made to the budget that was distributed, but realize that some reductions will be necessary to achieve financial goals. The budget is at a 4.4% increase. None of the increase dramatically effects what we are trying to accomplish at Rivendell. There is a .4 increase in the business position, a new position for building operations, a new position for an elementary education assistant, a new position for the planning room/library at the Academy. A .3% increase in administration cost, due to FTE 100% for Bob and Paul. They did not start in time to achieve this status last year. Health insurance costs only increasing by $25,000. Student transportation is up and Vocational Education costs are up due to increased cost and the number of students involved in the program. There is a $20,000 in the technology department increase. Also, an increase in school equipment and books by $15,000, including chemistry books that we currently do not have. Special education costs are down. Out of district placement numbers are down. Allen mentioned that the Board needs to really think about having a facilitator to work with the School Board to analyze data. Margaret inquired about the global language textbooks, specifically this is for updating our current textbooks? Paul reported that middle school level Spanish program is currently borrowing books from another school. She also inquired about the VISIONS program. Allen responded that there is a small amount of money in the budget allocated to this program. Doug inquired about our co-paying the Trail’s Coordinator position. (It is not currently allocated in the budget). Should this be carried forward on the budget or in a grant? The Board will receive the same packet that the budget advisory committee will get including backup documentation. Carol clarified the difference between global languages and foreign languages. (Global language perhaps being a language spoken universally). We are trying to using world languages as the correct terminology.
V. Business Requiring Discussion: A. 2007-2008 School Calendar: Carol asked about the change of date for 3-way conferences. The change is the negotiated date that is the least conflicting with NECAP, etc. Margaret asked about the MLK holiday and the in-service immediately following. This date is new from previous years and would be a change from a Friday in February instead. Doug thought it might be too imposing after just returning from a holiday and thought maybe some other open dates would be preferable. Noelle replied that it is about the work that we are trying to accomplish. Heather wondered if the change in 3-way conference time change might be too far out and is concerned about student progress. There was also some discussion about not having Columbus Day off. Margaret suggested moving January 22 to January 2 for the in-service. Noelle replied that this was not possible due to contractual agreements. Noelle asked the Board if they would like more feedback from parents regarding the calendar. Carol remembered parents not wanting a four day weekend for MLK holiday. Doug mentioned ski Thursday also impacting that week. Juliette felt one 3-day week is better than two 4-day weeks. Noelle suggested that the calendar be adopted with the understanding that she would take it back to the administrative team regarding the 4-day weekend. Action: Motion was made to adopt the 2007-2008 school calendar. Approved. B. 2007-2008 Tuition Rate: Noelle explained how the tuition rate was set at $11,900. Action: Motion was made to adopt the 2007-2008 tuition rate at $11,900.00. Approved. C. Change in February Board Meeting Date: The reason for the change is to allow time for the budget to be ready to be shown to the Board. Action: Motion was made to change the February meeting to the 13th at WSE 6:30 p.m. Approved. D. Timelines for 2007 Annual Meeting: Carol referred to the handout. Action: Motion was made to adopt the timelines for 2007 Annual Meeting. Approved. E. Job Description – Food Service Manager/RA Head Cook Doug had some concern about one person being able to supervise all District kitchen staff. Action: After discussion a motion was made to adopt the job description with the following change: remove Head Cook/RA to read only as Food Service Manager. Approved with this change. F. Change to Technology Curriculum: Action: Motion was made to approve the Technology Curriculum. Approved. G. First Reading of Policies: 1) Admission of Non-Resident Tuition Students, Code F20 – Revision The question arises when a parent is trying to place a student with special needs. Does the cost now belong to the receiving district as the sending school did not actually place the student, it was parent choice? Mel asked if student admittance would be reviewed annually, specifically if space became an issue. If admitted, students would become part of the population regardless of space. On an aside, Mel asked if we need to post a No Hunting sign to protect the school from hunters. Noelle will address this. 2) Curriculum Development, Code G1 – Revision Name change only to reflect current status with the consultant. 3) Tobacco Prohibition, Code E1 – Revision Be sure that our policies are up-to-date. Review.

VI. Business Requiring Action: A. 2007-2008 School Calendar: See above. B. 2007-2008 Tuition Rate: See above C. Change in February Board Meeting Date See above D. Timelines for 2007 Annual Meeting See above E. Job Descriptions See above F. Technology Curriculum: Action: Motion was made to approve the Technology Curriculum. Approved. G. Personnel: Gordon Christie-Maples - Drama Coach, Teddy Reichert – Odyssey of the Mind, Joy Michelson – Yearbook Advisor. Also, $1.00 coaches: Debbie Marsh – Assistant Snowboard Coach, Sam Hanford – Assistant Ski Coach. Approved. Noelle spoke about the interviews for Food Manager position and the unanimous consensus to hire Celise Johnson. Noelle proposed to her that she start on a 20-hour/week basis and serve as the sub, do all the ordering, supervise staff, catch up with paperwork. Currently, two people are doing the Academy lunch program, but Noelle envisions going back to the old model. The kitchen is no longer involved with financial collection. Action: Motion was made to hire the coaches listed above. Approved. Action: Motion was made to hire Celise Johnson as the Food Service Manager. Approved. H. Future Agenda Items: 1) Presentations: a) February – 6th Grade Transition b) World Languages –
March  c) Science – April  d) Music - May  Action:  Motion was made to adjourn and move to executive session at 8:54 p.m.  Approved.

Board came out of Executive Session at 9:15 p.m.

VII. Adjourn:  Action:  Motion was made to adjourn.  Approved.  The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Gray
Interim District Clerk/Treasurer