Members Present: Marc DeBois (Chair), Vanessa DeSimone, David Ricker (Orford); David Gagner, Bruce Lyndes (Fairlee), Kathy Hooke, Jean MacDonald (Vershire), Kevin Dexter, Cory Austin (W. Fairlee); Kathy Blanchard (at-large)

Members Absent: None

Administration and Staff Present: Elaine Arbour (Superintendent); Tammy MacQueen (WES Principal); Michael Foxall (SME Principal); Michael Galli (Dean of Students); Jan Cole (Director of Special Education); Dick Paulson (Chief Financial Officer)

Public Present: Mark Burger, Craig Tomlinson, Michael Lepene, Christine Bills, Amy Fahey, Lauren Warbin, Theresa Woodward, Tami Sullivan, Adam Sullivan (Orford); Iren Otis, Ashely Bean (West Fairlee); Kenneth Champagne, Scott O’Donnell, Kelsi O’Donnell, Marie Gladstone, Lindsey Housington, Joseph Pellegrino, Brandi Mardin, Tim Piper, Samantha Hickman, Courtney Carter, Brooke Gladstone, Matt Jung, Olivia Weale, Jeremy Bacon, Toni Bacon, Clement Powers, Victoria Lacasse, Angela Welch (Fairlee); Melissa Goodrich (Vershire); Kristina Otis (Bradford); Cicely Richardson (Journal Opinion); Tim Camerato (Valley News)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Board Member Resignation (Fairlee)/Discussion of Membership: Marc DeBois reported he received a letter of resignation from Mark Avery. Action: Motion was made to approve the letter of resignation from Mark Avery (Blanchard/Austin) Approved. Elaine Arbour said Mark Avery gave his regrets and has enjoyed his time serving on the Board.

III. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: Revision to add Section IIIA: Election of a New Vice Chair until the next Annual District Meeting in March 2018. 

a) Election of New Vice Chair: Action: Motion was made to elect Bruce Lyndes (Fairlee) as the Vice Chair (Ricker/Austin) Approved.

IV. General Public Comments: Brooke Gladstone (Fairlee) read a statement addressing several concerns including how decisions are made and communication, in particular at the SME preschool and about the Winter Program. She spoke of a petition that was started to show the community cared and also of a survey that the Rivendell Rec initiated to get feedback about their program. There was discussion about improvements and offering a full circle winter program rather than eliminating the program. Arbour acknowledged there was some internal communication issues regarding the preschool program and assured that decision making is with the intent to provide good education services to students. DeBois clarified that the Winter Program and preschool are two separate issues and that normally Winter Program wouldn’t come to the Board level. Keri Gelenian spoke of missed instructional time and said he made the decision to split from the super early release on Thursday for skiers and keep it the normal early release time on Thursdays. Students in good academic standing were allowed to participate, but this has been on ongoing issue. Students not skiing did not receive comparable programs in the afternoon and the inequity issue kept resurfacing. Gelenian said Tammy MacQueen and Michael Foxall worked hard to balance that inequity and Hulbert was offered to help solve this problem, but then the timing didn’t match up. He wrote a letter apologizing for not realizing the change of time and its impact on instruction and cancelled the program at the Academy. Due to the late notice he later decided to let students participate if they were passing all their classes. There was further discussion about those parents/student that don’t want their kids to participate in any of the options. Foxall spoke of wanting a quality winter program for students, but that does not have a negative impact on education.
Victoria Lacasse (Fairlee) spoke about how physical activity does not cause harm, but can rather improve academic performance. B. Gladstone agreed that what is going on now is not working and wondered what a full circle program looks like and why can’t we find something for those students who don’t want to be outside all of the time. She asked that we come up with a way to create a program that doesn’t involve just skiing. DeBois said the ski program is not part of the school or school budget and the Board has no authority over the Rec, although the District has helped to fund Hulbert. Amy Fahey (Orford) said she spoke with the previous superintendent, Dr. Michael Harris, and MacQueen last year, and was asked to present options for an equitable program. She approached Hulbert and they agreed to offer a program. This allowed skiing, skating and Hulbert. The skating rink at Samuel Morey did not work out, but the one at Westshire was beautiful. There was additional discussion about transportation funding, scholarships, donated equipment and services. She added it’s difficult to create all of these options without the support of the school. Tami Sullivan (Orford) spoke about communication issues and added that the ski program gets students outside with minimal parent involvement, but that we should certainly offer alternatives for those who don’t want to ski. It was asked if the Board was willing to help. DeBois spoke of the help the Board provided between the two rec programs – Community Service Organization and the Rivendell Rec, but when the new program started the Board stepped out; it’s a separate entity. Fahey acknowledged it’s just too many volunteers to pull from the community and it would require the participation of teachers and/or paraeducators. DeBois explained that staff fall under a union agreement and some further discussion ensued about staff responsibilities, including professional development time. Michael Payne (Orford) encourages the push of outdoor education and added we should think about using the volunteers we currently have to get together with a group of educators to think about how they might support the district and its vision as a whole – an outdoor program as part of the greater curriculum. DeBois stated that the Board is not involved in the daily operation of the school and that job falls to the administrators. Arbour explained that the program cut was raised several times in the budget process during field trip discussion. There were additional questions about the reasoning behind why the winter program is being cut, finances, volunteers and equity. Arbour said we don’t provide a program that is all inclusive and lost instructional time is a concern. She added we don’t have the capacity onsite to provide the same kind of robust program for those not skiing or at Hulbert. There was discussion about providing some time to come up with a program and come back in the fall with a recommendation. DeBois suggested organizing a Board committee to address the Winter Program and other Board members urged to seize this as an opportunity. Members of the Board apologized for any misunderstanding of the change to the Winter Program. DeBois recommended that the superintendent establish a committee to work with the Rivendell Rec to find common ground and next steps.

DeBois stated Section VII: Informational Reports would be eliminated in the interest of time and to email Brenda Gray with any comments. Mark Burger asked that the January 9, 2018 include the following statement which was omitted in the minutes: “Ask that the Board include Orford Selectman in lease negotiations to protect the town when calculating payment in lieu of taxes.”

V. Presentation: None

VI. Consent Agenda
A. Minutes
1) Board January 9, 2018
Action: Motion made to approve consent agenda with changes noted in General Public Comments from Burger (Lyndes/Austin) Approved. Abstentions: MacDonald.

2) Public Budget Forum – January 11, 2018
Action: Motion made to approve the January 11, 2018 public budget forum meeting minutes. (Hooke/Austin) Approved.

3) Public Budget Forum – January 23, 2018
Action: Motion made to approve the January 23, 2018 public budget forum meeting minutes. (Macdonald/Austin) Approved.
VII. Informational Reports (written)
A. Superintendent Report: None
B. Head of Schools Report: None
C. Elementary Schools Report: None

VIII. Ongoing Business
A. Approve District General Legal Counsel: Arbour provided background that when she was hired the Board was experiencing issues with current legal counsel. She was asked to identify several options, but after reaching out to colleagues she did not have another firm to put forward so recommended Gardner, Fulton & Waugh. Action: Motion was made to approve Gardner, Fulton & Waugh as District general legal counsel (Gagner/Ricker) Approved.

B. Approve Annual District Meeting Warrant
1) FY19 Budget Amount for Warrant
   Arbour distributed a new draft of the warrant and explained the deadline for petitioned warrant articles is February 23, 2018.
   Action: Motion was made to approve the sum of $10,632,960 to include on the Warrant for the operating budget for the District for the 2018-2019 fiscal year (Lyndes/Ricker) Approved.
   Action: Motion was made to approve Article 5 to include on the Warrant. Shall the voters of the District raise the sum of $70,000 for replenishment of the capital reserve fund? (Lyndes/MacDonald) Approved.
   Action: Motion was made to approve Article 1, 3, and 7 as written to include on the Warrant (Austin/Ricker) Approved.
   Action: Motion was made to approve Article 6 with the following amendment, Shall the voters of the District authorize the School Board to apply for, accept, and expend, without further action by the voters of the District, all money from any governmental or private source which becomes available during the 2018-2019 fiscal year for their intended use?” (MacDonald/Austin) Approved. Abstentions: Hooke.
   Arbour spoke about the language in the Warrant opening paragraph identifying “the legal voters of Fairlee (Vermont), Orford (New Hampshire), Vershire (Vermont), and West Fairlee (Vermont) (school districts) and stated that individual voters are not the school districts. Following some discussion, DeBois concurred and the language was stricken from the Warrant. All articles above for the 2018 Warrant were approved with the understanding there may be additional petitioned articles to add if received by the February 23, 2018 deadline.

2) Other Warrant Articles
   Arbour spoke about the change to Article 2 to make a correction identified through meetings with the Local Elected Auditors to comply with the Articles of Agreement.
   Action: Motion was made to approve Article 2 to include the correction of the election of the elected local auditors (Austin/MacDonald) Approved.

C. SME Preschool & Winter Program: Arbour said the preschool was part of the conversation at COL to look at current space restrictions at SME and it was premature to consider a move of the preschool to Rivendell Academy. She apologized for this and said this will require additional conversation with the preschool teacher, administrators and parents, if, and when it was to go to the Board for approval. Foxall said he regrets the miscommunication and understands there is a great emotional attachment to the preschool being at SME. He added that if it were to be moved to RA the quality would not suffer and that quality programming would still occur. The messy communication was not fair, but this still needs to be a consideration and he will be advocating for it. There was discussion about what other options had been considered, including possibly moving the 6th grade instead. DeBois clarified that the work is still ongoing and the Board has asked administrations to look at the best use of space.

D. Policy First Reads (Gun Policy, Advanced Coursework/Placement): Arbour explained that VT state law had disallowed anyone who is not law enforcement to carry a weapon on school property, but NH has a different legislation which allow for guns to be carried in public places including schools. She further explained that House Bill 1749 disallows schools to create policy
for banning guns on campus in conflict with NH open carry laws. Federal law prohibits students from having guns on campus, but not adults. Arbour explained we are attempting to harness the power of federal law as a district and while the policy would be redundant as it applies to the elementary schools that it would cover the entire district, including school sponsored events. Michael Galli said this issue was raised 11 months ago and the HB1749 seeks to criminalize this policy and includes a $5,000 fine on elected school board members for failure to enforce. The Board will vote on the policy at the next meeting and should send any questions/comments to Gray.

Arbour said the advanced coursework/placement policy allows NH student to access STEM programming and funding that the Board voted to approve. The policy will be voted on at the next Board meeting and questions/comments should be sent to Gray.

E. Rivendell Review Committee Recommendations
Arbour explained that the Rivendell Review Committee has provided recommendations for the Board’s consideration which include terms and roles for the elected auditors, the Annual Report, vocational education, and budget vs. actual reconciliation for assessments. Burger said these were time sensitive and unanimous recommendations which were policy and procedural in nature. There was discussion about the role of elected auditors and Arbour stated it has been clear about roles/responsibilities and intent. Arbour will bring to the March meeting the items that need to be addressed immediately.

IX. New Business
A. Personnel Updates: Action: Motion was made to approve David Detweiler as English Teacher for the remainder of the school year (Hooke/Lyndes) Approved.
B. 2018-2019 School Year Calendar: Action: Motion was made to approve the 2018-2019 school year calendar as presented (Austin/Lyndes) Approved.
C. Correspondence
Arbour distributed the FY18 Compact School Board Report.

X. Future Agenda Items
20th Anniversary, Crisis Response, Community Outreach, Department Reports, Vision for Food Service, Cooperation w/Thetford Academy, Electronic Devices, Elected Local Auditors’ Role, ALICE – Active Shooter Response Training, Keys and Access to Buildings, Capital Reserve Fund Establishment/Access, Lacrosse Program, Preschool Program (March), Lacrosse-Chelsea (March), Rivendell Review Committee Recommendations (March), Final Planning for Annual Meeting (March)

XI. Executive Session
1) Negotiations
2) Personnel

XII. Adjournment
Action: Motion made to adjourn at 9:59 PM (Austin/Lyndes) Approved.
Board came out of exec session at 10:30 PM
Action: Motion made to approve the personnel agreement discussed (Austin/DeSimone) Approved.
Meeting adjourned at 10:31 PM. (Ricker/Austin)

Recorded by:
Brenda Gray
Executive Assistant/HR Manager

Note: All Board votes were unanimous unless noted otherwise.