RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Westshire Elementary School, West Fairlee, VT
February 7, 2012

Members Present: Cicely Richardson, Vanessa DeSimone, Marc DeBois (Orford); Sandra Smith-Ordway (Chair), Bruce Lyndes, Mark Avery (Fairlee); Jennifer Shatney (W. Fairlee); Kathy Hooke, Jennifer Ricker (Vershire), Kathy Blanchard (at-large)

Members Absent: Dawn Stever (W. Fairlee)

Administration and Staff Present: Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools/SME Principal), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools/RA Principal), Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Dick Paulson (CFO), Joan Holcombe (Westshire Principal), Michael Galli (RA Dean of Students)

Others Present: Christina Moreland (Student Government Rep), Kirsten Surprenant (Teacher), Barbara Griffin (Teacher), David Ricker (Orford), Harry Pease (Orford), Ludlow Flower (Orford), Terry Harwood (Orford), Tom Thomson (Orford), Allen Martin (Orford)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:31 p.m.

II. General Public Comments: None.

III. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: S. Smith-Ordway added Board Goals to Ongoing Business (VI).

IV. Presentation/Guests
   A. Concerned Citizens of Orford – The questions that the Orford group had sent were received prior to the meeting.
      Question 1: Please elaborate and explain the comment made by the chair during the last meeting that Fairlee pays hundreds of thousands of dollars for education taxes for which it receives nothing in return? Smith-Ordway gave the numbers to H. Pease. Pease asked if the numbers have an impact on the Fairlee tax rate and Smith-Ordway replied about ¼ of it. She said she would get a more exact number. Pease asked if the other towns are givers or takers in that and Hooke replied that Vershire and West Fairlee were on the receiving side. Hooke further spoke on equalization in Vermont. Needham said that over time, even with fluctuations, that studies show that Vermont has developed a system that has some fairness to it.
      Question 2 – Can the total FTE of the staff be displayed in the Annual Report, i.e. the sum of the staffing numbers presented on the first few pages? Needham explained the FTE different categories of staff. Thomson stated that NH has a website where the public can see a list of all NH state employees’ information (name, position, fte, salaries, benefits, etc.) He would like taxpayers to be able to see this information so that they will know where the bulk of the budget is going.
      Question 3 – When and by what media were Public Notices of this year’s two Public Budget Forum meetings posted? Needham replied that it was posted on the RISD website in early January, in each of the schools, in each of the towns through the town clerks, was sent to Journal Opinion, and was listed on the School Board agendas which are also posted. Hooke asked if the group had any suggestion for public hearing notification and listservs in the towns were also discussed.
      Question 4: Given that the Public Budget Forum meetings have already been held, are data available for expected 2012-2013 budget total, Orford Allocation percentage, and
estimated tax rate? Dick Paulson gave the estimates which are the most current compilations we have. A question was asked on when the Orford Grand List is set and C. Richardson stated it is usually in the fall.

Question 5 – What is the status of teacher contract negotiations? Needham stated that they are in process and that the Board was clear that salary increases due to negotiations will come from within the budget the Board approves tonight. Smith-Ordway asked if the group had any other questions or comments. Harwood asked what the enrollment projection across Rivendell is and Needham replied that it is about the same – stabilized. Paulson went back to the reason why there was a drop in Orford figures and that is because of a large drop in vocational tuition. Discussion ensued on keeping as many RISD students in RA classes. This is changing Orford’s share by about $50,000. It is significant for Orford because Orford pays the whole tuition where in the VT towns, a large portion of vo-tech gets paid by Vermont. Discussion ensued on inviting in tuition students, at what point is a classroom empty, and when classes get combined. Needham explained that tuition students come in at the secondary level and that classes at that level are dependent on graduation requirements, so if we have room in a classroom adding tuition students helps. Needham also explained how setting the tuition rate works and there are certain requirements from the state. The tuition rate for next year has been set at $13,500.

V. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes (January 10, 2012) – Changes noted.

B. Superintendent Report – Needham had two additions to her written report. One that Peggy Lydem, the VISIONS K-2 coordinator had resigned and Needham said VISIONS was thankful for Lydem’s time with VISIONS. Two that NECAPs were released today and should be in the newspapers. She suggested that Bridget Fariel come to the next Board meeting and, along with the principals, discuss NECAPs in more details. Needham said the Action Plan has been worked on. She also talked about meeting with Dean Stearns from River Bend with Gelenian regarding instruction, vo-tech recruitment of students, types of classes, summer programs, etc. Hooke thanked Needham for attending the various towns’ selectboard meetings recently.

C. Head of Schools Report – Gelenian mentioned a number of items including K. Brown (RA Science teacher) who is developing a partnership with Boston Latin (first public school in country) and that they are going to give us the physics curriculum being developed there; two teachers going with him to University Park in Worcester, MA; COL is doing a great job; parts of classes are being videotaped for teachers to look at. Smith-Ordway referred to Gelenian’s written report and asked who were going on the internships he had mentioned. Gelenian stated juniors and seniors. Gelenian then reiterated some items in his written report. Discussion ensued on getting press releases out to the media on some of the things going on at RA. J. Shatney suggested he contact WCAX's Across the Fence.

D. Principal Reports – Holcombe spoke of the Young Writers Project in grades 4-6, Social Thinking going on at Westshire, parent group with School Counselor, and the science activity held that day with Doctor Quinton Quark of Slapstick Science – the Notion of Motion (physics). G. Keiling added that Samuel Morey students had also come out to Westshire for it and that VerShare had supported this. Keiling also added that we had students who would be participating in Special Olympics and that May 19th is the Annual Allen Avery Memorial Raptor Run.

1. Student Representatives – Christina Moreland reported on: Winter Carnival (planning and organizing, first year 7-12, pep rally type assembly planned for this Friday); Ghost
Out idea was postponed and no new date yet; and an assembly planned for May 3rd with John Halligan on Ryan’s Story regarding bullying.

ACTION: Motion made to approve consent agenda with changes to minutes. APPROVED.

VI. Ongoing Business
A. Approve Proposed 2012-2013 Budget – D. Paulson distributed the proposed budget and stated it was basically the same one as previous, except the capital reserve was changed from $50,000 to $25,000, as requested. The proposed budget is for $9,405,978 (without the capital reserve). He stated that revenue has stayed relatively constant and that grants will be down by about $40,000 for this year. M. Avery questioned tax rates on page 4 of the budget as they were different than what Paulson gave earlier in meeting. Paulson apologized and said that the earlier rates were off by an average of three cents. The corrected rates are: Fairlee $1.5433, West Fairlee $1.6582, Vershire $1.5533 and Orford $19.47. Discussion ensued on how transportation is divided up between the towns and what the Articles of Agreement called for. M. DeBois stated that the Finance Committee had worked hard and thanked them for the hours they had spent on the budget. K. Hooke stated that although negotiations have not been completed yet, the Committee was committed to absorbing any changes due to negotiations within the proposed this budget so some choices may have to be made in regard to employment. ACTION: Motion made to approve the 2012-2013 operating budget of $9,405,978 to be presented to the voters as a warrant article for the Annual District Meeting. APPROVED.

There was some discussion on the capital reserve regarding at some point needing to build up our capital reserve, perhaps as interest on our debt service is going down, and how money is accessed from the capital reserve. Needham stated that when project is something that should come from capital reserve that it would come to the Board for approval. Paulson will research what has been spent from capital reserve so far.

ACTION: Motion made to approve capital improvement for $25,000 to be presented as a separate article on the warrant for the Annual District Meeting. APPROVED.

B. Committee Updates – None.
C. Board Goals – Smith-Ordway stated that the Board needed to be looking at its goals to see if the Board needs to rethink their goals, look at if the Board is supporting the goals in the manner hoped for. Also, she said the Strategic Plan goes until 2013 so that would need to be looked at.

VII. New Business
A. Correspondence – None
B. 2012-2013 School Calendar – Needham explained proposed 2012-13 calendar. She said that September 28th is the southeast region in-service day and at this time they don’t know what the topic will be but RISD will either be attending or having our own in-service. Also, she spoke regarding the 190 days or option about 192 days which has to do with negotiating and NEA no longer have two days in October. Brief discussion regarding Town Meeting days.

ACTION: Motion made to approve presented 2012-2013 School Calendar with option for 190 and 192 days for teachers. APPROVED.

C. Overnight Student Trip – K. Gelenian explained that Stephen Johnson, RA teacher, and Richard Otis, RA student, had been selected by the National History Day Organization for a trip with other teachers and students from across the country to go on a tour of Washington, DC and Normandy, France in June. V. DeSimone requested that they do a presentation to the Board after the trip.
ACTION: Motion made to approve the June trip to Washington, DC, and Normandy, France for Stephen Johnson and Richard Otis. APPROVED.

VIII. Future Agenda Items
Professional Development In-service; Long Range Plans to Address Flux in Population, Community Outreach, Grants, Global Language for 6th grade, Policies to be Revised, Student Presentations, Department Reports, Strategic Plan. Board Goals, NEASC, NECAP Results (March), ESEA Waiver (March), District Annual Meeting (March)
Brief discussion ensued on how few people were at the 2011 Annual Meeting (100+) and the need to get people to attend the meeting.

IX. Anticipated Executive Session:
A. Negotiations
B. Personnel
ACTION: Motion made to go into executive session regarding negotiations and personnel at 8:20 p.m. APPROVED.
Board came out of executive session at 9:50 p.m.

X. Adjournment:
ACTION: Motion made to adjourn at 9:51 p.m. APPROVED.

Recorded by:
Penny Perryman