Members Present: Trevor Law, Jennifer Ricker (Vershire); Bruce Lyndes (at large); Carol Sobetzer, Mark DeBois (Orford); Doug Tifft, Sandra Smith-Ordway, Margaret Gladstone (Fairlee); Beverly Ash (West Fairlee).

Administrators Present: Gail Keiling (Head of Schools/Superintendent), Dick Paulson, Jr. (CFO); Gary Collins (Director of Operations; Hank Plaisted (Director of Information Technology); Shawn Gonyaw (WSE Principal); Eloise Ginty (SME Principal)

Others Present: Cicely Richardson (JO); Jon Molesworth; Cathy Eastburn

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

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: None.

III. General Public Comments: None.

IV. Student/Teacher Presentation & Recognition
   A. Energy Audit & Roof Report (G. Collins): Collins reported the results and highlights of a free energy assessment conducted on 11/26/08 by Norm Etkind from the Vermont Superintendents’ Association. Our buildings are below the average for fuel usage by up to almost 30% and almost 20% for electricity usage compared to state averages. There are still areas that need improvement. Some items would not cost much money and would be easy to accomplish and those will be done; however, there are other areas that would require a significant investment. One such area is the gym lights. A time for shutting off lights and electrical equipment would help and replacing the lights in the gyms with more efficient lights would save more money; however, the cost to replace all at the same time would be exorbitant. Ricker asked if solar panels would help and Collins commented that Ms. Reichert’s Environmental Science Club was researching powering her classroom with alternative energy sources. Collins and Keiling have contacted the state of NH regarding whether public funds may be available to help with costs and it is still unclear whether the government will appropriate such funding.

   Roofs: Collins reported that the SME roof is the major concern with leaking problems dating back to the initial reconstruction of the Fairlee Elementary School. He has spoken to the contractor that just did a repair job on the roof and a rough estimate to repair the roof is about $90,000 and about $175,000 to re-roof the whole roof. Collins stated that there is no warranty on the SME roof and there were years of litigation with the contractor that installed the original roof. The new work would have a manufacturer’s ten year warranty. The middle school roof is okay (re-roofed 3-4 years ago) and the high school building has one small leak (last summer they roofed one half of a wing). Estimate to repair the HS roof leak would be $33,800.

   District Office Project: Collins presented an estimate by Estes & Gallup of $63,675.00 to move the District Office to RA in the high school. He stated that there would also be a cost for an architect, as Collins had done the rough drawing of the proposed office space.

   Wiring would be an additional $6,000 (approximate) and there would also be permitting and shelving costs. Collins commented that the Estes representative discussed the benefits of renting over re-fit as sometimes being more financially beneficial than construction. Sobetzer asked whether community volunteers could perform the re-fit work to save
money and Collins replied that code, laws and regulations imposed on the District would prevent that. Discussion was held on other suggestions such as hiring a contractor to insure compliance and deal with the volunteers or whether River Bend could do it as their student project. River Bend would probably not work as the actual work would need to be done when school is not in session and River Bend does their projects during the school year.

Smith-Ordway and DeBois commented regarding heating fuel for next year. Collins will see if there are pre-buy options available now for the best savings.

**B. Westshire 5th Grade (S. Gonyaw & E. Ginty):** Gonyaw and Ginty jointly presented an initial draft of ideas for transition activities to assist the current WSE fourth graders to transition to fifth grade at SME and to assist the students in retaining a sense of still being part of the WSE community. The plans also propose “community building” for the whole elementary student body. A letter will be sent to fourth grade families in the near future regarding the fifth graders going to SME next year. Tifft asked whether the WSE fifth graders will go to SME every year, will it flow the other way, optimizing the District’s buildings, and how far can be projected into the future. Keiling commented that these questions go more to the Long Range Planning Committee. Molesworth commented that the District could look at reconfiguring grades at the two schools. Travel would be an issue, especially with smaller children.

V. Consent Agenda:

A. Minutes (January 13, 2009): Approved with corrections (capitalize “M” in Mark Martel’s name on page 1; add “d” to change “prepare” to “prepared” at 5th bullet under section IV, page 2).


C. Technology Committee Report (written): January 29, 2009

D. Long Range Planning Committee Report (written): January 12, 2009

E. Head of Schools (Superintendent)’s Report (written): Gladstone asked about the math scores. Keiling said they will be compared to the portfolio scores. Tifft asked what is the maximum amount the District can charge for tuition, Paulson said it can only be up to 3% of the actual student cost or the District has to refund the overage. Paulson is presently working on a formula to determine the amount to charge so the District does not go over and have to refund.

**Action:** Motion was made to accept the Consent Agenda. Approved.

VI. Ongoing Business

A. Memorandum of Agreement with Orford Police: Discussion regarding thefts of under $500 can be handled by the school administrator and that department involvement is covered by the statutory reference. **Action:** Motion made to accept MOU. Approved.

VII. New Business

A. School Calendar 2009-2010: Calendar reviewed and discussion ensued on February break, January in-service, late end date in June, early start date, and graduation being tentative. Sobetzer requested Keiling meet with the Administrators again for concerns/comments. Board will act on calendar at the next meeting.

B. Correspondence: Carol reported receiving correspondence from VT Governor Douglas; a letter was received from Mary Daley, discussion of which was tabled until the Budget discussion.

C. 2009-2010 Draft Budget: Smith-Ordway (Chair, Finance Committee) thanked Keiling and Paulson for their hours of preparation and the more user-friendly format.
Public Budget Hearings had about 30 people attending the Orford meeting and 25 attended the West Fairlee meeting. General public comments were the similar at both sites: people support the schools but don’t want to see an increase, others want the budget decreased by a specific percentage—some would even pay more. Keiling addressed specific questions raised at the public budget meetings, responses to the same, and some ideas for possible trimmings to the draft budget, also that the District may not receive grant money for Early Childhood tuition scholarships as usual because the money comes through OESU, which may not receive full grant funding next year due to budgetary cuts by funding source(s). There was then general discussion regarding possible modifications to the draft budget. Hank Plaisted, Director of Information Technology, answered questions regarding technology and stated that District is adequately covered with hardware at this time and does have licensing agreements with fees; he is looking at solutions to cut down software costs. When asked how he gets best prices, Plaisted stated that he bids out substantial purchases, keeps good relationships with vendors, looks for compatible parts and models, and looks to the longevity of equipment. Jon Molesworth asked if Plaisted will be at the District Meeting to answer such questions, Plaisted replied in the affirmative. Sobetzer stated that it is important for Board members to be personally knowledgeable regarding the answers to such questions. Plaisted stated that we are on-line with our cost/student for technology compared to other schools in the area. Further discussion ensued regarding other modifications to the draft budget in order to decrease it. Items discussed were lunch programs, teachers’ increases and contracts, bus transportation and the transportation contract coming up for renewal. Gladstone stated that we don’t want to effect, or hurt, the kids by level funding, but it would not be due diligence if the Board did not bring back a draft budget with reductions. She further stated that a budget built from the floor will show needs are different each year. Tifft stated that the budget needs to be a sustainable figure. Further discussion tabled to future meeting.

Action: Motion made to go into Executive session to discuss personnel issues. **Approved.**

Board went into Executive Session at 8:59 p.m. Board came out of Executive Session at 9:45 p.m.

D. **Special Board Meeting Date to Approve 2009-2010 Budget:** Action: Motion made to hold a special Board Meeting on February 24, 2009. **Approved.**

VII. **Strategic Action Plan**
   a. **Update (G. Keiling)**

VIII. **Adjournment**

   Action – Motion made to adjourn meeting. **Approved.** The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Mary Levin Sarazin
Board Recording Secretary