Rivendell Interstate School District – Board Meeting Minutes
Rivendell Academy, Orford, NH
Tuesday, May 01, 2007

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

Administrators and Staff Present: Noelle Vitt (Head of Schools), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools), Nicole Saginor, Anna Alden, Irene Drew, Bonnie Blake

Others Present: Cicely Richardson (Journal Opinion), Penny Mitchell (Student Representative), Laura Bradley,

I. Call Meeting: Carol Sobetzer called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. Approve Board Minutes of April 3, April 5 and April 24, 2007: Action: Motion was made to approve the minutes of April 3, April 5 and April 24, 2007. Approved. Board members will submit any spelling/typo corrections to Brenda directly.

III. Public Input: None

IV. Communications and Reports: A. Report of the Chair: Action: Motion was made to accept Nicole Saignor’s resignation. Approved. Nicole thanked the Board for the opportunity to work with them. She will be taking a leadership position in St. Johnsbury. Approved. 1) Presentation – Herb Pandiscio, Strategic Planning Consultant: Carol turned the meeting over to Doug Tifft. He introduced Herb Pandiscio and his wife Ruth. Together as a team they have been doing superintendent searches for 14 years; completing over 100 searches. Herb discussed the issue of declining enrollment and its impact on programs. He spoke about what attracts people to a community: work and/or schools and said marketing the school system is essential. The school district needs to be outstanding. Statistical data important, but speaking to employees, parents, students and graduates is as important. The consultant must be collaborative and work with an advisory board. In regards to the superintendent search, Herb spoke about experience and selecting the correct person to fit into the strategic plan of academic excellence. Discussion was opened to the Board for questions. Margaret asked for clarification between strategic study and strategic plan. Herb called it a strategic goal, which is academic excellence. She asked how he saw the superintendent search fitting into this goal. Herb said he would hire first defining academic excellence to candidates. Herb feels the first and last steps are important – 1) educational audit and 2) creation of local advisory board. Juliette asked what Herb saw as the role of the school board in this process. Herb said he would like to look at the credentials of all staff and how dual certifications may help preserve jobs. Juliette asked where he got his ideas about how to approach this search. Herb responded that his ideas on how to approach this search were formed on the information that he received from the letter from Doug. Allen asked what brought them to NH/VT, since most of his work has been done in CT. Herb was intrigued; he is a problem solver and the name of the town was familiar to him. Heather asked what his time frame would be – Herb is thinking early fall, but could be based on the school district’s needs. Margaret asked Herb about the educational audit and she spoke about the District’s desire to move forward. Would Herb be in the community trying to get a sense of what community members feel about the school district? He would be conducting these surveys, possibly a written survey to reach the greater community. 2) Change of June Board Meeting Date to June 12 Due to the fact that there are two major events scheduled for June 5. Action: Motion was made to change the meeting from June 5 to June 12. Approved.
B. Report of Head of Schools: Noelle deferred to the music teachers and thanked them for their hard work on the curriculum. 1) Music Curriculum Irene spoke about the format of the document, the mission statement and its importance to their work. They have high expectations and are passionate about their work. Their goals are to be exceptional. Irene and Anna spoke about the twelve general music concepts and the unit(s) they are taught within. Anna pointed out that under the 7th grade units they still need to be created as the 7th grade does not currently have music. Bonnie spoke about students in the band program and building upon the skills that they are taught at the elementary level. There was some discussion about scheduling/time for the music and band program. Carol Sobetzer asked if there was any integration with the music program and the classrooms. Anna responded that some music is geared towards the classroom teachings. Irene said that she integrates a lot of projects, but the challenge has been finding the time to implement these projects. Carol Sobetzer wanted to know if this information has been documented so that it can be used as part of the curriculum in the future. She also asked how the music is chosen for students to perform. The music teachers spoke about developmentally appropriate music. Doug asked about encouraging students to go out into the community and see the music that surrounds them in different musical groups. Anna responded that it would be great to see scholarships for students to attend musical functions outside of school. Noelle mentioned the Arts Committee that was established to bring arts to the students, but the money has been depleted and it has basically become a fundraising committee. Anna noted that the curriculum includes theatre documents as well. Irene spoke about a community choir to engage community members in music. Noelle suggested seeking grant funding for this project. Juliette commented that the music instruction that the kids are receiving is outstanding. 2) Request from Odyssey of the Mind (discussed under VI. Business Requiring Discussion Only) C. Reports of the Committee Chairs: 1) Long-range planning: No report. 2) Negotiations: Allen reported that the Board made an offer and it was better than what the Union was asking for. Unfortunately, they were not able to reach closure at the negotiation meeting. Health insurance, salary increase, sick bank are the key issues at hand. The Negotiating Committee is trying to reach a base to make us more competitive with other districts. We are still in negotiations.

V. Business Requiring Discussion & Action: A. Strategic Planning Juliette spoke about strategic planning and her background with this process. She said a strategic plan should be viewed as a living document, a check-point and a tool. It needs to be action oriented; providing a framework for decision-making. She feels that without a strategic plan in place there is no basis for decision-making. A strategic plan provides a framework for making pro-active decisions, helps to be more focused on data, setting up assessment/evaluation tools (benchmarks), research allocation, efficiency, communication and transparency. There was some discussion as to whether or not the Board is committed to the process of creating a strategic plan. Carol summarized based on Board comments that this is something the Board would like to proceed with, but the process is important. Action: Motion was made to move section VI. Business Requiring Discussion Only ahead of executive session. Approved.

B. Personnel C. Roles and Responsibilities Carol said that she feels during Board discussion that all members really needs to participate and share what they are thinking and be respectful of each others opinions.

VI. Business Requiring Discussion Only: A. Future Agenda Items: 1) Policies: a. Second Readings – Admission of Non-Resident Tuition Students, Code F20; Curriculum b. Revisions: Participation of Home Study Students in School Programs 2) Presentations: a. Odyssey of the Mind – May 22 meeting The OM team will not be coming to the May 22 Board meeting, but will be at Expo. Noelle spoke about the funds that were requested in support of the OM team fundraising ($5000.00) which includes, in part, club money not used at Rivendell Academy. b. Adult Basic Education (B. Emerson) – May 22 meeting Emerson will speak the evening of May 22. c. Science Noelle reported that chemistry will be offered next year. Curriculum outline needs to go to PIC and is in draft form. Science will present in the fall. d.
Technology Plan The plan is currently in draft form; the evaluation piece is being worked on, but will need to be presented to the Board by June. The calendar card was reviewed. Allen spoke about the grant money which is to be applied to the funds requested by OM and that it should be noted that this is a private foundation grant, not a Rivendell grant. Penny Mitchell said the students are beginning to talk about next year’s student government and that Spring Fling planning is in the process. Margaret asked about the facilities use policy and Noelle said it is ready to be presented when the Board is ready. Board will decide at next planning meeting if it will fit into the June agenda. Noelle mentioned a coach’s evaluation report from the athletic director. The Board would like to see the report and if they have additional questions the AD/Head of schools can report later. Action: Motion was made to move to executive session at 8:15 p.m. Approved.

Board came out of Executive Session at 9:50 p.m.

Action: Motion was made to deny Lisanne Velez’s request for leave for 2007-2008 school year. Approved.

Action: Motion was made to deny Kathryn Inman’s request to work at home one day per week. Approved.

VII. Adjourn: Action: Motion was made to adjourn. Approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Gray
District Clerk/Treasurer