RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Westshire Elementary, West Fairlee, VT
May 1, 2012

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

Members Absent: Marc DeBois

Administration and Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Joan Holcombe (Westshire Principal), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools/RA Principal), Michael Galli (Dean of Students), Paula Driscoll (Westshire Teacher), Janet Cole (Director of SPED)

Others Present: Cheryl Howe (Vershire), Felipe Kill and Jessica Janofsky (Brazil Foreign Exchange Students)

I. Call to Order: Smith-Ordway called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: None

III. General Public Comments: None.

IV. Presentation/Guests:
   A. Foreign Exchange Students: F. Kill and J. Janofsky spoke to Board about their experience in the United States and as students at Rivendell Academy. Some of their comments were: RA was a small school so got to know lots of people and teachers, could not have picked a better school than Rivendell, has made lots of friends, think teachers are great always try to help students, don’t want to leave, love America want to come back for college. Board asked some questions regarding what year they were in at their home school and how they would compare level work: felt doing less work here than in Brazil but more learning, more homework here but in Brazil lot more work, classes are shorter in Brazil and here teachers explain more and spend longer time so students learn, felt level of complexity about the same, felt RA teachers really care that you learn a subject and stay after class/school to help students. Stated that RA is like a family, they care about you, but In Brazil you are just a number, there are 57 students in Janofsky’s class in Brazil, students stay in one room and teachers move. Didn’t like the way the American students talk about teachers, students don’t think teachers are helping them or that they need to learn. Regarding technology stated there are more computers here which helps a lot. They are in private schools in Brazil so have more technology than Brazil public schools. Brazil doesn’t have all the things you need to do your work and have more tests so schools can get the points they need. Also, they thought it was interesting how American parents and community are involved in students going to school and the idea of community service for students. Community service in Brazil is not the same as Brazilians would want to know how much they were being paid to provide service. Board suggested that the students share their experience with our students and thanked them for coming.

V. Consent Agenda (accept)
   A. Minutes (April 10, 2012) – Changes noted.
   B. Superintendent Report (written) – Needham reported that both Denise Riordan (World Language Teacher) and Shawn Clough (Physical Education Teacher) have resigned effective at the end of this school year (both moving from the area). Needham also reported back to
the Board as requested regarding making changes in date for the Annual District Meeting and that it could be done by holding a Special District Meeting properly warned or by putting it on the warrant for the next Annual District Meeting in March 2013. Needham also reported that one item that she and Gary Collins, the Director of Operations, have been working on is watching that the District is getting the best price and quality work for needed services. As an example, G. Collins just had bid out the septic system work. Five bids were received and recommendation was for the same company that the District has been using, as their pricing was still the best. In reference to a question regarding what NEAP is, B. Needham stated it is a national test and one of the indicators used with comparisons internationally. Vermont and New Hampshire usually at top of our nation. Also reported that G. Martino working on website. Avery suggested to make it fun for students to go to and also include learning experiences.

C. Head of Schools Report (written) – K. Gelenian additions reported: letters to the editor in North Country Journal with wrong information from the Warren Village Board, so Gelenian has sent letter to editor with correct information for next edition; working on recruiting tuition students from Waits River Valley and Tracy Page has put together a spreadsheet of the K-8 students in surrounding schools; Facebook discussion; John Halligan, speaking on bullying May 3 and everyone welcome; working on the last rubric; working with Nancy Hall on college and work place readiness for a grant; Science NECAPS are coming up; Bridget Fariel gave a diagnostic math test to RA seventh graders to see how are they going; have visited some schools that have good math programs and good math teachers; discussions being held on how to help students get math. Making it more fun, think more and see connection between math and science.

RA Student Representative – No student representative was at the meeting and no written report. Gelenian said Student Government is working on the summer reading.

D. Principal Reports (written) – Holcombe addition: NECAPS are second week in May, getting ready for NECAPS by practicing; 5 students and 3 adults presenting at Rural VT conference with ebooks; concerns regarding merging two classes for next year bringing up questions for teachers and parents; have some new families coming to Kindergarten. Discussion on how to ease anxiety of teachers and parents regarding merging two classes. Also, the Finance/Long Range Planning Committee will be holding a meeting in May to discuss long range plans on classes and Administrators will be in attendance and public is, as always, welcome. Discussion on successful programs at Westshire like Everybody Wins and Healthy Snack Program and if these programs are implemented at Samuel Morey. G. Keiling was not in attendance but Holcombe said that she thought they had implemented a healthy snack program on their own and is hoping to develop the reading program.

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

ACTION: Motion made to accept resignations of Denise Riordan, World Language Teacher, and Shawn Clough, Physical Education Teacher, with regrets. Approved.

VI. Ongoing Business

A. Board Communication – Needham stated that new manual for school boards from the Vermont School Boards Association (The Essential Work of Vermont School Boards) had been received and copies were distributed to the Board. Smith-Ordway announced that she had recently attended a webinar for school board chairs.

1) Open Meeting Law – Board Electronic Communication: Board members referred to page 78 of above manual regarding Board member Electronic Communications Standards. Discussion on all Board communication being done through the First Class accounts that were set up for the Board and not personal email addresses.
2) Individuals vs. as a Board – Needham spoke about page 75, Vermont Code of ethics for School Board Members. Suggestion that this might be a good topic to discuss at a Board retreat.

B. Auditor Appointment – Discussion on what local auditors do. Suggestion that in the future Superintendent could invite them in when CPAs come in for audit as a good faith effort. Also, suggestions to send out email to listservs in towns regarding needing one local auditor for remainder of year with requirements. Also, Board members will as people they think might be interested.

C. Administrators

1) Roles/Responsibilities: Needham reported that Gelenian, Keiling, Fariel and she have been meeting regarding roles/responsibilities for the Dean of Studies (curriculum piece).

2) Curriculum Focus: Discussion on curriculum for K-12 and individual needs of buildings. COL has been working on curriculum, various classes being videotaped. Board requested that different departments (i.e., science, English, etc.) present their various curriculums at Board meetings. Noted that this is already a future agenda item.

D. Committee Updates – J. Shatney will speak with D. Stever about Negotiations switch. Community Engagement reported that a card of “Upcoming Events at Rivendell’ had been mailed to the postal patrons in the four District towns. Plan is to do this periodically during the next school year – perhaps quarterly.

VII. New Business

A. Overnight Trip (Hulbert): Action: Motion made to approve overnight Hulbert Trip on May 21 and 22, 2012. Approved.

B. Strategic Plan – Next Steps: Finance/LRP did some work in April and at meeting prior to tonight’s Board meeting regarding talking about major direction and that it was written for 5 years, which ends in 2013. Smith-Ordway suggested getting a report out on what has been accomplished on the Strategic Plan so far. Hooke will look into strategic plan a bit more as Mountain School has been going through this and she will ask their director about their process.

C. Correspondence: None

VIII. Future Agenda Items –
Website (June); Professional Development In-service (June); Senior Class Trip Report (June); Long Range Plans to Address Flux in Population (progress report and ideas from Keri possibly for July), Community Outreach, Grants, Global Language for 6th grade, Policies to be Revised, Student Presentations, Department Reports, Board Goals, NEAS&C, 4 Year Science Progression

IX. Anticipated Executive Session – Action: Motion made to enter into Executive Session at 8:40 p.m. to discuss Negotiations. Approved.

A. Negotiations (Educational Support Personnel /Contracts DO/Admin)
Board came out of Executive Session at 10:18 p.m.

X. Adjournment: Action – Motion made to adjourn. Approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:19 p.m.

Recorded by:

Penny Perryman