RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
District Office – Orford, NH
September 2, 2014 – 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Marc DeBois (Chair), David Ricker, (Orford); Mark Avery (Vice Chair), Bruce Lyndes (Fairlee); Jean MacDonald, Kathy Hooke (Vershire), Sarah Rinehimer (West Fairlee); Kathy Blanchard (at-large)

Members Absent: Cicely Richardson (Orford), Grover Boutin (Fairlee); Mike Fanizzi (W. Fairlee)

Administration and Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools/RA Principal), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary/SME Principal), Tammy MacQueen (WES Principal), Gary Collins (Director of Operations), Dick Paulson (CFO), Michael Galli (RA Dean of Students)

Others Present: Angela Welch (Fairlee)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:15 p.m. Board went for a quick tour of some areas in the Academy with Gelenian.

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: Needham stated that she had an addition of a policy that she would like to add under Policy Review.

III. General Public Comments (Listen & Defer Action to Future Mtg.): None.

IV. Presentation/Guests – None.

V. Consent Agenda (Accept):
   A. Minutes
      1. Board – August 5, 2014
         Action: Motion made to approve the consent agenda. Approved.

VI. Informational Reports (written):
   A. Superintendent Report (written): No questions or additions.
   B. Head of Schools Report (written): Gelenian had a suggestion that he wished the Board would take a more active role in getting ideas sent to the State level on issues that impact the schools. As example, he discussed items like State certification (perhaps NH and VT should have a reciprocal license agreement since Rivendell is interstate), AYP, and “need of improvement” process. Gelenian felt that this takes time and effort away from the “real” work. DeBois and Needham both said that VSBA would be a source to help with this. DeBois did say that the Board is not aware of what Gelenian or other administrators were struggling with and would need these items sent to them before the Board could send letters out periodically to the State on the various items or to VSBA for help. Needham also reminded the Board that VSBA has regional meetings as well as state meetings and gets involved in all these type of issues. It was noted that licensing is a legislative issue. Lyndes asked why the Academy electronic sign was not working and Collins responded that it was due to lightning and the part is on order. This will be part of an insurance claim.
   C. Elementary Principals Report (written): MacQueen reported that WES had another two new students enroll today and the opening of school was going well. MacDonald asked if there were any concerns about the size of the WES Kindergarten (24). MacQueen stated there were and Keiling, Needham and she had actually met today regarding it. Keiling reported that SME also had a great opening and that the power outage the first day was a challenge but teachers and students did well. Keiling also spoke about how the 6th graders were really merged into one class and helping the 5th graders.
VII. Ongoing Business (Deliberation & Possible Action):

A. Financials (D. Paulson): Paulson reported that he originally thought there would be about a $60,000 surplus in expenses for FY14, but, now it looks instead like a small deficit in expenses. However, revenue exceeded expectations, so there will be a net surplus approaching $200,000. He also asked the Board to sign the NH Annual Financial Report, which they did. Paulson stated that he is doing some self-auditing of the various grants currently and may need to still make some adjustments. MacDonald asked if vocational ed revenue is due to grants. Paulson said it was not due to grants, but due to conservative estimates for revenue in the FY14 budget.

B. Auditor Position Appointment: No suggestions. DeBois stated that we needed a Rivendell District resident from one of the Vermont towns for the local auditor position.

C. Policy Review – Second Reading (Possible Approval):
1) Public Participation at Board Meetings, Code C3
2) Public Complaints about personnel, Code D10
3) Budgeting, Code E2
4) Fiscal Management and General Financial Accountability, Code E3
5) Student Activities Funds Management, Code E4
6) Student Attendance, Code F32
7) Animals in the Classroom, Code G2

Needham stated that all these policies had a first reading at the August meeting and changes were made as the Board had requested. MacDonald wanted to put a hold on Animals in the Classroom (G2) until the next meeting. Rinehimer felt that Student Attendance (F32) needed to be changed, however, after a brief discussion with Needham pointing out that the item was legislative, it was decided not to change F32.

Action: Motion made to approve above policies (C3, D10, E2, E3, E4 and F32), with the exception of G2. Approved.

Needham then distributed policy Curriculum Development, Code G1, and explained that this had been left off the agenda in error for a first reading of the revision. Needham stated that besides the general changes, the last paragraph needed to be added in order to cover a federal grant requirement. Board has requested to send Perryman and changes they were suggesting for Code G1 or G2 before the next meeting.

D. REA Negotiations
1) Committee Member Appointments
Mark Avery as Board Assistant Chair is in charge of this committee. Richardson (in writing) and Blanchard volunteered to be committee members. DeBois requested that Needham set up a meeting for the committee and that there would be further discussion of negotiations under Executive Session.

E. CSO – Needham reported that some parents had held a meeting regarding the CSO disbanding. Welch (a parent) stated she had attended the meeting but there had been no consensus on what to do and no other meeting date had been set. Welch said that parents wanted to know how Board feels about taking over the elementary sports. DeBois stated that it was not something the Board would vote on, instead it is up to the administration. Needham stated that the District informed elementary parents through the School Reach (telephone and email alert system) that a meeting for soccer registration was being held and both elementary principals were going to be in attendance, although, the meeting would be conducted by Craig Pelletier who has agreed to be the Soccer Coordinator during this transition time. She further stated that the RA Athletic Director, Bob Thatcher, did not want to participate but did have some suggestions. Needham stated that the District’s Leadership Team (administrators) had met today and she asked Gelenian to report. Gelenian stated that the administration does not want to take this on and felt that it was an important part of bringing the four
Rivendell communities together by having the parents work together and do this. Needham stated that the District stepped in on soccer because it needed to happen immediately. The question of money was then discussed, as MacDonald wondering about the money in the CSO accounts. Board seemed in agreement that the District should not take any money from the disbanded CSO accounts if offered. A lengthy discussion ensued (i.e., communication problem, perhaps Lions Club would help, must be all four towns not separated, perhaps a facilitator to help the parents organize, not wanting children to be harmed by no elementary sports program, no money in budget, criminal record checks, parents restarting the CSO or a new group using the same bylaws, recognizing everyone had been volunteers, same people getting burnt out). Keiling checked with the State of Vermont and all a new interested group would have to do is send in $175 and the CSO could be reinstated. MacQueen and Keiling also spoke on how in the beginning of Rivendell the creation of the CSO was an important part having the parents of all four towns working together to create this opportunity for their children and helping the District to be a united group. Welch thought from her perspective that the parents would probably come together if the District was not going to take over. DeBois encouraged administration to put together some communication piece to parents.

F. Strategic Plan Process: DeBois stated that Boutin would not be attending meeting for a while and the Board needed to start moving on this. DeBois thought the Board needed a paid facilitator, perhaps contacting VSBA. Rinehimer knew of someone that she thought would be a good facilitator. DeBois requested Board members contact Perryman with facilitator suggestions.

VIII. New Business (Receive Information and Possible Action):
A. Energy Audit Report (G. Collins): Needham said, as indicated in a previous report, the District had an Energy Audit and added that Collins has always been very vigilant regarding energy and ways to save. Collins stated that this was the second audit in ten years and many of the recommendations from the first audit were implemented. The report states that Rivendell is doing a good job maintaining buildings and are proactive with energy policy/procedure and facility operating plans. One highlight of the report were the Energy Star ratings: RA (East Wing) 98; RA (West Wing) 86; WES 83; and SME 96 (the optimum score is 75+). District was well below average at all sites for oil usage per square foot. Average is .43 gallons per square foot and RA (East Wing) .23; RA (East Wing) .45; WES .20; and SME .29. District also was completely below Vermont average of 5.9 KWH per square foot as all of the schools were below 5.3. Collins stated that the report also had recommendations, however, some would be quite costly. He stated that Rivendell will be getting two Energy Star awards at our elementary schools and that Efficiency Vermont is paying for the engineering fee on these. Rinehimer mentioned that Thetford had received a solar grant. Collins was unaware of this but spoke regarding solar opportunities, his review of solar potential but did say there were lots of “gray” areas. One of the recommendations was a short/long term capital plan and Collins reported that he has an eight year plan of capital projects/needs that he keeps current.

B. 2014-2015 Student Enrollment First Day: Board was pleased to see enrollment was up. Gelenian mentioned that there is a real estate website called Zillow and someone had reported to him that our Rivendell Academy did not have a rating on the site. In order to get a rating, people need to go to greatschools.org to do a review, which is then linked to Zillow. He stated that in his newsletter he is asking parents to go add reviews. DeBois mentioned perhaps the Board should all do this too. Ricker said he would send the link to everyone.

C. Correspondence: None.
IX. **Future Agenda Items (Discussion):**
   Youth Risk Survey (October), Crisis Response, Orford Academy Building Task Force, Community Outreach, Policies to be Revised (ongoing), Student Presentations, Department Reports

X. **Anticipated Executive Session (Discussion), 1 VSA 313:**
   A. **REA Negotiations**
   B. **Personnel Issue**
   **Action:** Motion made to go into Executive Session at 7:48 p.m. **Approved.**
   Board came out of Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

XI. **Adjournment (Action)**
   **Action:** Motion made to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. **Approved.**

Recorded by:

Penny Perryman, CEOE
Executive Assistant/HR Manager