RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Westshire Elementary School – West Fairlee, VT
December 2, 2014 – 6:00 p.m.

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

Members Absent: 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 Schools/SME Principal), Tammy MacQueen (WES Principal), Dick Paulson (CFO), Janet Cole (Director of Special Education), Barbara Griffin (SME/WES Teacher)

Others Present: Laura Soares (VSBIT President), Lillian Gahagan (JO reporter)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Presentation/Guests:
A. Laura Soares, VSBIT President – Soares gave a brief introduction about herself, VSBIT and VEHI then spoke in depth about the Affordable Health Coverage Act and how it is affecting school VEHI coverages. She distributed the Employer Shared Responsibility chart. Soares said that employers of Rivendell’s size had to offer health coverage to full time employees, however, only have to make it affordability to employees, does not need to be affordability to spouses and dependents. She spoke about a number of items: employers who are carving out spouses; VEHI plans are grandfathered currently; Vermont has probably 20 grandfathered plans and VEHI has about 16 of those plans; VEHI plan with deductibles had the deductible increased about two years ago and can never increase again; Green Mountain Care is still probably two to three years out; suggest that Boards and union work together; suggested going to VEHI website to look at booklet - Comparing Health Plans from VEHI & VT Health Connect; explained platinum, gold, silver and bronze programs; all VEHI plans are platinum; 2018 is when the excise tax comes through; VEHI JY plan will cross the line in 2018; Rivendell currently has three platinum plans; employers will have to pay a fine and over time all of Rivendell’s plans will cross Affordable Care Act Excise Tax Threshold; gave suggestions of how to make changes (i.e., change district contribution premium amount but can’t go below 80%; JY participants voluntarily leaving plan then Rivendell can drop it but can’t drop it in negotiations would affect grandfather status of all Rivendell plans; VEHI working with Gallagher Benefits Services which gives members a large group of lawyers all well-versed on health care to assist and answer questions. Avery said local boards need help with all this and working with the union, unrealistic to expect small boards to be able to do this. Soares said that the legislature needs to hear from both sides (school boards and union) about the difficulties. Soares said if the legislature was open to admitting that their mechanism isn’t working so they let the handcuffs off of VEHI and then VEHI and VT-NEA could be more creative if not in the grandfather block. DeBois told Board if they had any questions for Soares to forward to Perryman who would in turn send to Soares. Board thanked Soares for attending the meeting.

III. Possible Executive Session (Discussion, 1 VSA §313
A. Contract Negotiations – Not needed at this point.

IV. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: None.

V. General Public Comments (Listen & Defer Action to Future Mtg.): None.
VI. Consent Agenda (Accept):
   A. Minutes
      1) Board – November 17 & 18, 2014
         Action: Motion made to approve the consent agenda. Approved.

VII. Ongoing Business (Deliberation & Possible Action):
   A. Auditor Position Appointment: No suggestions.
   B. Policy Review: Needham said that the animal policy would be held until January and the internet usage would also as a revision to the policy had just been received from VSBA and she would need time to review changes.
      1) Participation of Home Study Students in School Programs and Activities, Code F26 – Needham stated this is first reading of the revision and explained the changes (verbiage changed or taken out due to no longer required and adding a clause regarding home study students attending Rivendell graduations). Needham requested that Board members send any suggestions/comment/questions to Perryman.

VIII. New Business (Receive Information and Possible Action):
   A. Budget 2015-2016: Needham reported that CFO Paulson was in attendance with a very preliminary budget. Needham explained since the Board had requested they present what the administrators wanted they had done that and not made an preliminary cuts, thus this draft budget was presently up $300,000 over last year and did not include any staff increases yet (approximately 3.12% increase). Needham stated she was uncomfortable presenting a budget this high, however, the Board had requested it this way. She said that next week at the Special Board Meeting regarding budget, the Board could ask questions from the administration and give guidance on what changes to make. Needham briefly reviewed some of the increases (ECP teacher salary shifting from federal funds to local budget, increase in Westshire Principal percentage from 50% to 70%, increase in technology, transportation contract, etc.) Paulson stated the revenue includes the $300,000 that we had as a surplus in 2013 and as he had mentioned at the last Board meeting the threshold at $17,103 approximately $1000 per pupil higher. Paulson stated that the legislature might decrease to keep threshold lower more in line with what it has increased with in the past (about $500 more). Needham spoke of the preschool revenue being down because Rivendell won’t be charging any more since moving forward and preschool students will be included in ADM. Paulson informed the Board that he had added the 2014 actual column on Gelenian’s request which made sense. Paulson said that the equalized pupil number should be released around December 10th. DeBois said that he did think this preliminary draft budget was much higher than he thought the Board would expect to take to the community, especially since it was without salary increases included yet. Needham stated that for the kind of cuts that would probably need to be made then that would be looking at personnel cuts. Board asked about teacher to student ratios and what the administrators felt about 13 to 1 as State is suggesting. Needham said they were about 7 to 1 as listed on the Vermont AOE for last year and probably more like 4 to 1 if it included all staff (not just teachers – i.e., custodians, administrative assistants, food service, etc.). Gelenian spoke about public schools, one point being that they are the number one mental health care provider for children. MacQueen added not just the students but also families. Gelenian said if told by Board to bring number of staff down they would but the most vulnerable students will be affected. Gelenian added that technology has gone up but having laptops for students and moving into the electronic learning requires these purchases. Gelenian pointed out that Vermont schools are in the top two in the country, although that does not get the attention it should. Keiling said one of Rivendell’s challenges is that Rivendell is spread out and if we were consolidated somehow we could cut costs. Hooke stated that she thinks what sells a budget to voters is an increase that is bearable and showing the voters what they are getting for that increase. Hooke stated that Rivendell has continuously passed level funded or budgets with minimum increases and have still been able to increase Rivendell’s school quality. Blanchard stated that although it is painful, the teacher/student ratio and staff/student ratio will have to be looked at and
need to gradually start working on that. Gelenian reported there is a new dual enrollment fee in the budget regarding students taking college classes while still in high school, something the Vermont AOE is encouraging but now at least half of the cost is going back to the schools to pay.

B. **Overnight Field Trip – National Honor Society**: Gelenian reported that NHS trip happens annually with a few teachers and the NHS students at Gail Keefer’s home and would be happening, if approved, December 4-5th. **Action**: Motion made to approve the National Honor Society Overnight Field Trip. **Approved**.

C. **Designation of Preschool Region**: Needham reported she had held an ECP (preschool) meeting today with all the ECP teachers and Keiling. Mandatory implementation has been put off a year as VT AOE is not prepared at this time but there are some advantages to moving forward now as opposed to waiting until required. In order to move forward the District has to designate what our region is for preschool and Needham is recommending to the Board that we designate the three Vermont towns in the Rivendell District as our region at this time. She explained briefly, after a Board question, that this involves Vermont dollars and pertains only to Vermont. Needham explained that under the new rules if a family in the designated region can’t get into the Rivendell ECP, a child can attend an approved community based program and Rivendell will have to provide $3,000 in funding. **Action**: Motion to have the three Vermont Rivendell towns (Fairlee, Vershire and West Fairlee) designated as the preliminary ECP region. **Approved**.

D. **Correspondence**: None.

IX. **Future Agenda Items (Discussion)**:
- Budget 2015-16, Common Core, Crisis Response, Community Outreach, Policies to be Revised (ongoing), Student Presentations, Department Reports

X. **Executive Session (Discussion), 1 VSA § 313**:
   A. **REA Negotiations**
   B. **Legal Issue**

**Action**: Motion made to go into Executive Session at 7:30 p.m. **Approved**. Board came out of Executive Session at 8:09 p.m. No action.

XI. **Adjournment (Action)**

**Action**: Motion made to adjourn. **Approved**. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Recorded by:
Penny Perryman, CEOE
Executive Assistant/HR Manager