RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
Westshire Elementary School – West Fairlee, VT  
December 3, 2013 – 6:30 p.m.

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

Members Absent: Mike Fanizzi (W. Fairlee)

Administration and Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools/SME Principal), Tammy MacQueen (WES Principal), Jan Cole (SPED Director), Donald Bazzell (Visions Director), Michael Galli (Dean of Students), Dick Paulson (CFO)

Others Present:

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: None

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

IV. Presentation/Guests
   A. Visions (D. Bazzell): Needham introduced D. Bazzell to the Board. Chair DeBois requested Bazzell give a brief bio first. Bazzell spoke of his work/educational background and then spoke of items about the current Visions program that he is pleased with (i.e., good relationship between afterschool staff and teachers that it is special and important, support in the community, resources, administration cooperation, majority of Visions staff are also RISD teachers and support staff). He stated that one of his goals is the sustainability piece and how to do that. Great things are happening in Visions, but it needs to market it better to community and show what we’re doing in order to apply for grants. Overall, Bazzell felt it a strong healthy program. D. Ricker asked if the at risk students are involved. Bazzell said they were and that the homework café piece of Visions was very helpful with this population. The Board thanked Bazzell.

V. Consent Agenda (Accept):
   A. Minutes
      1. Board – November 5, 2013
   Action: Motion made to approve the consent agenda. Approved.

VI. Informational Reports (written):
   A. Superintendent (written): Needham had nothing to add to her written report and asked if Board had any questions. Richardson asked what item 5 in report on Special Education funding was and Needham said related to coding and yearend adjustments. There was some discussion on Needham’s visits to Selectboards in each of the Rivendell towns, the Selectboards seemed appreciative of the visits, she said. She enjoys doing it and the visits have always been positive. Hooke thanked Needham for doing this. She reported that the Westshire Administrative Assistant position has been advertised, are currently accepting resumes and some interviews are already set up. Also, Needham said that Angel Parkin has been helping out with some items while the position is open.

   B. Head of Schools (written): Gelenian stated that Collins had received a bid of $4,000 for transportation to Waits River for next year. Richardson asked if the learning expectations that are being built into MMS at the Academy are also being done at the elementary schools. Gelenian said that Nancy Murphy is working on this and thinks there is a way. Hooke said she appreciated that Gelenian continues to keep track of these failure rates and reports them to the Board. Richardson asked if there is any way to get students to want to
learn. Gelenian reported that he’s asked students who have been successful in summer programs and who have made positive turn-arounds and the students don’t really know either. D. Ricker asked if something could be done at the elementary level to help with this but Gelenian said it doesn’t usually happen between grades 6 and 7, more often at grades 8 and 9.

1. **Student Government Report: Written report only.**

   **C. Elementary Reports:** Keiling stated that yesterday all elementary teachers took the common core assessment praxis – teachers were a little depressed, so different, very concerned about reading part as it is a split screen – reading on one side and test on other side and think it will be very confusing. Elementary schools are working hard with common core content but are very worried about the assessment. Martino is looking into the cost to purchase some samples to give students familiarity with the actual assessment. The first time students take is in the spring of 2015. Keiling also reported that Gelenian and she have been working with meeting with 5-8 teachers and 7-8 will go observe 5-6 and vice versa, looking at how to make better connections and the transition better. This will start in January. In reference to Keiling’s written report, Hooke questioned what the new math program is. Keiling reported the pilot is the Origo Stepping Stones and said that Everyday Math is not fully meeting the needs of common core. She also reported that Kathy McGowan has been phenomenal working with the teachers on this. MacQueen reported that Westshire had a send-off for Sonya McLam with classes giving her gifts and cards. Westshire will miss her and wish her the best of luck. Westshire will be bussing to Samuel Morey on Friday for the Vermont Symphony Orchestra performance.

   **Action:** Motion to accept S. McLam’s resignation with regret. **Approved.**

VII. **Ongoing Business (Deliberation and Possible Action):**

   A. **Orford Academy Building Task Force:** D. Ricker read an update from Ann Duncan-Cooley that they were looking into a few things. Needham reported that Paulson and she had met with Duncan-Cooley and Terry Martin and that the Task Force might want to present to Board and an executive session might be necessary at an upcoming meeting.

   B. **Strategic Plan Process/Retreat (G. Boutin):** Boutin nothing at this time.

   C. **Policies – Second Reading:**

      - Code E1 – Tobacco Prohibition; Code F3 – Hazing; Code F29 – Pupil Privacy Rights

      Boutin asked if the bus drivers know that they can’t smoke in the big Samuel Morey parking lot. Needham said she believed they do but would check. **Action:** Motion made to approve policies as presented. **Approved.**

VIII. **New Business (Receive Information and Possible Action):**

   A. **Overnight Field Trip (K. Gelenian):** Gelenian stated that the National Honor Society (NHS) would like to do the annual overnight trip to Gail Keefer’s house with two other faculty members also attending. They will use the trip to take care of ongoing business and work on items, such as tutoring students.

      **Action:** Motion made to approve NHS overnight field trip to Keefer’s home. **Approved.**

   B. **Special Education (J. Cole):** Needham introduced Jan who had come to give an overview and update which seemed appropriate before budget deliberations. Some of the items Cole reported were: Rivendell’s special education annual report had gone into the state; IEPs and 504s are driven by federal law for students with disability; people with disabilities being a protected class; being a long process and time to be approved for special education; having obligations for birth through 3 evaluations; seeing lots of children in preschool and lower elementary grades dealing with blindness, seizures, autism, significant language challenges, mobility, depression and on top of that learning disabilities; currently have 80 students on IEP and 20 students on 504 plans which is over 20% of Rivendell student population; and evaluate about 10 students every year who are at risk. Cole further reported that there are students on IEPs that are doing wonderfully; there is not a correlation between IEPs and at risk; providing very good diagnostic assessment – it can take up to six weeks – some in house and some are contracted out; currently contracting out Speech Language Pathologists, counseling, Occupational Therapy and Physical
Therapy; 10% students on IEPs are not being educated in our schools are alternatively placed but with the plan to get them back at in our Rivendell schools; and run some summer programs. Discussion on funding of special education and that it is not entirely paid for by local tax money (federal money, VT block grant). Needham reported that the percentage of students on IEPs and alternatively placed is high, but all schools are seeing the number creep up. After some discussion, Cole said that she is looking into hiring a clinician that could help facilitate the students coming back and it would be in partnership with Clara Martin with them sharing in cost. Needham said Cole has fostered partnerships with certain alternative programs (example Wilder School) and that Cole immediately starts trying to work on how to get that student back in District. After a question from Blanchard, Cole reported that EEEs percentage is little bit lower but disabilities more significant. Richardson wondered if there was any money in this current year’s budget that could be adjusted to hire a clinician this year, DeBois agreed. Cole reported that currently contracting some services through Robert Bryant and that part of doing it was to see if it would make the kind of difference we were hoping for. Bryant works with staff so then staff can work with students. Boutin said that it sounds like special education department is really doing a good job and should be something to celebrate at annual meeting. Cole and Needham stated that due to privacy it would be difficult to celebrate as people would know who the students are and that can’t be done. Board thanked Cole.

C. Individualized Student Needs (K. Gelenian): Gelenian distributed “Individualized Student Needs: How Do We Support Our Neediest Students” which he had prepared and went through the report explaining more thoroughly. Boutin asked “how do you identify successful” and Gelenian replied by graduation, passing classes, and not being discipline issues. Gelenian spoke highly of Robert Bryant and how he can predict student behavior. DeBois pointed out that Gelenian had spoken about this before and wondered why it was being brought to Board as it is not something the Board will act on but something that has to be acted on internally at the school level. Gelenian reported that he was just keeping the Board informed. Gelenian and Cole agreed that the celebration piece is that these students, at least at the Academy, are accepted by the student body and do not get bullied. Keiling said that part of the problem in this geographic area is finding the right person and that finding Robert Bryant, who is great with staff, was very lucky. Keiling reported that some things happening at the elementary schools that there are younger students hiding underneath tables and chairs, students who are “runners”, staff can’t pick up children, and that 5-10 students are consuming 80% of the day. Hooke suggested trying to find the right hire for paraprofessionals with education/experience in these behaviors. Avery stated that he had been recognizing this for some time and doesn’t find the attention these discipline issues are consuming acceptable and feels it is not fair that other students might be falling through the cracks due to the attention this is taking. Administrators are continuing to work on this and come up with solutions.

D. Budget 2014-2015: Needham reminded the Board of the special Board meeting next week and to email any budget questions that might arise before that meeting. Paulson shared that that revenue increase was about $40,000, had no guidance on tax rates at this time as CLAs were not in yet, VT AOE said could raise 4 to 5 cents and per pupil rate to go down $40, also no ADM figures have been published yet. Needham said Administrators are looking to Board for the bottom line after more conversation next week. There was a brief discussion on unexpended funds and Needham explained that it is usually because of personnel changes and benefits which are variable and are included at the higher amount when budget is prepared. DeBois polled Board members on their feeling on the bottom line of the draft 2014-2015 budget of $9,813,039, a 2.2% increase. (Avery, Lyndes, Blanchard, Hooke, Richardson, J. Ricker - too high; Boutin, DeBois, D. Ricker, Rinehimer -2.2 okay. Consensus was proposed draft too high at 2.2. Paulson informed Board that at a recent VASBO meeting Brad James took a poll of what the proposed increases in each schools budget were looking like and the majority was 5% or more. Draft budget will be reviewed in more depth at December 10th Special Board Meeting.

E. Correspondence: None.
IX. Future Agenda Items (Discussion):
Crisis Response, Community Outreach, Grants, Global Language for 6th grade (Jan late meeting),
Policies to be Revised (ongoing), Student Presentations, Department Reports, Recruiting Process,
Building Use Policy (revisit in May 2014), Orford Academy Building Task Force, Strategic Planning,
Budget, Calendar, Tuition Rate

X. Anticipated Executive Session (Discussion), 1 VSA 313 – Action: Motion made to enter
executive session at 8:38 p.m. Approved.

A. Negotiations
Board came out of executive session at 9:15 p.m.

XI. Adjournment (Action) –
Action: Motion made to adjourn at 9:16 p.m. Approved.

Recorded by:

Penny Perryman
Recorder