RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
Westshire Elementary School, West Fairlee, VT
December 6, 2011 – 6:30 p.m.

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

Members Absent: Vanessa DeSimone (Orford)

Administrators/Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Dick Paulson, Jr. (CFO), Hank Plaisted (Director of Information Technology), Gabi Martino (Technology Integration Specialist), Michael Galli (Dean of Students), Joan Holcombe (WES Principal), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools/RA Principal), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools/SME Principal)

Others: Gay-C Gahagan (Reporter-JO), Tom Thomson (Orford), Chris Crowley (Orford), Ludlow Flower (Orford)

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

II. General Public Comments: Chris Crowley announced he was there as a concerned citizen of Orford, along with Tom Thomson and Ludlow Flower. He gave a letter of concerns/questions to Smith-Ordway and requested that their group be added to the agenda for January School Board meeting for 30 minutes. Smith-Ordway said that the letter would be added to correspondence and that there was an agenda planning meeting after the Board meeting tonight and that the District Office would get back to him soon regarding the request.

III. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: None.

IV. Presentation/Guests
   A. Technology (H. Plaisted/G. Martino)
   Plaisted and Martino did a presentation on SmartBoards with the School Board able to participate as a student would in a classroom using a “clicker.” Other key topics discussed were: Fastroads NH fiber project, Vermont Rural grant for e-readers in elementary schools, 7th grade tablet/netbook pilot, iPads for Special Education, MMS Parent Portal for RA, electronic grade book for teachers, Young Writers Project, and technology budget/purchase decisions. Plaisted will send a list of other technology items they didn’t have time to present to Needham to share with the Board.

V. Consent Agenda
   A. Minutes (November 1, 2011) – Changes noted.
   B. Superintendent Report – No additions.
   C. Head of Schools Report – Additions to written report: Gelenian stated that they had the biggest family meeting at Vershire thanks to Kathy Hooke, included parents, retirees, former students, etc. He hoped other Board members would help with participation when meetings are held in their towns. Gelenian further reported that final exams were held and it appeared that the students took them very seriously. Grades should be done by Friday and, hopefully, report cards will be out by Friday. Board questioned him about academic notices which still are high. Gelenian agreed and this is being worked on. He stated that the level structure and expectations of some of the new faculty are different and math issues are appearing, especially now that there is a chemistry requirement. He compared it to muscle mass that it needs to be broken down before it is built up and said they were in the break down stage right now.
D. **Principal Reports** - Holcombe added that Westshire had joined SME for the VT symphony and invited everyone to the Westshire concert on December 19th. Keiling gave copies of report cards to Board as requested and stated they had been really working with the format since last spring. She stated that G. Martino has been phenomenal with her help and formatting.

1. **Student Representatives** - M. Galli reported as there was no student representative in attendance. He stated the students were choosing to foster closer ties with Thetford Academy – doing a student government swap, collaborating on speakers, etc. Smith-Ordway asked why Thetford Academy instead of Oxbow since Rivendell has a connection with students at River Bend. Galli said the students reached out to Oxbow and were “rebuffed;” however, they were immediately embraced by Thetford Academy.

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

VI. **Ongoing Business**

A. **2012-2013 Budget** – Needham distributed a draft budget, stated that it is still a work in process and is essentially a flat budget. She requested the Board look at it at their leisure and email any questions to K. Hooke (Finance Chair) or Needham. Needham stated that negotiations are still ongoing and there was no guesstimate for salary changes in this budget. Paulson (CFO) shared that by January Vermont should know what they are doing with the tax rate. He said that health insurance is in as a 5% increase at this time and each percent is roughly $10,000. Hooke had put the challenge to Needham and the administrators to try to level fund and still move Rivendell forward. Discussion on enrollment and that it has been holding stable as opposed to what we thought would be happening a few years ago and ways to market Rivendell to students in District who may be going to private schools and to interest students from other towns to come as tuition students. Ideas were: wider circulation of Rivendell Academy newsletters, setting them out during ballgames for people to pick up, sending excerpts from them to the District towns for their town listservs or newsletters, also reminders for people to go to the Rivendell website to see the great things happening.

B. **Committee Updates** – No updates besides minutes originally distributed in Board packet. Smith-Ordway will discuss committee assignment with new member, K. Blanchard, after meeting.

VII. **New Business**

A. **Correspondence** – Letter received from Orford group earlier in the meeting, discussion ensued. Needham and Paulson will review and begin answers to the various questions asked and bring to the Finance/LRP Committee. Needham added that she has correspondence that will need to be read/discussed under executive session. Gelenian had a request from Art Teacher, Jennifer Silverstein, for approval of an overnight field trip to New York City for approximately 4-5 art students, who are raising funds for it.

**Action:** Motion made to approve overnight art trip to NYC. **Approved.**

B. **Southeastern VT Public School Choice Collaborative 2012-2013 School Year** – Needham said this was just basically informational and reminded Board about law passed a few years ago regarding School Choice. Agreement needs to be signed each year by Board Chair. She told them that the deadline for student to apply is February for applications.

VIII. **Future Agenda Items**

Orford Group (January), Professional Development in-service; Long Range Plans to Address Flux in Population, Community Outreach, Grants, Global Language for 6th grade, Policies to be Revised, Student Presentations, Department Reports
IX. **Anticipated Executive Session**  
**Action:** Motion made to go into Executive Session at 8:24 p.m. **Approved.**  
Board came out of Executive Session at 8:45 p.m.  
**A. Negotiations**  
**B. Personnel Matter**

*Action:* Motion made to approve a request for a medical leave of absence for Susan Corliss for the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year effective immediately, with the stipulation that should she decide not to return for the 2012-2013 school year, she must notify the District Office no later than April 15, 2011. **Approved.**

X. **Adjournment:** **Action** – Motion made to adjourn. **Approved.** Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Recorded by:

Penny Perryman  
Recorder