3-5-19 RISD School Board Minutes
Westshire Elementary School

Present: Marc DeBois, Kathy Hooke, Kathy Blanchard, Bruce Lyndes, David Ricker, Kevin Dexter, Maria Koehler; Jon Lester; David Gagner, Vanessa DeSimone

Other: Elaine Arbour; Bill Little; Keri Gelenian

I. Call to order at 6:32 PM
II. Agenda – No changes
III. Public Comments
   a. Concern was expressed that meeting minutes are being posted late. Hopes for it to be solved. An additional position in the budget is intended to help.
   b. Concern was expressed re: mold at SME as well as losing Julie Donahue next year. Elaine Arbour spoke to the mold issue. Testing was done and findings were around the sink, in the closet, and in the duct work. All levels were low and deemed safe. Duct cleaning will occur over April vacation; sink cleaning and closet cleaning occurring now.
   c. Concern that it’s hard for one principal to cover two schools. Marc cited report from a consultant that will be made available to the public.
   d. Concerns expressed re: SME teacher being out until after April break and the lack of consistency in subs. Elaine spoke to having a reading teacher substitute in the classroom.
   e. Concern expressed by Rivendell Rec leader Josh Hickman about school district usage policy. Has resulted in additional costs to rec programs and could result in closing programs. Marc indicated that the Board wants to encourage people to use the facilities and would only charge for the maintenance personnel. Hickman indicated that they were charged 47 hours for 30 hours of tournament. Ross and Terry will review the hours to be sure it is accurate and will get back to Josh.
   f. Question about future elementary leadership positions and whether current personnel will continue or the board will seek two new administrators. Parent/staff member read a statement listing specific concerns about one of the building leaders.
   g. Concern expressed by a second parent/staff member that the leadership model isn’t working well. Reported that several staff members run the building in the absence of full time administrators. Endorsed concerns expressed in (f).
   h. Minutes from February 15, 2019 Board meeting – Approved unanimously (David Ricker/Kathy Hooke)

IV. Informational Reports
   a. Superintendent Report (oral) – Orford lease update. The lease will be negotiated between the Town of Orford and the School District with the assistance of attorneys. The plan is to begin after the Town and School District Annual Meetings are done.
   b. Head of Schools – Changes the schedule last year to allow teachers to team in an interdisciplinary team to support the instructional philosophy we are promoting. Worked on meeting five criteria to develop the schedule. (See Keri’s handout for more detail.) Keri’s evaluation of the schedule change is that it has been very positive so far. Five staff members went to Hi Tech High recently. Has already impacted several staff members’ planning approaches. Kerry Browne and Paige Radney are finalists for ab.
Rowland Fellowship of $100,000 (check amount). Professional development hasn’t been as robust as he would like this year. We scheduled COL on several Board meeting nights and it skewed the planning of that team for PD. Keri spoke about bullying and referenced a checklist to use during bullying investigations and to share with parents. Stephanie Chesnut is working on a grant from the Anti-Defamation League. She is also taking some 7th and 8th graders to the Beyond Bullying Conference on Burlington, VT. RA is one of three schools in the Upper Valley selected by Dartmouth to provide college mentoring to students during their junior and senior years in high school and freshman and sophomore years in college. Five teachers are hoping to take students on a kayak trip to a coral reef next year. Have formed a committee to build the Academic Mentoring Program. Student behavior has been a challenge this year, but it is starting to feel like they’re making good progress. Ross Convertino has been a great addition to this process when egregious behavior involves athletes. Ross is working on changing the culture of athletics and fan behavior at the Academy.

b. Elementary Principal – Just got a Maker’s Cabinet built and filled by Laszlo Bardos’ class. Mrs. O’Hearn is testing it now. Julie will be working on a unit with the third grade and the fifth grade. Bringing Mindfulness into the school. Kyla came to community meeting to support mindful practices and will attend the staff meeting on Thursday to do a mindfulness exercise with staff. Girls on the Run will be starting at both schools by several staff members. Recognized people in the room who supported and organized parts of the Winter Program.

VI. Ongoing Business

a. Monthly finance update – Bill reported that the FY2017 audit report is just in. The auditors will report to the Board when the FY2018 report is done. They will be here in either April or May. We’re making progress on implementing the new financial system, hopefully this spring. Payroll process is also showing progress.

b. Update on Superintendent Search

i. Approve position from .6 FTE to .8 FTE – Approved unanimously (Kathy Hooke/Maria Koehler)

ii. Committee is formed (Kathy Hooke, David Ricker, Vanessa DeSimone, Keri Gelenian, Brenda Gray, Kirsten Suprenant, Sarah Rose, Rebecca Wordak, Jessica Cheney, Mikayla Oaks). Have met three times. Job was posted on School Spring and Ed Week. Have narrowed it to three candidates so far. Two have visited RA and the third candidate will come soon. Planning to do the first round of interviews March 18, 2019. Still looking at incoming applicants.

iii. Forum hosted by a small number of the search committee last night to see what people love about RISD; hopes & concerns; looking for in a superintendent. Similar conversation held at RA with staff hosted by Kirsten Suprenant.

c. Snow Day Make-up on 3/22/19 – No vote taken. Board sought comments from parents. Would be concerned about losing the conference in March, as it is a valuable time to connect about students. Consider having a short student day and do conferences in the evening. Consider an early release and use the PD time on two Thursdays for overflow conferences. A few teachers advocated for keeping the conference day. Need a robust and concrete plan if the day is cancelled. Elaine will ask if we can reduce some because of Emergency Days due to number of snow days; also look at Administrative Agreements between the states; look at Articles of Agreement. Could there be conferences at elementary and RA have school to accommodate the required number of
days for NH and allow the VT-located elementary schools have conferences. Keri is asking that we minimize impact to PD time. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday of conference week to do early dismissal. Wouldn’t impact PD. If emergency waiver or other administrative waivers aren’t available, the days will remain as they currently are with no changes.

VII. New Business

a. Administrative Contracts
i. Resignation of Julie Donahue as RISD Elementary Principal – Approved unanimously and with gratitude for service (Bruce Lyndes/David Ricker)
ii. Nomination of Keri Gelenian as RA Principal & Head of Schools (Kathy Blanchard/Kathy Hooke) – approved unanimously
iii. Nomination of Jan Cole as Special Education Director (David Gagner/Bruce Lyndes) – approved unanimously

b. Final planning for Annual School District Meeting & Appointment of District Clerk
i. Esther Dobbins is able to take minutes, but she can’t prepare for the meeting. Dave Gagner, Kevin Dexter, Kathy Blanchard will volunteer to prep. Marc DeBois will call Esther tomorrow (3/6/19) to learn what needs to be done.
ii. Final planning – There will be a slide show. Marc DeBois will do the introduction and send slides to Brenda. Kathy Hooke will present a final numbers discussion, to include the explanation and history of tax rates. Someone needs to talk about the student to staff ratio (Elaine & Brenda will prep it & Kathy Hooke will speak about it). It is suggested that we pay attention to the RRC’s recommendations about how to do that calculation so we are consistent moving forward; include tuition students and only locally funded staff; focus on instructional staff; include a number of non-instructional staff; need to make it clear that the running of the business operations takes people and show the non-teaching people as critical members of the staff. Speak about the major drivers of the budget increases; what is the actual new money (Elaine & Bill to help get numbers). Doug Tifft will likely speak for the RRC and the Local Elected Auditors.
   1. To get cost per pupil allocations, suggested to look at ADM for Rivendell, including all students, over the last few years. Don’t worry about VT/NH calculations – use ADM from Articles of Agreement and see what the trends are for spending local and grants over the last few years.
   2. We’re not applying the $300,000 surplus at this time to address the audit concerns regarding deficits.
   3. Need building study results (Elaine to prepare).

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iii. Slides need to be to Brenda by the end of next week at the latest.
iv. Consider getting flier out to taxpayers (Elaine & Kathy Hooke) – Look at Chris Crowley’s memo for change in shift of tax rates. Annual Report is accurate, but the prior articles and Board minutes were working on different numbers and need to be corrected.

c. Correspondence – Marc DeBois received a call from the Valley News regarding the budget. There was an article in the paper. The Board received a report from Margaret MacLean. Local Elected Auditors had information about ADM and tax rates.

VIII. April Agenda

a. Review facilities use document
b. Minutes from 2/28/19 & 3/5/19 School Board meetings

c. Update on Orford Field Lease Agreement

d. FY2017 and FY2018 audit reports presented by Plodzik & Sanderson

e. Orford Academy Update

f. Rivendell Review Committee Report in April & about 20 minutes at the May meeting; Will need to extend charge into June for final work

g. Approve REA CBAs.

h. Update on Superintendent’s Search

i. Elementary Principal Search

j. Community looking for additional ways to interact with the Board because Board meetings aren’t always as conducive for community members to have a two-way conversation.

k. Resignations/Contracts

IX. Executive Session

a. Entered at 8:28 PM (Maria Koehler/Bruce Lyndes) – Approved unanimously

b. Exited at 10:08 PM (Kevin Dexter/Maria Koehler) – Approved unanimously

X. Motion to accept report from consultant Margaret MacLean regarding elementary school needs (David Gagner/Maria Koehler) – Approved unanimously

XI. Motion to advertise for SME Principal (Bruce Lyndes/David Gagner) – Approved unanimously

XII. Motion to convert Elementary Assistant Principal position back to Principal (Jon Lester/Maria Koehler) – Approved unanimously

XIII. Motion to advertise for WES Principal (Maria Koehler/David Ricker) – Approved unanimously

XIV. Adjourned at 10:14 PM (Bruce Lyndes/Kathy Blanchard) – Approved unanimously

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine M. Arbour, Ed.D.
Superintendent