

UNION #39 SCHOOL BOARD
Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 26, 2007
Black River High School, Library
7:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER- ROLL CALL and WELCOME

Board: Allen Seiple, Diana Chimbolo, Peter Girouard, Linda Guerrero
Staff: James Frail, Principal; Frank Perotti, Superintendent; Mike Ripley, Assist. Principal; Sue Renard
Student Representatives: Chantel Marechaux
Public: Lucy Columb, Beth Merrill,

Mr. Seiple called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. COMMUNICATIONS:

- A. Public Comments: None
- B. Written: None

III. BUSINESS ITEMS

- A. Minutes: March 21, 2007, Regular Meeting; April 4, 2007, Budget Info Meeting; April 10, 2007, Annual Meeting; April 10, 2007, Reorganizational Meeting

The board completed the missing information from the March 21, 2007 minutes regarding executive session and adjournment to show that the board returned from executive session at 9:45 p.m. and Mr. Bixby moved to adjourn and Mr. Pace seconded the motion.

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2007 meeting as corrected and the April 4, 2007 meeting and the April 10, 2007 reorganizational meeting as presented. Mr. Girouard seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

- B. Department Reports

Ms. Chimbolo suggested that Mr. Frail relay to Ms. Trimboli the board's request for the maintenance reports to include more future planning. She noted that the board had made that request previously. The board would like the reports to include current status of major systems, anticipated upcoming repairs. The goal is to work toward preventative maintenance.

- C. Approval of Orders:

- i. A/P #30, 31; P/R #21, 22

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to approve orders for A/P 30, 31 and P/R 21, 22 as presented. Ms. Guerrero seconded. There was discussion about the ability of the school to send some students to Stafford Technical Center in Rutland since there are some programs offered there that are not offered at RVTC. There was discussion about the payment to LES for 3rd quarter maintenance being high and it was clarified that the payment also includes custodial salaries. Ms. Chimbolo's motion carried unanimously.

- ii. A/P # 32, 33; P/R 23

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to approve orders for A/P 32, 33 and P/R 23 as presented. Ms. Guerrero seconded. There was discussion about the Dick Blick East expenditure for art materials. There was also discussion about the board's request to have the business office provide a variance description for the orders to see if any of the expenditures will put them over budget. Ms. Chimbolo's motion carried unanimously.

D. FY '06 Surplus

Ms. Chimbolo reported that after the audit of the FY '05-06 budget and expenditures, there is a surplus of just over \$100,000. She reported that state law says that the board can make the decision to apply the surplus to the current budget to reduce taxes, but that the decision to spend that money elsewhere must be voted upon by the voters.

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to approve applying the surplus to reduce taxes. Mr. Girouard seconded. There was discussion about keeping the money in reserve for next year's budget in light of pending legislation, however doing that would also have to be presented to the voters. Ms. Chimbolo's motion carried unanimously.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Transfer of money from Coaches salary account to Booster Club for Girls SB jackets

Mr. Seiple reported that the board had planned \$800 for the assistant snowboard coach's salary, however Mr. Seiple filled that position on a volunteer basis, therefore that money has not been spent. He suggested that the board transfer half of that money (\$400) to the booster club to help provide jackets for the Girls' Varsity Snowboard Team. With the donations they have received thus far, if the board approves the \$400 donation, the booster club will be able to pay approximately \$100 per jacket and the girls will each pay approximately \$30 for their jackets.

Mr. Girouard voiced his concern that, in the past students have held fundraisers to help pay for their varsity jackets or parents have helped pay for them, and he wouldn't want this to set a precedent. Mr. Girouard **moved** to donate ½ of the planned \$800 assistant snowboard coach salary (\$400) to the booster club for the purchase of varsity jackets for the girls snowboard team, with the caveat that this donation is not precedent-setting due to Mr. Seiple's donation of his time. Ms. Chimbolo seconded. Mr. Seiple recused himself from the vote and the motion carried with a vote of 3 in favor.

B. Academic Trophy for the Girls' Soccer Team

Mr. Seiple reported that the 2004 and 2005 Girls' Varsity Soccer Teams were nationally ranked in academics and that he anticipates the 2006 team to be so ranked as well. He noted that it speaks to the quality of the school that it has sports teams that do well academically. He noted that it would be good to acknowledge their achievements with a trophy. Ms. Chimbolo suggested a plaque that has room to add more years as more are achieved and put team pictures in the trophy case with the plaque. Ms. Guerrero suggested using some of the rest of the unused Assistant Snowboard Coach salary to pay for the plaque. She also suggested the plaque be a generic Varsity Sports Academic Award and then add individual mini-plaque labels to say the specific team (Girls'/Boys'; Sport; Year). Ms. Chimbolo suggested that the board allow Mr. Frail to pursue pricing information and discuss wording with the athletic director. There was also discussion about including other past teams that met the same criteria.

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to allow Mr. Frail to spend up to \$300 on the purchase of a plaque for Varsity Sports Academic Award with the ability to add individual mini-plaque labels for the specific team. Ms. Guerrero seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Joint Board

The joint boards need to meet to discuss joint contracts for non-union employees, nursing and maintenance splits and make decisions based on the approved budgets. The meeting was originally planned for May 9, 2007, but will now have to be held on May 10, 2007.

V. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

A. Senior Class Trip

Ms. Columb presented the board with a tentative itinerary for the Senior Class Trip. There was discussion that there would be 34 students and 6 adults (Doris Reiser, Sue

Renard, Bob Sanford, Eric Lever, Ms. Columb, and Mr. Renard or Mr. Frail). There was discussion that the students understood that there would be absolutely no wandering off without a chaperone. There is a letter to parents that explains the rules including the requirement of staying with a chaperone, and both the student and his/her parent will have to sign the letter acknowledging that they have read and understand the rules.

It was noted that 6 of the students have been to New York City in the past and it may be these students that are more likely to separate from the group since they may feel more comfortable in the environment, however it is still unacceptable. Ms. Guerrera suggested that the chaperones all have a list of all of the students' cell phone numbers. It was reported that the group had raised all the money (and then some) necessary for their trip. Ms. Goraj and Ms. Columb have reserved the bus, the hotel (the students will all be on the same floor) and tickets for a Broadway show.

Mr. Girouard **moved** to approve the Senior Class Trip as presented. Ms. Guerrera seconded and the motion carried with a vote of 3 in favor and 1 opposed.

B. Report

Mr. Frail distributed his report for the board's review. He noted that he would like to have the board's tentative support for the National History Day trip to Washington and he will bring an itinerary to the next board meeting. The board consensus was that they would support moving forward in the planning process for the National History Day.

The armory is open for PE classes, however the school will not automatically use it for a weight room because they want to see how the PE portion works out. In addition, recruitment numbers may affect how long the armory can stay open.

There was discussion about middle school baseball not having much participation. Some of these students will be able to participate in Little League/Babe Ruth teams, and others participating in other sports, such as lacrosse.

The board discussed offering Mr. Tofferi a stipend for an instructional golf program. They will address that issue at the next meeting.

C. Teacher Vacancy FY 07-08

Mr. Frail reported that the only known teacher vacancy at this point is for the position created by the approval of the budget—a part-time English/Health teacher. The board consensus was that Mr. Frail could begin to advertise the position of part-time English/Health teacher.

VI. POLICY

A. Grade Advancement: Retention, Promotion & Acceleration

Ms. Chimbolo **moved** to adopt the Grade Advancement policy as written, to be labeled as appropriate. Ms. Guerrera seconded. Mr. Seiple stated that in the past he had been part of a discussion about a student struggling with their grades and the topic of what would happen to the student came up. It was determined that the student would advance to the next grade. Mr. Seiple questioned this practice, citing that it is the school's responsibility to prepare a student for the world and shouldn't just advance a student through the grades as a matter of course.

Mr. Frail cited research that indicates that retention after 3rd grade generally doesn't increase the student's understanding of a subject, rather it increases the dropout risk. The school needs parental support for the retention of a student, and retaining a student without another program of study to replace the original unsuccessful program will likely result in the student continuing to be unsuccessful in that program. Mr. Frail stated that

they are reviewing the retention policy relating to middle school students to investigate alternative education options such as summer school and tutorials. There was discussion that 22 states have graduation tests to qualify for graduation. There was discussion about a teacher focusing on a student who is behind since he should have been retained the previous year and not being able to focus on the other students in the class. There was also discussion about parental involvement in the retention discussions.

Ms. Chimbolo's motion passed unanimously.

VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Mr. Seiple noted that there were a few students who recently lost their fathers and stated that he hoped the school was being attentive to the students' needs during this time. There was discussion about the students' sensitivity during this time and that they pull together as a community.

Ms. Marechaux reported that the student council has planned some more fundraisers and a spring carnival on May 24, 2007. On that day school will end at 10:45 a.m. and then the students will pick up around town for approximately an hour, then return to school for a barbecue and non-competitive games.

She reported that the French Club's trip to France was successful and the students found it interesting to see the difference in the cultures, the architecture and history. The students stayed with families and many gained a better understanding of spoken French.

She noted that the prom is scheduled for May 19, and BRACC is doing an after-prom program. There is a school play tonight (4/26), Friday (4/27) and Saturday (4/28) entitled Gentleman Prefer Blondes; and an art showcase on May 1, and a middle school showcase on May 10. On June 11, grades 7-11 will have an awards night; June 15 is senior night and Baccalaureate is scheduled for June 3.

VIII. CURRICULUM REPORT:

Mr. Seiple wanted to hear some of the successes and challenges faced by the teachers at Black River High School. Ms. Renard reported that one of her biggest challenges is with the scheduling. One of her classes is 45 minutes long (due to being in one of the split blocks), but truly needs to be a minimum of 1 hour long. She also noted that keyboarding needs to be taught at the elementary level to properly prepare students for many of her classes. She stated that she has spoken to principals in the past about these issues. Mr. Seiple explained that Mr. Ryan is working with a scheduling committee to implement a new form of scheduling possibly in school year 2008-2009.

Ms. Renard also stated that she would be interested in co-teaching an introduction to film course which would be interdisciplinary (including English, history, social studies). The course could be taught 1 day per week after the regular school day (pending contract issues being resolved).

There was discussion about the school being small and flexible enough to adapt to what the students need. There was discussion about replacing snow days with virtual days whereby if school was closed due to weather, students would still log on to the computer from home and participate in the school day. She suggested that the Gates Foundation may help fund the program to help provide computers and internet for every student. However it was noted that the Gates Foundation usually works with super-large schools with thousands of students.

Ms. Renard noted that the computer labs should have air conditioning for the benefit of the machines. The computer tables are very old (previously typewriter tables) and need replacing. The electrical outlets in the floor need reworking to make the plugs in them flush with the floor and thus a safer environment. Mr. Tuomisto can try to work up an estimate for the upgrades, and Ms. Renard and Mr. Frail can look into grants. It was noted that the school needs a good grant writer for these projects.

Mr. Ripley noted that the facilities in the science labs are challenging, particularly with regard to electricity and gas. He noted his life science classes usually have the right equipment to do their labs, but the physical sciences are sometimes hindered by the facilities.

IX. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

There was discussion that Mr. Ripley's evaluation would be completed by Mr. Frail, while Mr. Frail's evaluation would be completed by Dr. Perotti, with Mr. Frail to provide him with his 360 report.

The board discussed exterior cameras as part of the security upgrades, noting that they should be wireless, and therefore more able to be moved to various locations as needs change.

Dr. Perotti reported that there has been much activity and response generated around the education spending bills in the legislature, particularly those regarding special education and caps on excessive spending. He noted that special education contracts will cause schools to exceed the proposed spending caps almost every year. U39 is especially sensitive to the education spending levels.

Dr. Perotti reported that governance needs to be investigated, not just at the school level, but also at the Board of Education level. He cited the recent communications study that showed 60% of the memos from the Board of Education required mandated action and time, but most provided no funding. There was discussion about the percentage of special education students, and Black River is within the state average. It was noted that funding is penalized if the number of special education students is too high. Dr. Perotti noted that HCRS is undergoing some negotiations (in particular summer work schedules and internal communication), but may go on strike on May 1. The school contracts with HCRS for mental health services and there was discussion about how the school is preparing for that issue. HCRS has a contingency plan in the event that their providers strike. The school's case worker will have to cover those needs. There was discussion that the school may need to increase its contract to better ensure consistency of service. It was noted that HCRS bills private insurance and Medicaid for these services.

There was more discussion about the joint board meetings and Mr. Frail will speak with Ms. Trimboli regarding the maintenance splits. Mr. Frail will bring his recommendations for non-union employees to the meeting.

X. TO-DO LIST:

The board would like an update from Mr. Ryan on the progress of the scheduling committee. They would also like the most up-to-date enrollment numbers before beginning to discuss the possibility of school closure. It was noted that as enrollment drops, overhead costs increase on a per student basis. Ms. Chimbolo noted that the state has an enrollment projection formula. There was discussion about bringing the information (enrollment review, management review, and facility review) to Dartmouth to get a full overview (the business school students in turn get credit on their senior theses), and Dr. Perotti is still trying to work on this option.

There was discussion about saving money by contracting superintendent services or letting others contract RWSU's superintendent services. It was noted that as enrollment continues to drop, the cost of educating the students may eventually rise to \$20,000 per actual student and the board may have to consider other options. Mr. Seiple reminded the board that the survey results indicate that the town would like the school to remain open with renovation. It was suggested to try to set up an endowment for the school through donations from vacation homeowners.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Ms. Chimbolo suggested entering executive session at 8:50 p.m. to discuss the principal's contract and to invite Mr. Frail, Dr. Perotti, and Mr. Ripley. The board consensus was to enter executive session.

The board returned from executive session at 9:24 p.m.

XII. ADJOURNMENT:

The board consensus was to adjourn.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, May 3, 2007, 7:00 p.m., RWSU Special Meeting, Superintendent's Office

Thursday, May 10, 2007, 7:00 p.m., Joint Boards Meeting, LES Multipurpose Room

Wednesday, May 16, 2007, 7:00 p.m., U39 Regular Meeting, Mt. Holly Elementary
School Library

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Wilson
Board Recording Secretary