

MINUTES
RYE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
Rye Middle School Multipurpose Room
April 26, 2005

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Culyer at 7:03 p.m. and the roll was called.

Present

Mr. James Culyer, *President*
Mr. Stephen Feeney, *Vice President*
Ms. Sarah Mariani
Mr. Joshua Nathan
Mr. George Pratt
Ms. Victoria Sterling
Mr. Robert Zahm

And Dr. Edward Shine, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Daniel McCann, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. Robert Walsh, Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Culyer welcomed those present and announced that the meeting was a business meeting of the Board to which the public was invited. He announced that Consent Agenda Items Action-General 2, Revised Board Policy 7900; Action-General 5, Approval of the BOCES 2005-2006 Administrative Budget; Action-General 6, Approval to Cast a Vote for BOCES Board Candidates John DeSantis and Beverly Levine; and Action-General 7, Adoption of the Rye City School District 2005-2006 Budget Totaling \$55,800,147 would be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Culyer thanked all the individuals who had worked hard, including community residents, PTOs and POs, the administration and the Board, on the development of the budget and called for a round of applause, stating that it really was a joint effort that he hoped had contributed to a budget that will be accepted by the community on the 17th of May.

Hearing of the Public on Non-Agenda Items

A member of the public said he complimented the Board on the budget development.

A member of the public suggested that if there were less than 10 to 12 students in a class, the class should be abolished. She asked that the Board and administration have a commitment to the people and to the students in doing this.

CONSENT AGENDA

On a motion by Mr. Pratt, seconded by Ms. Mariani and carried unanimously (7-0) it was voted to approve the following items:

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Action – General

1. The minutes of the meeting of the Board of April 12, 2005, as written.
2. Revised Board Policies 0100 (Equal Opportunity), 0100.A (Non-Discrimination Against the Disabled); 0200 (School District Goals and Objectives); and 0300 (Evaluation of Professional Staff). (Attachment I)
3. Board of Education Policy 1000 (Community Relations). (Attachment II)
4. Adoption of the Ninth Grade English Curriculum. (Attachment III)
5. Adoption of Sixth Grade Textbooks Science Explorer – Cells and Heredity; Science Explorer – Weather and Climate; Science Explorer – Motion, Forces, and Energy; and Science Explorer – Chemical Building Blocks. (Attachment IV)

Action – Fiscal

- The recommendation to award the bid for the District-Wide Grounds Maintenance and Field Maintenance three-year contract for the 2005-2006 through 2007-2008 period with the District's annual option for renewal to P.A. Ferraro Landscaping in the amount of \$25,000.00 for the School Year 2005-2006. (Attachment V)

Action - Personnel

1. The Three Year Probationary Appointment of Amy Young, as an Elementary Teacher, for which she holds New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Pre K-6, 1.0 FTE, MA Step 4, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2004 – June 30, 2007.
2. The Three Year Probationary Appointment of Michele Black, as a Special Education Teacher assigned to Milton School, for which she holds New York State Permanent Certification in Special Education K-12, 1.0 FTE, MA Step 7, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective February 23, 2004 – February 22, 2007.
3. The extension of the Probationary Period of Kyra Johnson as a math tenure area probationary employee, through January 5, 2006.
4. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Courtney Albaum, as an Elementary Teacher for which she has Professional New York State Certification in Childhood Education 1-6, assigned to Osborn School, 1.0 FTE, MA, Step 10, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
5. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Traci Jeffers, as an Elementary Teacher for which she holds New York State Permanent Certification in Elementary K-6, assigned to Osborn School, 1.0 FTE, MA, Step 10, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.

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6. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Jacquelyn Benfari, as an Elementary Teacher for which she holds New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Education PreK-6, assigned to Osborn School, 1.0 FTE, MA, Step 10, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
7. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Cheryl Gelsomino, as an Elementary Teacher for which she holds New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Education N-6, assigned to Osborn School, 1.0 FTE, BA+15, Step 4, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
8. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Michelle Ring, as an Elementary Teacher assigned to Midland School, for which she has New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Education K-6 and Special Education K-12, 1.0 FTE, BA+15 Step 5, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
9. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Deborah Sherman, as an Elementary Teacher for which she has New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Education PreK-6, 1.0 FTE, BA+15, Step 6, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
10. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Stephanie Zaccario, as an Elementary Teacher for which she has New York State Provisional Certification in Elementary Education PreK-6, 1.0 FTE, MA Step 3/4 of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
11. The Leave Replacement Appointment of Heather Castellani, as an Elementary Teacher for which she holds New York State Provisional Certification in Special Education and Elementary Education PreK-6, assigned to Midland School, 1.0 FTE, MA Step 3/4, of the 2005-2006 Teacher Salary Schedule, effective September 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006.
12. The Emergency Conditional Leave Replacement Appointment of Lauren Russo, as a Kindergarten Teacher assigned to Milton School, for which she has New York State Permanent Certification in Elementary Education N-6, 1.0 FTE, MA, Step 6, of the 2004-2005 Teacher Salary Schedule, prorated, effective April 26, 2005 to June 30, 2005.

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

BOCES Administrative Budget

Dr. Shine explained that every year local Boards of Education have the opportunity to vote on the BOCES administrative budget. Mr. Pratt said in future years he would like to see

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comparisons to the current year so it would be possible to evaluate the prior budget against the actual, against the proposed budget.

On a motion by Ms. Mariani, seconded by Mr. Pratt and carried 6-1 with Mr. Feeney opposed, it was voted to approve the 2005-2006 BOCES Administrative Budget in the amount of \$6,804,805.00. (Attachment VI)

BOCES Board Candidates

Mr. Zahm said he felt he could not vote on candidates about whom he knew nothing. Mr. Pratt agreed.

On a motion by Ms. Sterling, seconded by Ms. Mariani and carried 5-2 with Mr. Pratt and Mr. Zahm opposed, it was voted to approve the election of John DeSantis and Beverly A. Levine to the Board of Cooperative Educational Services. (Attachment VII)

Adoption of the 2005-2006 Budget

Mr. Culyer said that as introduction to this agenda item, Mr. Feeney would present a report of the Budget Analysis Subcommittee.

Mr. Feeney gave a report of the Budget Analysis Subcommittee. He said that by way of background, the Board began the school year being responsive to the community in the formation of a Budget Analysis Subcommittee. He said the Board authorized this at its July, 2004 Planning Session. He said the Board had put out a call for citizen participation and that all who applied and desired to serve were accepted. He noted that he, Mr. Pratt, Mr. Zahm, Dr. Shine, and Mr. Walsh served, along with community members Bertrand deFrondeville, John Johnston, Jack Zahringer, and Martin Gerson.

He said that from late fall through April the committee met seven times including an orientation meeting on Long Island provided by the New York State School Boards Association. He said the membership was surveyed for topics, and that no agenda was imposed. He delineated the areas in which each member had served, noting that debt service and Osborn litigation is an ongoing process for the District in defending himself.

Mr. Johnston then provided a report on the committee's efforts. He and Mr. Feeney both suggested that the committee needs to work year-round, begin earlier in the fall, and stay ahead of the budget cycle more effectively. Mr. Johnston thanked the members of the Board and administration, especially Mr. Walsh, for his responsiveness. He said he felt it was a job well done.

Mr. Pratt commented that the committee was not given the power to make written recommendations to the Board, and suggested that the Board, at its July review meeting, review and revisit how it would like the committee to communicate with the Board.

Dr. Shine then provided background information on the budget. He said that after several months of discussion and deliberation, he was presenting the 2005-2006 budget of \$55,800,147 for adoption, a 6.76% budget-to-budget increase with an estimated tax rate increase of 5.54%.

He suggested that a short history of the budget process might be in order to understand fully how he arrived at the \$55,800,147 total and said that in February 2005, he presented a preliminary budget that reflected a 9.9% budget-to-budget increase. He said that right on the heels of that presentation the District was notified of a new State Comptroller's mandate to move the Teachers' Retirement System [TRS] allocation from a modified accrual [cash]

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accounting methodology to a full accrual methodology, while increasing the percentage of salary set aside to 7.9% from 5.62%. This new requirement pushed the budget to a 12.4% increase with an estimated tax increase in a similar range.

Dr. Shine said that after several Board meetings and considerable discussion with information, questions and clarification requests from the Board, the total budget of \$55,800,147 was the result. He said despite the significant reductions which have taken place in removing set-asides for Osborn litigation and projected transfers to fund balance to support the Osborn contingent liability, the following budget “drivers” remain:

1. Negotiated agreements with employee bargaining groups – While the budget-to-budget increase is 2.9%, the real increase[less new staff positions] for salaries is \$2,446,884 or 8.4%. In addition to salary increases, this includes Extra Pay for Extra work increases, increases in over time pay, and other hourly rates, etc.
2. Benefits – Health insurance costs are increasing at a rate of 9% per year and the TRS allocation for the 2005-2006 budget is increasing 179%.
3. Debt Service – In 2002, the community approved a bond resolution for \$22 million for additions and alterations to the elementary school. Recently the bonds have been sold and the 2005-2006 budget will reflect the first principal and interest payments on those bonds. The debt service fund will increase \$1.3 million over the 2004-2005 budget. The anticipated increase was moderated by a bond refunding plan proposed by the District’s financial advisors and approved by the Sub-Committee on Borrowing and Investment. The Debt and Transfers component of the 2005-2006 budget will increase by 44.82%.
4. Facilities – Since 2002, the Board of Education’s plan for facilities was to increase the level of funding of this budget component to 2% of the previous year’s budget; this budget finally achieves that level of funding. The long-range plan was to level-off at 2% and make significant progress toward on-going facility issues, while contemplating capital improvements. The funding level in this budget area is increasing by \$320,215 or from 1.38% of the 2003-2004 budget to 2% of the 2004-2005 budget.
5. New Programs and Additional Staff to support the schools during construction, support class size at the elementary schools, enrollment increases at the middle school, and the implementation of a revised grade 6 foreign language program at the middle school are included in this budget. Funding to support this new staff is \$658,167 or 1.18% of the total budget.
6. The budget for operational support of the school facilities is projected to increase by \$131,683. This is attributed, essentially, to projected cost increases for heating oil, gas, gasoline, and electricity.

Dr. Shine concluded by recommending that the Board adopt the 2005-2006 budget of \$55,800,147 and present this budget for a vote of the electorate on Tuesday, May 17, 2005.

Mr. Feeney said he would like to reiterate that all Westchester school districts were facing the same budgetary issues, including labor, health and other benefits higher than the CPI, Teachers Retirement System obligations, and debt service on voter-approved bonds. He said specific to Rye was the litigation by the Osborn Home against the school district and the city, and that the expense of this was significant. He said that despite these burdens, the Rye City School District budget was the lowest announced to date of any Westchester school

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district, for the second year in a row, despite the Osborn litigation costs.

Mr. Pratt explained the District's decisions in complying with the Teachers Retirement System mandated change in funding and that the Audit Committee had recommended that the District pay the fee and not attempt to finance it for later payment.

Mr. Culyer called for questions or comments from the public.

A member of the public said he wanted to compliment Dr. Shine on doing a marvelous job bringing the budget to state contingency budget level and that he was pleased with the job the administration did.

A member of the public congratulated the Board and administration for working so hard to bring the budget down, and that the whole community was relieved. He then said he had regrets on format, that the District must develop an updated enrollment figure, and that he implored the administration to come up with a better number.

A member of the public asked the Board to change class size and consider K-2 at 22 students, and 3-5 at 25 or 26 students. She said the District didn't need assistant principals and that the District was trying to give a private school education in a public school setting. She said the District did not have to go that high to have a quality education.

There being no further discussion, on a motion by Ms. Mariani, seconded by Mr. Nathan and carried unanimously (7-0) it was voted to adopt the 2005-2006 school year budget in the amount of \$55,800,147.00, a 6.76% budget-to-budget increase with an estimated tax rate increase of 5.54%. (Attachment VIII)

Board of Education Policy 7900

Mr. Pratt reviewed the process used to review Policy 7900, Use of Permanent Field Lighting at John Nugent Stadium. He explained the derivation of the report written by the committee formed, in accordance with the policy, and submitted to the Board in February. He outlined the process used to inform neighbors and other residents of the review of the policy and delineated the dates of meetings and communications. He then summarized the recommended changes to the policy.

The Board discussed these recommended changes and Mr. Castagna responded to questions regarding practice and game conditions. Believing more time was needed for Board and public comment, Ms. Sterling asked Mr. Castagna how late a decision could be made without the decision having an impact on his scheduling needs. Mr. Castagna said he would need to know by the end of May so he could schedule games with other districts and practices.

After extensive Board discussion, Mr. Culyer opened the floor to the public. Eleven residents presented opinions for and against increased use of the lights.

Mr. Pratt offered to meet with proponents and opponents prior to the next meeting. This offer was accepted by the Board, with thanks extended to Mr. Pratt by the Board and the public, and it was agreed that all interested parties would meet prior to the May 3 meeting of the Board.

Ms. Mariani moved to table a decision on Policy 7900 to the May 3rd meeting of the Board. Mr. Nathan seconded the motion, which carried 4-2-1 with Ms. Mariani and Mr. Zahm voting no and Ms. Sterling abstaining.

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REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Shine said he wanted to further explain the BOCES agenda items, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services administrative budget and the vote by the board for candidates to the BOCES board. He explained that this is a requirement of the 33 component school districts of the Southern Westchester BOCES and that the Rye City School District is a member, benefiting from cooperative bidding and other programs shared with other districts to save money that each would otherwise have to bid or spend individually. He said that the candidates elected to the BOCES Board represent all districts in decisions for the cooperative as nominated and submitted to each district for a vote.

Dr. Shine noted that a very impressive ceremony took place that morning at Milton to celebrate the PTO's gift of new playground equipment to the school. He said that this was a big financial undertaking by the parents of the school, and the students were more than enthusiastic, anxious to try it out the minute the ribbon was cut. In fact, he said, their enthusiasm ended the speeches that were listed on the program, including his.

Dr. Shine said that the school district report card was being bound and would be mailed to all residents during the week. He said that it provides a succinct overview of District test performance at all grade levels, program highlights, and statistics and information on major initiatives and budgetary categories from human resources to curriculum and instruction. He noted that this is an annual publication that enables residents to have a greater understanding of the efforts of the district on behalf of every student.

Dr. Shine said that on Thursday Midland School was sponsoring an author's tea for the Picturing Writing program. It's an excellent opportunity to see the results of this curriculum initiative and board members are welcome to attend. It begins at 2:30 in the Midland Library.

Dr. Shine said that at the Board's next meeting, Tuesday, May 3rd, there would be a display of student work for the community from 7:30 to 8 p.m. He said he would like to encourage everyone to attend to see the results of the elementary science program coordinated by Laura Klein. He said there would be examples of student writing in science, demonstrations of the Lego and robotics curriculum, and several other expositions of achievement and learning. He encouraged those attending the meeting to come a little early to tour the exhibit, and those who could not stay for the meeting to stop by at 7:30 to learn more about our efforts in elementary science this year.

COMMUNICATIONS TO/FROM THE BOARD

Mr. Zahm inquired about the Strategic Plan work session of the Board. After reviewing the upcoming scheduled meetings of the Strategic Planning Team, it was agreed that although meeting to discuss the process is a priority of the Board, this work session would take place early in the fall to give the Board time to evaluate the process and related cost implications.

Mr. Feeney reviewed the sale of the District's bonds and the debt schedule.

Mr. Culyer announced that there would be a joint meeting with the Rye City Council on April 30th.

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Closing Items

On a motion by Ms. Mariani, seconded by Mr. Pratt and carried unanimously (7-0) it was voted at 1:50 a.m. to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Ferrari
District Clerk