

**MINUTES**  
**RYE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**Rye Middle School Multipurpose Room**  
**April 4, 2006**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Culyer at 7:05 p.m. in the Rye Middle School Multipurpose Room and the Board adjourned immediately into Executive Session on a motion by Ms. Sterling, seconded by Mr. Feeney and carried unanimously (5-0), for the review of the employment history of current and prospective employees, pending litigation, and negotiations pursuant to the Taylor Law.

Present

Mr. James Culyer, *President*  
Mr. Stephen Feeney, *Vice President*  
Mr. Edward Fox  
Ms. Victoria Sterling  
Mr. Robert Zahm

Excused

Mr. Joshua Nathan

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

On a motion by Mr. Zahm, seconded by Ms. Sterling and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted at 8:00 p.m. to reconvene in public. Mr. Culyer welcomed those present and asked Mr. Feeney to present the Board's Extra Mile Awards.

Mr. Feeney introduced Ms. Andrea Kocsis of the Rye Lion's Club and Ms. Jane Fox of the Rye Rotary and thanked them, and their organizations, for their encouragement and support of Rye students and work on behalf of the schools. Ms. Kocsis and Ms. Fox thanked the Board for this recognition and expressed their appreciation of the work of the district and commitment to the programs they sponsor.

Hearing of the Public on Non-Agenda Items

There were no questions or comments from the public.

**BUDGET HEARING**

Mr. Culyer asked Dr. Shine to review the proposed budget. Dr. Shine began by discussing the major drivers to the \$4,154,241 million increase to the budget. He said that:

1. **57.4%** of the increase is attributable to increases in salaries for the 427 employees of the school district; one new position is included in the budget.

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2. **20.2%** of the increase is attributable to increases in the cost of benefits for the current employees of the District;
3. **1.8%** of the increase is attributable to facility operations and repair, including increases for fuel and electricity, and with 1.5% of the prior year's budget in Capital Reserve.
4. **7.1%** of the increase is substantiated by increases in the cost of insurance, construction litigation, litigation costs for negotiations, a new state mandated internal auditor and support for students to attend our BOCES vocational center;
5. **4.3%** of the increase is attributable to an increase in technology with 1.47% of the prior year's budget going to technology upgrades and new initiatives.
6. **11.0%** of the increase is provided to support increases in the cost of special education out-of-district placements. Some of this increase occurred in the 2005-2006 school year with new students moving into the district and new out-of-district placements made by the CSE, with parent approval. Almost all of the funds in this cost center provide tuition, related services and transportation costs for students placed in out-of-district placements.
7. **1.2%** of the increase supports the increased cost of providing middle school and high school athletics; i.e., increases in transportation costs, the cost of referees, supplies and equipment. This increase also includes the addition of a 9<sup>th</sup> grade football team and additional teams in modified baseball and softball.

He noted that while these percentages add up to 103% with rounding, there are cost center adjustments totaling -3% that yield a total of 100%.

Dr. Shine said that at the conclusion of the budget discussion on March 21, the Board asked for a review of some of the personnel and other budget priorities shared by parents and Board members and had made a final request that the tax rate increase should be below 7%. He said that in the budget being presented, the budget-to-budget increase is now 7.44% and the tax rate impact is estimated to be 6.97%.

Dr. Shine then reviewed the budget reductions previously presented, with modifications.

Mr. Culyer then opened the hearing and invited all interested parties to address the Board.

Bertrand deFrondeville asked why revenues were continually underestimated and said he felt there was too much margin on expenditures.

Linda Bonaventura, Osborn PTO co-President, addressed the Board and thanked them and Dr. Shine for considering a first grade section at Osborn School.

Margot Willoughby, Midland PTO co-president, discussed the Midland playground project and thanked the Board for help with the installation of a new

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playground. Mr. Culyer suggested that she hold the rest of her comments regarding the north playground until later on the agenda.

Martin Gerson said he questioned whether there was budget discipline in terms of income and cost projections, stating he felt there was overbudgeting and that \$1 to \$2 million could be taken out of the budget.

There being no further comment, Mr. Culyer called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, noting that Action-Fiscal Item 1, Approval of the Extension of the Current Landscaping Contract, would be removed.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

On a motion by Mr. Fox, seconded by Ms. Sterling and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted to approve the following items:

#### **Action – General**

1. The minutes of the March 21, 2006 meeting of the Board, as written.
2. The English 10 Combined Regents Honors Curriculum, as presented, for tenth grade students. (Attachment I)
3. The Global History and Geography 10RH Curriculum, as presented, for the second year of the two-year program for ninth and tenth graders. (Attachment II)
4. The gifts of \$2,000.00 from the Rye Middle School Parents' Organization and \$3,000 from the Rye High School Parents' Organization to Heard in Rye. (Attachment III)

#### **Action – Fiscal**

1. The recommendation to reject the bid for a two-year refuse removal contract for the school years 2006-2008 submitted by Waste Management of New York, LLC. (Attachment IV)
2. The resolution to approve Budget Transfer #18 in the amount of \$23,084.00 to set up a separate account for BOCES Library Automation for all the schools, transferred from other BOCES service lines not being used this school year; and Budget Transfer #19 in the amount of \$5,210.00 to cover the additional cost of Ivy Bound instruction expenses, transferred from other miscellaneous high school budget accounts not being spent this school year. (Attachment V)

#### **Action – Personnel**

1. A resolution that the Superintendent of Schools and the Board President are authorized to sign an Agreement extending the probationary term of Donald Ross,  
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- a math teacher, tenure area probationary employee, through June 30, 2007 as recommended.
2. The request by Susan Barr for an unpaid Child Care Leave of Absence from her position as Third Grade Teacher assigned to Midland School, effective July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007.
  3. The request by Lisa Lonnegren for an unpaid Child Care Leave of Absence from her position as Fifth Grade Teacher assigned to Midland School, effective July 1, 2006 – on or about January 26, 2007.
  4. The resignation of Nikki Colodny as a Biology/Chemistry teacher assigned to Rye High School effective June 30, 2006.
  5. The resignation of Lynne Gallant as Kindergarten teacher assigned to Midland School effective June 30, 2006.
  6. The resignation of Maureen Henningson as Second Grade teacher assigned to Osborn School effective June 30, 2006.
  7. The resignation of Kyra Johnson as a Math teacher assigned to Rye High School effective June 30, 2006.
  8. The resignation of Allison McKinnon as Kindergarten teacher assigned to Milton School effective June 30, 2006.
  9. The termination of Thomas Carlo, as a Food Service Helper assigned to Rye High School effective March 20, 2006.
  10. The termination of Tracy Scott, as a Food Service Helper assigned to Rye High School effective March 14, 2006.
  11. The resignation of Michael Tina as a special education teacher aide assigned to Rye Middle School effective March 31, 2006.
  12. The resignation of Brigid C. Franklin as a Senior Office Assistant (Automated Systems) assigned to the Offices of Personnel and Curriculum, Managerial & Confidential Position effective June 21, 2006.
  13. The appointment of Linda Byrne as a Food Service Helper with a probationary period of a minimum of twelve weeks to a maximum of fifty-two weeks 7 hours/day, 5 days/week, assigned to Rye High School, effective March 13, 2006.

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14. The Appointment of Catherine Henne as a Teacher Aide, with a probationary period of a minimum of twelve weeks to a maximum of fifty-two weeks, assigned to Osborn School, Step 1 of the 2005-2006 Teacher Aide/Teaching Assistant Salary Schedule, 3.5 hours/day, 5 days/week, effective March 27, 2006.
15. The Extra Pay for Extra Work Assignment for the 2005-2006 school per the attached. (Attachment VI)

#### **Action – Special Education**

1. The recommendations of the Committee on Preschool Special Education from its meeting of December 1, 2005 for Student ID#457; from its meeting of December 19, 2005 for Student ID#456; and from its meeting of January 5, 2006 for Student ID#442.
2. The recommendations of the Committee on Special Education from its meetings of February 28, 2006 for Students ID#686 and 431; from its meeting of January 31 for Student ID#429; from its meetings of February 9, 2006 for Students ID#911695, 480, and 689; from its meetings of February 14, 2006 for Students D#911766 and 656; and from its meeting of February 16, 2006 for Student ID#911510.

#### **REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Shine announced that Rye High School and Middle School music teacher, Helen Cannistraci, would be the recipient off the Cab Calloway Lifetime Achievement Award for her career in music education. He said that this is a prestigious award in both music and education and he knew that the Board joined him in extending congratulations to Miss Cannistraci.

Dr. Shine commented on the many area resources that enriched curriculum and were available for student field trips and elaborated on the opportunities available.

Dr. Shine shared two sets of statistics that were a little different than budgets and enrollment figures. He noted that the first was prepared by Dr. Dituri in response to a state request. It is a count of the number of children in Rye between the ages of 3 and 21 who were born in another country and entered our schools or began receiving services between February 1, 2003 and this past January 31. It shows that there are 178 students from 36 different countries in our public schools who meet that criteria, and 67 students from 22 different countries in the non-public schools within the Rye City School District.

Dr. Shine said the second statistic was a count on the number of books we have in circulation in our media centers. This year, we reported the catalog list of 85,493 books among our five schools, a number that does not include other media materials such as periodicals and audio/visual materials.

Members of the administration, faculty and staff would be helping the Rye Free Reading Room in its Strategic Planning Process later in the week, Dr. Shine said,

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responding to a representative who is gathering perspective from teachers and students on the public library. Dr. Shine said that the representative would meet with high school and middle school teachers and students, and with elementary teachers, inclusive of Rye Country Day School and Resurrection Grammar School faculty members. He said that the district was happy to support this effort as a long-term partner of the Rye Free Reading Room.

Dr. Shine then reminded the Board that the following week was spring break and reviewed the hours the building would be staffed.

### **PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION**

#### 2006 – 2007 Budget

Board members discussed the proposed budget, reviewing the topics of Strategic Planning costs, a suggestion that technology capital and operational expenditures be broken out, and the guidance, nurse and technology budget components.

Mr. Feeney commented that hearing budget negatives in the media was repugnant to him, considering that the District had the second lowest tax rate increase the preceding year and that this year it appeared the District would again be in the lower half of tax rate increases in Westchester and Putnam Counties. He said he felt it was time for the local press to begin to credit the Board of Education and responsibly guide citizens through the process.

A member of the public said he asked the Board to take a hard look at this comment. Mr. Feeney responded that this was inflammatory and that it was time to give the Board credit. The member of the public said it was time for the district to go back to the basics and forget such courses as law and orienteering for sixth graders.

The member of the public said legal expenses should be shown prominently. Mr. Culyer replied that as pertained to the Osborn Home litigation, the Board was defending itself against a lawsuit, that it did not initiate the suit, and that the costs were taken from the tax certiorari reserve in the event that a refund would be required.

A member of the public commented that Rye teacher salary increases were extremely high compared to Bronxville, for example. Mr. Culyer and Dr. Shine explained that our salary increases were actually in line with every other district, and that the numbers must be compared in like categories. They said that every district in the state, to the best of their knowledge, had step increases in addition to regular increases for teachers, but that some just reported the on-average 3.5 salary increase without the step and longevity information. They explained that the Rye figure he was citing included both components.

A member of the public said she complimented the Board on coming in with an increase much lower than the median and that her entire school community thanked them.

A member of the public asked the process for covering Osborn litigation costs. Members of the Board, Dr. Shine and Mr. Walsh responded that the costs were very visible and had been planned to be drawn from the tax certiorari account since it basically was a tax certiorari matter.

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Mr. Culyer returned to the Board, some members of which wished to discuss the guidance and half-time nurse positions, technology allocations and cost center numbers.

#### Report on Tax Certioraris and Reserves

Mr. Feeney presented a comprehensive overview of the tax certiorari process, accounting measures, and projections, reviewing both Osborn Home and other tax certiorari claims. (Attachment VII) He provided historical context as well as future projections.

A member of the public said he felt Mr. Feeney's presentation was excellent and that he believed that prudent planning and reserving of costs against the possibility of a tax certiorari claim being successful was only fair, with the costs borne by residents at the time, not by taxpayers going forward if the Board were not to reserve but rather borrow in the future to pay any successful claims. He said it would be interesting to know what comparable districts are doing about tax certiorari reserves. Mr. Feeney said he could investigate this.

A member of the public disagreed and said the Board was over taxing the community by millions of dollars and that they should not be reserving monies but rather bonding in the future.

#### Five-Year Facilities Plan

Mr. Culyer presented a comprehensive overview of the work of the Facilities Committee, explaining that each year the committee reviews lists of proposed projects to attempt to identify those projects best suited to be accomplished by funding from the annual operating budget. He explained the difference between these capital reserve projects and those warranted to be funded by long-term bond issues called Capital Improvement Projects. He discussed the portion of the budget allocated to projects, and noted those items identified for the 2006-2007 school year as the recommendations of the committee.

The Midland PTO co-presidents and other parent members presented their plans for the Midland playground to the Board, requesting facilities support for some costs.

A member of the public said that the Midland field was in terrible condition and that the only way to correct it would be to install artificial turf.

#### Policy Review

Dr. Shine recommended that this agenda item be discussed at the next meeting because of the lateness of the hour. Mr. Culyer and members of the Board concurred.

### **ITEM REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA**

#### Grounds and Field Maintenance

Mr. Feeney said he had pulled this item because he felt the District should first investigate co-bidding with the Rye Presbyterian Church to get a better price on square

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foot costs. Dr. Shine said he would look into the legal aspects of this request and potential arrangement.

On a motion by Mr. Zahm, seconded by Ms. Sterling and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted to approve the recommendation to award the contract for Districtwide grounds and field maintenance to P.A. Ferrari Landscaping for the 2006-2007 school year for \$25,000.00, with the District's annual option for renewal at \$25,000.00 Parts I & II for school year 2006-2007 and \$25,000.00 for school year 2007-2008, Parts I & II, at the District's option. (Attachment VIII)

### **COMMUNICATIONS TO / FROM BOARD**

Mr. Zahm explained his communication regarding current use of elementary school staff and the need for improvement to reduce cost and potentially enhance the consistency of instruction across classes, within each grade level.

Dr. Shine responded that this is, of course, a consideration with principals and PTO presidents, but that a committee convened to review and recommend on this topic, as recommended by Mr. Zahm, should include community members who did not have children in the schools. He said this question, in his estimation, required a broader representation on the committee.

Mr. Culyer then directed the administration to put together a meeting with a charge authorized by the Board, to approach this topic.

Mr. Feeney announced that the Audit and Credit and Borrowing and Investment Committees would convene at 6 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. respectively on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Culyer announced that Dr. McCann would be leaving the District to become the Superintendent of Schools in the Hendrick Hudson School District. He thanked Dr. McCann, on behalf of the Board, and although he would not be leaving until the end of the school year, wished him the best and thanked him again for all he has given the Rye City School District.

### **Adjournment**

On a motion by Mr. Fox, seconded by Ms. Sterling and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted at 11:40 p.m. to adjourn into Executive Session for the review of the employment history of current and prospective employees. Mr. Culyer announced that when the Board reconvened in public it would not be conducting further discussion or voting on any matter.

On a motion by Mr. Zahm, seconded by Feeney and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted at 12:10 a.m. to reconvene in public. There being no further business, on a motion by Mr. Fox, seconded by Ms. Sterling and carried unanimously (5-0) it was voted at 12:10 a.m. to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Ferrari  
District Clerk