

**RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING**

Westshire Elementary – West Fairlee, VT
September 5, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Jason Knowles, Clement Powers, David Gagner (Fairlee); David Ricker, Vanessa DeSimone zoom (Orford); Rebecca Wurdak, (West Fairlee); Nate Thames, Kathy Hooke (Vershire); Sara Day (at-large)

Members Absent: Terry Martin (Orford); Sarah Molesworth (West Fairlee)

Administration and Staff Present: Barrett Williams (Superintendent), Nancy Murphy (Business Manager), Steven Lindemann zoom (Samuel Morey Principal), Sara Rose zoom (Westshire Principal)

Public Present: Charlie Smith in person. Via zoom - Cassia Kriezis, Andy Stevenson; Alex Nuti-de Biasi, Lauren Warbin, Matt June Brianne Showalter, Gayle Justynski, Brian Boardman, Miranda Garrow, Christine Dyke

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

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation:

III. General Public Comments: Charlie Smith had questions regarding Act 173. It was decided he would wait until the superintendent report was given.

IV. Consent Agenda (Accept)

A. Special Board Meeting – July 11, 2023

Motion was made to approve the July 11, 2023 board meeting minutes

Motion by Nate Thames, second by David Ricker

Final Resolution: Motion carries

Yea: Jason Knowles, David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone

Abstain: Rebecca Wurdak

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

B. Board Retreat – August 14, 2023

Motion was made to approve the August 14, 2023 board retreat meeting minutes

Motion by Nate Thames, second by Sara Day

Final Resolution: Motion carries

Yea: David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone

Abstain: Rebecca Wurdak, Jason Knowles

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

V. Informational Reports

A. Superintendent Report: Barrett Williams reviewed his written report which included welcoming staff and students back to school, strategic plan, Act 173, ADA update and SPED Director update. The three in-service days seemed to be a rush to get everything done and ready for students. Next year an additional day for in-service will be planned before the start of school. David Ricker wondered if we could look into posting a link to the strategic plan survey that went out in the JO for more residents and community members to complete. Kathy Hooke wondered if we could also have posters with a QR code around town offices and libraries as

well. RISD will be piloting the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) regarding Act 173. This will help us receive training and financial resources to develop our own tiered systemic approach to improve supports for all our students. Charlie Smith asked specific questions on how our process will work. The state is asking schools to come up with their own procedures in determining eligibility. It was decided that Barrett would share information with Charlie and talk further at another time. Barrett Williams shared that the improvements for the electronic door openers were scheduled to be fixed before the first day of school but the contractor was still waiting on parts. Those parts are now in. Jamie Bourn is working with the contractors to get that work completed as soon as possible. Barrett Williams offered the Special Ed Director position to Caryn Hastie and she has accepted. She is moving here from Houston, TX and has worked in special education for 8 years. She spent 3 days here touring our district and attended a training with out special educators. She is expected to start on October 1st.

- B. Head of Schools Report:** No additional comments to the written reports submitted. Kathy asked about the grant for the theater lights and if that has moved forward. Nancy Murphy stated that there was a discussion over the summer regarding putting this out to bid. There has been no discussion as of late.
- C. Elementary Schools Report:** No additional comments to the written reports submitted. Sara Day reported that her daughter came back and visited SME and thought the work on the grounds and gardens looked great. Barrett gave credit to Beth Roy and Katie Cole for their hard work in the gardens at all schools. Kathy Hooke would like to change the next board meeting to be at SME to see the progress. Everyone supports that change.

VI. Ongoing Business

- A. Monthly Finance Update:** Nancy Murphy reported that the expenditure report encumbrances will change a little once the first payroll of the year happens at the end of the week. Expenses are where they would be at this point in the year. On the revenue side interest rates are still up. We have started receiving the first installments of grants. We have been filing state reports, writing investments for the FY'24 federal grants. We have implemented a new food service program called Titan. It will help manager track food costs, inventory, create menus and tell give you nutritional information as well as allergens. As well as streamline our reporting. Auditors are scheduled to be in the week of September 11th. Clem asked what the status of Rivendell Trails Program noticing that no encumbrances or expenditures had been made. Nancy stated that funds were used to help subsidize farm to school program last year. There are portions of the Rivendell Trails Program criss cross with the Farm to School Program. Currently there is no Trails Coordinator. Beth Roy is also on the Rivendell Trails Board. Barrett will reach out to her for an update on additional contacts. Kathy Hooke stated that they are looking for new members. Anyone interested should contact Kathy directly. Clem would like to allocate funds to look at an event to bring in community members, other students to visit our district to see what we have to offer. Barrett stated we could look into doing something like that going forward.
- B. Strategic Plan:** There will be two meetings scheduled for the strategic plan over the next two months. The first will be September 26th at 6:30 p.m. at Rivendell Academy to discuss the results of the survey. Barrett will contact those who were interested in being on a Steering Committee to meet before the September 26th meeting. A second meeting will happen in October to discuss different break downs and having conversations with community members and staff members.
- C. Board Goals and Education:** Kathy would like the board to take advantage of the learning opportunities the VSBA has to offer. Kathy Hooke asked board members what they would be interested in being further educated in? The VSBA is holding their annual conference at Lake Morey Inn if anyone is interested. Kathy will reach out to Terry Martin to see if he would be

interested in attending. Nate Thames and Rebecca Wurdak are interested in learning more about special education line items and budgeting.

Kathy is looking for some ideas on how we can develop guidelines around board conduct and communication to community/media. Barrett will reach out to the VSBA regarding this.

Kathy would like to invite staff and students to present some classroom or school highlights to share and/or present to the board on things they are doing. Kathy will reach out to administration. Sara Day would like to see some of the senior projects. Kathy added it would be great to have senior projects presented to the board as part of reporting.

VII. New Business

A. Overnight Trip Approval

Senior Class Trip – Upper Baker Pond, September 13-14, 2023

There was discussion around the liability. The board will approve this overnight trip with the understanding there needs to be a lifeguard for swimming. Boating activities will require personal floatation jackets as written in the request.

Motion was made to approve the overnight senior class trip with the contingency that swimming happens in the presence of a lifeguard.

Motion by David Gagner, second by David Ricker.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone, Rebecca Wurdak, Jason Knowles

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

B. Approve Nomination: Caryn Hastie (Rebecca/Nate) approved by show of hands.

Motion was made to approve the nomination of Caryn Hastie, Special Education Director

Motion by Rebecca Wurdak, second by Nate Thames

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa

DiSimone, Rebecca Wurdak, Jason Knowles

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

C. Westshire Pavilion: Nate Thames brought this to the board after being part of a pavilion being put up in Vershire. This would be a timber frame, 42x30, open on all 4 sides and a metal roof. Funding would come from fundraising and a matching grant from the state called Better Places. The next steps would be to fill out an application and if accepted begin the fundraising process. The application needs to be filled out through the school district because it is the property owner. Nancy Murphy asked for Nate to include Dawn Dodge, our grant manager who will be able to help in the application process and keep everything in line with all the requirements of this grant. Nate encouraged the other school towns look in to taking advantage of this opportunity as well. This is a great way to improve our school and district. There are some fees associated with the application.

D. Board Meeting Format and Board Contact Information: After some discussion it was decided that the board chairs will have their Rivendell e-mail addresses on the website. This will be further discussed. It was also decided that board meetings will continue to offer a zoom option.

E. Correspondence: Clement Powers stated that he, David Gagner (Fairlee members) as well as Kathy Hooke attended the Fairlee Selectboard Meeting. They have been asked to attend another. Clem stated they proposed September 18th or 25th for dates. Kathy will reach out to them to discuss the proposed dates. Everyone agrees this is great for communication between the town and school. Clem also received a concern regarding the choices of students clothing. There is a section in school handbooks regarding clothing in school. If anyone has concerns, they should

bring it to the principal for further discussion and ask to put something out as a reminder to students and families.

Sara Day wanted to follow up regarding solar/energy. Jamie will reach out to Ken once we receive the written report. Walk through happened last week. Results are being received 6-8 weeks after walk through.

Wendy Fogg-McIntire, CBA representative for support staff, initiated request for a meeting for the upcoming negotiations. Nate Thames and Jason Knowles have agreed to be part of this.

Kathy Hooke discussed the correspondence she had received from multiple residents regarding tax bills. Kathy chose to respond to answer questions with specific information talking points to help residents understand how tax amounts are decided. David Gagner wondered if there was something that could be sent out as a guideline for residents on how it works. Sara Day thought that Kathy responded in a clear respectful way.

VIII. Future Agenda Items (Discussion):

Academy Building

Strategic Plan

Board Contact Information

Board Goals and Education

IX. Executive Session - (Discussion), 1 VSA § 313, if needed

Motion was made to go into Executive Session at 7:58 p.m.

Motion by Rebecca Wurdak, second by Jason Knowles.

Final Resolution: Motion carries

Yea: Jason Knowles, David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone, Rebecca Wurdak

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

Motion was made to exit out of Executive Session at 8:09 p.m.

Motion by Nate Thames, second by Clement Powers

Final Resolution: Motion carries

Yea: Jason Knowles, David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone, Rebecca Wurdak

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

No action taken.

X. Adjournment (Action)

Motion was made to adjourn at 8:10 p.m.

Motion by Nate Thames, second by Jason Knowles

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Jason Knowles, David Ricker, Nate Thames, Clement Powers, Sara Day, David Gagner, Vanessa DiSimone, Rebecca Wurdak

Not Voting: Kathy Hooke

Recorded by:
Angel Parkin

Note: All Board votes were unanimous unless noted otherwise.