

**RUMNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RUSSELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
JANUARY 20, 2010  
MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Paula Ferenc, Yvon Cloutier, Jennifer Miller, Tom Cowie

**Administration Present:** Holly Barrett-Morse, Ethel Gaides

**Others Present:** Numerous members of the community, parents of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students

**Non-Public Session:** Ms. Ferenc made the motion at 5:00 PM to enter into non-public session to discuss student issues. Mr. Cloutier seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

**Public Session:** Mr. Cowie made the motion to enter into public session. Ms. Ferenc seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

**Agenda Review:** no change

**Minutes of January 6, 2010:** it was noted that in the third paragraph, the word “member” should read “members”. On a motion by Mr. Cowie, seconded by Mr. Cloutier, the minutes were accepted as amended.

**Minutes of December 22, 2009:** In the paragraph of Budget – Draft #3, the third line should read “The school board agreed to decrease the transfer of the district portion of funds to food service”. Mr. Cloutier made the motion to accept as corrected, Mr. Cowie seconded and all voted in favor.

**Minutes of December 16, 2009:** Mr. Cloutier made the motion, Ms. Ferenc seconded and all voted in favor to accept the minutes as written. Mr. Cowie abstained.

**Minutes of December 2, 2009:** With a motion by Mr. Cloutier, seconded by Mrs. Miller, all voted in favor to accept the minutes as written.

**Minutes of November 24, 2009:** With a motion by Mr. Cloutier, seconded by Mr. Cowie, all voted in favor to accept the minutes as written. Mrs. Miller abstained.

**Privilege of the Floor #1:** In attendance tonight were many parents, mostly of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class and other members of the community. Most were there to express their concern over recent events that have involved bullying, fighting and general classroom

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disruptions. All who wished to were given a chance to speak. Julie Dyson read a prepared statement that referenced to Public Safety Violence Act and stated that some students do not feel safe in the school. Lona Deshaies said that her child had been threatened by another student. Tammy LaPointe expressed concern regarding disruptions that occur in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class. Cheryl Lewis inquired about what is being done regarding bullying. Doug Willett stated that in his observations, RES is not happy place, there is no supervision at sporting events and the teachers are not happy. Joe Dodge expressed the need to hear from the teachers and administration, along with the parents and students, to get the full view of what is happening. Lori Comeau felt that there has not been enough communication from the administration. Lena Smoker spoke in support of teachers and staff in that her family's experiences through the fifth grade have been positive. Lieann Guyotte Daigle also felt that there were a lot of good things going on at RES and pointed out that the handbook sets guidelines for some the issues that are being raised. They may not be being followed consistently, but they are there and should be referred to. Mary Hulse noted that she hears lots of things from other parents and that it is hard to tell what is fact and what is rumor. She wishes parents would get more involved in school activities. More communication from the school would also be helpful, information out to the public, school news in the newspaper to spread word about positive events and activities.

Mr. Cowie addressed the bullying issue by stating that if there is a problem, there needs to be intervention. From comments being heard, it appears to be mostly in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes. He referred to the handbook as a starting point. Continuing comments included Kelly Turner stating that her first grader has experienced problems on the bus. Susan Barickman feels the disruptions/bullying occur in grades 5 thorough 8. Deb Van Loon stated that this is not just a bullying issue but a society issue. Children are not being made to pay the consequences for their bad behavior. It is not just the school that is not enforcing guidelines – everyone needs to be involved. Laurel Dodge, a teacher in another district, has dealt with disruptive students by following the guidelines set up by her school.

After all who wished to were given a chance to speak, Ms. Ferenc addressed the group by summarizing that the concerns she is hearing involve the safety of students, that changes need to be made and there needs to be consistency in following the policies that are in place. She recognizes that everyone needs to work together and asked that parents be role models to their children. Mr. Cowie went on to state that friction between students and bad behavior is not the fault of the teacher or principal, as some tonight have implied. Thirteen year old girls in a small class are going to have conflicts. In dealing with his own daughter at that age he found that talking with other parents involved was helpful in resolving issues between the girls.

Mrs. Morse then spoke to the group and expressed her concerns that some comments made tonight were very personal and directed to her specifically. She thanked the parents for coming forward and stated that there is a lot of misinformation floating around. She

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heard their ideas to improve communication and will work on that. Mrs. Morse went on to state that in her short time at RES she has noted a certain culture and climate has been building over the years with some long term staff. She feels there is some tension and negative behavior among the adults in the building that may affect the behavior of students. She noted that confidentiality is very important, that things are being done to deal with students who are disruptive, and that not all that is being done is public information.

Mr. Cloutier reminded those present that the issues being heard tonight should be brought to the attention of the principal first. If they are not satisfied with that then they should ask for a meeting with the superintendent. If they meet with the superintendent they should be very specific about their concerns and be prepared to offer solutions. Parents need to be advocates for their children but they also need to allow time for solutions to be worked out.

Ms. Ferenc then asked that the board move forward with the agenda. The board and administration will take under consideration all of the concerns that were heard tonight and will be providing feedback at a future meeting.

**Principals Report:** Mrs. Morse reported that the winter program will be starting next week and will run for five weeks. Students will be given the option to choose any activity each week. In December the guidance department arranged for the PSU Tiger program to come to RES and tomorrow a presentation will be made by the “Kids on the Block”. The dental screening program was held in November and letter from Barbara Laverack was received outlining the success and benefits of the program. An SAU-wide in-service day was held on Friday, January 15. All teachers attended workshops that were grade specific.

**Board Issues:** Wellness policy – a revised draft was distributed to board members to consider, the final reading will be at the next meeting.

Warrant articles – two warrant articles were added at the budget hearing held on January 6. The deliberative session will be held on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at 6:30 PM in the school cafeteria. The board will meet at 5:30 that evening for a final review of the budget and to get an administrative update from the principal. The meeting will be open to the public. Final voting of the 2010-2011 school budget will take place by private ballot on town voting day, Tuesday, March 9, 2010.

Board Goals - The board reviewed the existing goals and all were in agreement to continue with the “going green” message and to encourage recycling on a daily basis. The utilization of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills will always be important and the school should continue to explore ways to improve on those skills. The updating of the policy book is an ongoing process and will continue to be reviewed. It was felt that the goal of encouraging and enhancing the middle school approach needs to be more specific. It

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appears that RES needs to enhance and improve the areas of discipline, school safety and the overall climate in the building. Mr. Cowie spoke of the need to develop tactics for dealing with upper grade bullying, school safety and consequences for bad behavior. Mr. Cloutier suggested the addition of a review of programs to be done before the next budget process. A program he would like to see offered is a foreign language.

Policy Committee – Mr. Cloutier suggested that the policy book be reviewed and a list made to determine which specific policies should be reviewed at this time. At the next meeting one will be chosen to be worked on and two board members assigned to get that process started.

**Privilege of the Floor #2** - A member of the audience spoke in defense of the teachers, saying that they felt the teachers got a bad rap during the earlier privilege of the floor. Joe Dodge then spoke again saying that there are many issues to be dealt with here. It is not just how the teachers are dealing with the problems, but also the parents, and especially the students. It appears that the students are not taking responsibility for their actions. He expressed concern for the parents who are not here tonight.

At 7:45PM Mr. Cowie made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Cloutier seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy McQuinn-Downing