

FINAL

RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, November 14, 2023 - 6:00 PM

PRESENT: Beth Choquette, Principal/Superintendent; Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Nathan Steele; Karen Youdelman; Mary Shook, SPED Director; Anna O'Donnell; Rachel Kanz; Julia Gregory; Michelle Smith

Ina called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

REVIEW AND APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER, 2023: Beth reminded the committee that the minutes of September 12, 2023 had been reviewed and revised but no vote was taken to accept them.

Ina moved that the minutes of the September 12, 2023 meeting of the Richmond School Committee be accepted as revised. Nathan seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

The Committee then turned to review of the minutes of October 14, 2023. Several changes were made. Ina moved to approve the Minutes of the October 14, 2023 meeting of the Richmond School Committee as amended. The motion was seconded by Karen and passed by unanimous consent.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT: Beth spoke about the Massachusetts Project 351 in which schools in Massachusetts nominate 8th graders to become ambassadors. They work together for transformative change. This year's ambassador will be Khloe Amankwah. She will travel to Boston in January for the kick-off of the program and we are so excited and proud to have Khloe represent Richmond Consolidated School.

A Custodian for the school, Rudy Rivera, has been hired. Beth thanked Berkshire Family Cleaning for the work they did during the summer.

Culture & Climate Survey Results: Of the 35 respondents, a large percentage responded that Richmond was a good place for their children to learn. They cited things the children especially liked: friends, special activities, food, a sense of community, the environment and the closeness of classmates.

Over 90% of the respondents agreed that one of the strengths is communication from the Administration. People said they felt welcome and part of the school community. The Administration and teachers were acknowledged to respond to questions in a timely

manner. All of those ties back to our School Improvement Plan - Engagement and Relationships.

Things to work on (Below 80% agree) 1. More diversity: increase the culture of belonging, more work on social justice for marginalized populations. Beth noted that people who attend our school want to be represented at our school. It is important to understand that what families and students see in the school should represent who they are. Beth noted that that is being worked on.

2. More challenging curriculum. Feedback indicated a need for greater challenges for students, extra support and more targeted interventions. Beth said that the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) and the WIN (What I need) blocks address those issues.

3. Communication from teachers concerning students' progress and what is going on in the classroom. Beth noted her delight in the immediate response of teachers who have stepped up to do a phenomenal job of increasing communication.

Between 80% and 90% agree: 1. Parents want students more engaged academically. They like the elementary student-led conferences. Beth noted that such a program is being worked on for the middle school.

2. Special events: Beth indicated her pleasure at being able to restore some of the special events that were ended during the COVID pandemic.

3. Access to Information (Policies, etc.) Beth is working with Ronna to increase the accessibility of that kind of information on the website.

Beth said that feedback is essential to improvement and she is proud of the way the staff is working to do what is best for the students.

GRANTS FOR FY'24: Title 1 - \$44,483. To be spent for instruction, professional development, homelessness, evidence-based programs, and after-school programs (gardening, library, technology).

Title II - \$2,235. For student achievement. Focuses on professional development of teachers and access of minority families and low-income families to teachers and the Administration.

Title IV - \$10,000. Safety and health in the school. After-school programs and student well-being.

Beth noted that in the past, some curriculum adoption was never brought to the School Committee for approval. Therefore, she presented three programs for their approval. These programs are currently in place in the Middle School only.

"Get Real" for sex education. Parents have access to the curriculum and may opt-out. In response to a question from the Committee, Beth explained how the curricula is followed in sequential order. She outlined the steps that are being taken by Christina Lenfest and Haley Korte and how they work together with parents.

There are two other programs that have not been used previously and that Ms. Korte would like approval on, both of which have been recommended to her by Ms. Korte's colleagues. They are Teen Health and The National Institute of Health curriculum, which is focused on substance use and misuse and other content related to the standards.

Beth will take this year to analyze those new standards and see where coverage already exists. Beth asked for a vote of approval for the three programs.

Ina moved to approve the above mentioned three programs for use in the Richmond School curriculum. The motion was seconded by Karen and passed by unanimous vote.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Beth provided a heat update from Nexus. Rooms covered under Phase I have been completed. Control units will be changed this week. Once that is completed, the school and Nexus will have control of all of the upgraded classrooms. Nexus will continue to provide training for anyone that needs it.

Budget season has begun. Sharon Harrison and Beth have started that process.

Virtual School: Last year the Committee had a request to raise the cap of the percentage of students who can attend school virtually. Richmond had a 1% cap in place at that time. The State allows for a 2% cap, so the School Committee voted to raise the cap to 2% in order to allow that family to have their child attend the virtual school along with their siblings. Now Beth needs a vote to restore the cap to 1%. Given the "grandfather" rule for students already enrolled at the time of the vote, restoring the 1% cap will not impact that family.

Ina moved to approve a return to a 1% cap on the number of Richmond students who could attend the virtual school and the Greater Commonwealth School. Nate seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous vote.

Berkshire County Professional Development Day: Mary and Mike Vecchia and Beth attended. Attorney Richard Cole focused his address on harassment, bullying and hate crimes in school. He clarified the difference between harassment and bullying. This ties in to the survey results around culture, diversity and social justice for marginalized populations.

The Veteran's Luncheon - Beth said it went extremely well. Thanksgiving Feast is coming up next week and Beth noted that volunteers are needed.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Mary reported that Sharon Harrison advised her of a new State grant (#274), for the new I.E.P. The State will give Richmond \$6,066 for training. Mary will be meeting via Zoom tomorrow to discuss going from ESPED to Power School with a colleague who is currently using it in her school. That school will be up and running with this program in December and Mary will have access to it for training purposes.

The advantage of Power School is that teachers can access students' I.E.P.'s. They cannot, however, access the student's psychological evaluations without special approval from Mary Shook, Michael Vecchia, or Beth Choquette. Mary is hoping to move forward with this new grant tomorrow and anticipates that this update will prove to be very valuable for the school.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Beth noted that nothing stands out particularly except the Maintenance of Grounds line has gone over budget. It will, however, balance out at the end of the year.

Sharon has been away, so Beth's salary has not yet been moved into a one-line item.

There being no further business before the Committee, Ina moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 PM. The motion was seconded and passed with unanimous consent.

Submitted by Phyllis LeBeau