

**FINAL**  
**RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Thursday, February 15, 2024 - 6:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Beth Choquette, Superintendent/Principal; Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Michelle Smith, Kindergarten; Sharon Renfrew; Tom Forstner, Nathan Steele; Karen Youdelman; Mary Shook, SPED Director; Rachel Kanz, 6th Grade

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 9, 2024:** Ina moved to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Karen and was adopted by unanimous consent.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**FY2024 PROPOSED BUDGET:** Beth began by thanking Sharon for her help with the proposed budget. She then outlined the sources she used for input to the budget of needs and wants. In response to a question from Ina, Sharon explained the criteria the State uses for funding. Beth noted that Richmond outperforms the State in ELA scores for grades 3-8 and since 2021 has outperformed the State in Math. Science - 5th grade had a strong showing compared to the State since 2021, although the 8th grade showed a slight decline during COVID. Moving forward, Beth will be looking into new curriculum and activities, including hands on to support student learning and growth.

**School Improvement Plan:** All goals tie together and the intent is to maintain current levels of services and salaries. The separate Superintendent/Principal salaries have now been combined. With the departure of Peter Dillon as Superintendent, the shared services line has been decreased.

FY'25 is the last year remaining for our two contracts (Paraprofessionals and Teachers). Next year may begin with the addition of one half-time ELL teacher to accommodate the change in the school's demographics. It is anticipated that 3-4 students may require ELL services this year.

Increases in the cost of special education have impacted the budget substantially. One of our students has moved to a residential placement. In addition, new requirements of the School Choice and Tuition statute have increased the budget. Richmond will now be responsible for any difference between the \$5,000 received for a Choice student and the cost of any tuition we have to pay. Beth explained how the Choice and Tuition statute works from Kindergarten through graduation from High School.

**Financial Overview:** There will be an increase from the FY'24 budget to the FY'25 budget.

**Budget Requirements:** FY'24 Budget - Tuition - increased

Salaries and Health Ins. - remain consistent  
with contractual obligations  
Additional Personnel - Half-time ELL  
Transportation  
Utilities - Estimated  
Shared Services - decreased

The budget shows an increase of 7.5% - 67% of which are salaries

There was a short discussion of several specific items that Beth addressed to everyone's approval. She then touched on the next items in the budget.

Beth created a survey for staff and families to request needs and wants that they would like to be included in the budget. Among them were furniture and grounds, which could not be included in the budget.

Questions and suggestions from the Committee:

Energy Audits - EverSource will do full audits at no cost. Heating in the building is very uneven. Rooms where the new system has been installed seem to be doing well. Danielle is looking into possible sources of reimbursements for that new system.

Reduce Paper - possibly as a class project. Evaluate results in a few months to see if it is successful.

Electricity savings - make sure all lights and computers are turned off when leaving a room. Beth noted that lights are on an automatic system. Nate noted that there is a remedial program at the State level to help schools solve the problems that cause higher than necessary energy use.

Tom suggested reaching out to private companies or do fund-raising with the public. There may be untapped resources for donors and benefactors.

Ina congratulated Beth and Sharon for the extraordinary effort they put into the budget and how they were able to clearly make the budget a statement of what we need for our students.

Ina moved that the School Committee approve presenting the proposed budget to the Budget Advisory Committee as outlined above. The motion was seconded by Karen and was carried by unanimous vote.

## **SUPERINTENDENT / PRINCIPAL EVALUATION:**

### **Midyear Evaluation of the Superintendent**

Professional Practice Goal - Budget was successfully aligned with the School Improvement Plan. Beth will seek alternative funding where possible.

New - Half-Time ELL Teacher - This has proven to be necessary to meet the needs of some students

Building-Wide Substitute Teacher

Next Phase of the Heating System (This will be a separate Warrant Article)

Beth is having weekly budget meetings with Sharon and Ina to go over the budget.

Civic Leaders Group - a way for Beth to communicate with all stakeholders so that lines of communication can be open and there are no surprises.

Ina summed up the budget as having all goals aligned and all making sense. She felt that the new Civic Leaders Group Beth created was a brilliant idea that brings focus on the school and the Town as a single community.

The Committee members noted their delight with the accomplishments Beth has made in a year and one-half and how far the school has come under her direction.

Universal Design for Learning: Beth recounted that someone from Katie Novak Education was brought in during the opening days of school and that their book has been read by staff. She was excited to report that Katie herself will be coming to the school on March 15th to spend a full day with the staff. In the meantime, Beth has been working with the staff on understanding UDL.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION:**

Beth quickly went over the list of her Superintendent goals and how they are being met.

### **PRINCIPAL'S EVALUATION:**

Goals: Student Learning - increase in benchmark levels across Kindergarten to 2nd grade: Half way through the year the level of at or above 51% in reading has increased to 71% and the level of 58% at or above in math has increased to 80%. The Dibels Reading Assessment has gone from 48% to 69% in K - 2nd grade.

Beth announced that the winter Benchmark Data Meetings have just been completed and the data shows that the intervention block incorporated into the schedule is really helping students to progress.

Professional Practice Goal: Beth is currently mentoring a Richmond teacher working towards her Principal's license. She is mentoring a new principal at the W.E.B. Dubois school through the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity.

School Improvement Goals are the same as her Superintendent goals.

Ina rated all goals as having been exceeded. There were no objections from the committee.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:**

Eighth grade graduation ceremony will be held on June 10th.

Nate testing has been completed and the testers were surprised at the excellent results seen in the 8th grade.

MCAS will be done at the end of March

Beth has chosen to table the Otis Elevator repairs. Sharon thinks we might be able to take that expense out of the budget.

Beth had provided copies of the proposed 2025 school calendar to the Committee. Ina moved to approve the School Calendar. Her motion was seconded by Nate and carried by unanimous vote.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

The tuition agreement with Hancock remains the same through FY'27.

Pittsfield tuition agreement has a floor of 2% and a cap of 3% through FY'29.

Taconic has now gone fully vocational so we have to pay tuition at the State's Vocational Rate, which has not been disseminated yet.

Ina moved to approve the tuition agreements as noted above. She was seconded by Karen and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

A discussion ensued about movements being investigated to lower the impact of the Choice and Tuition rules. The options noted were the possibility of regionalization, and the Home Rule. The Civic Leaders Group is working on clarification of all of the issues for presentation to the Town.

Nate volunteered to be the Committee member who will sign warrants.

After some discussion, Ina moved to accept School Choice students for the coming school year. Nate seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Beth reported on the results of the Juul class action suit she joined for the school and noted that she has now joined the social media class action suit.

**SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mary Shook reported that the teachers have completed six hours of training on the new IEP. This program is more student oriented and focused. Now she needs to set aside time to train the SPED teachers. Once that program is up and running, students will have more involvement.

Richmond's IDEA Performance and Compliance was rated 100% in all categories. The officials were amazed at how well the younger students are doing as a result of the improvements made.

Mary plans to apply for an Extraordinary Relief Grant.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Beth had nothing of interest to report at this time.

There being no further business before the Committee, Ina moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 PM. Tom seconded and the motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

Submitted by; Phyllis LeBeau