

RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday June 13, 2023 - 6:00 PM - Via Zoom

PRESENT: Peter Dillon, Superintendent; Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Nathan Steele; Karen Youdelman; Kimmie Leeco; Tom Forstner; Beth Choquette, Principal; Cristina Lenfest; Kim Kuster, Reading Specialist

Peter called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Review and Approve Minutes: Ina moved to approve the Minutes of the May 9, 2023 meeting as amended. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion was passed by roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Kimmie, aye; Nate, aye; Karen, aye; Tom, aye.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment: None

Principal's Report: Beth reported that she had spent the last year with the literacy committee reviewing reading/writing programs reviewing from Kindergarten through eighth grade. Now that the Study Sync Program, for the Middle School has been approved, Beth asked Kim Kuster, Reading Specialist and a member of the Literacy Committee, to talk to this Committee about the K-5 program.

Kim explained the Wonders program, which would be adopted for K-5 and would have an impact on literacy development. The K-2 Foundations program currently in place is meant to be an accompaniment to a CORE program like Wonders and will now extend to the third grade and be introduced to Pre-K. All the teachers have been trained in Foundations, a supplemental work study program that teaches critical foundational skills such as phonics, spelling, and handwriting, which can be taught in the Tier I and Tier II settings and can be used for RTI and multi-tiered systems of support. That will be in place and Wonders will give the school, its students and teachers consistency with language and foundational skills as each teacher in a subsequent grade builds on what was previously taught. This is a very explicit, organized system that simplifies for the next grade teachers a way to build on what has been done.

Kim went on to explain the additional benefits of the program that go far beyond mere reading skills, one of which is writing. Students will be exposed to various cultures and information outside their immediate experiences. Students will learn how to write strong sentences, how to cite and use text evidence, etc. They will write about what they read about.

Ina asked about Kim's qualifications for teaching Special Ed students. She was assured that Kim and the incoming specialists are fully trained in the important systems. Nathan remarked how important writing skills are and how those skills have changed over the years with clarity and conciseness becoming more important. Beth expanded on the benefits of this program and explained what the cost was and where those monies will be found to cover the cost. She asked that the Committee approve adoption of the program.

Karen asked how parents could help. Is there a home support piece that could reinforce what is being taught at school? She was assured that there was, indeed, materials available for parents to participate. Tom asked if the teachers are on board with this program. There was a

discussion of various ways parents could be involved in this system that also made it clear that the teachers are enthusiastic about it.

Ina moved to approve the implementation of Wonders 2023 for the Pre-K to 5th grades at Richmond Consolidated School. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion was passed by roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Kimmie, aye; Nate, aye; Karen, aye; Tom, aye.

Principal's Report: Beth noted that the Eighth Grade Graduation will take place on Tuesday, June 20th at 6:00 PM at the school. A school-wide celebration will be held at 8:30 AM that day that will recognize some people who are leaving. Field Day, Friday rain or shine; Field Trips are coming to an end. Beth will be meeting with the Middle School Teachers on the 27th from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM about a new History curriculum. Beth noted that she will be needing approval for the materials for that new curriculum so that it can be ordered and in place before the next school year. It was suggested that a Special Meeting of the School Committee be called on Thursday, June 29th at 6:00 PM.

Beth then addressed the Heating System and other Grounds and Maintenance issues. Nexus came out to look at what has been done with the heating system and what remains to be done. There is \$68,000 budgeted so we need to know what can be done with that.

Berkshire Fencing came out to look at all of the areas in question and provided a quote of \$5,678. She will talk to Peter and Sharon Harris about the possibility of using the \$15,000 in the budget.

There are other grounds and maintenance issues to be flushed out such as mulch, drainage problems (which is a possible capital project), nature trails, etc. Beth will talk to the Horticulture program at Taconic to see if they might be interested in having their students work on our grounds.

Peter suggested that a group called "Greenagers" be approached to help with that kind of project. Greenagers is a program out of Taconic where kids are paid to do the work and learn. Changes to the schedule next year: Beth noted that she will be implementing a WINS Block; an intervention block and an acceleration block and work that into the schedule across the board. There will also be an Electives Block for the Middle School.

The Wellness Committee met to discuss snack recess and lunch. Recess will be held before lunch this year as it has been shown that doing that results in students taking more time to eat and eat better that way. For the elementary school, there will also be a small recess before snack and snack will be in the classroom during reading aloud and meditation time.

Beth announced that she has officially graduated from the Influence 100 Program and wished to thank Peter and Ina for their support and participation. This program works to support diversity for people of color for the field of Superintendency so that they can be included. She noted that it was a challenge for her as a white person. Peter and Ina expressed their admiration for the program.

Beth then asked Cristina Lenfest to share the slide show on "Girls on the Run." Cristina reported that the program began with grades three to five with three parent volunteer coaches. The program was based on running, but was mostly about social/emotional learning. The girls met twice a week after school with a celebration run at the end.

Tom suggested that Cristina mention the fund-raising component of the program. Each girl who could, would raise money to help those who could not otherwise afford the fees or equipment and to provide gifts for the community as a give-back. The girls made trail mix for the Fire Department, thank yous for the post office and bookmarks for the Library. Girls and parents got a lot out of this program and Cristina was very glad that she took it on.

Slideshow

Superintendent's Report: Peter asked the Committee for approval of the three-year academic tuition agreements with Pittsfield, Lenox and Berkshire Hills that includes a 4-½% increase each year. Ina asked for clarification of exactly how the agreement worked, which Peter provided.

Ina moved to approve the tuition agreements with Pittsfield, Lenox and Berkshire Hills School Districts for the 2023-2026 period. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion was adopted by unanimous roll-call vote: Kimmie, aye; Ina, aye; Karen, aye; Nathan, aye; Tom, aye.

At a meeting with the Board of Selectmen and other Richmond Administrators, it was agreed that the Town would cover mowing, weed-whacking and snow plowing at the school. There is a \$15,000 line item for grounds work which has largely been untouched for years that the Town suggested the school use. In addition, the Town has agreed to pay for a new parking lot at an approximate cost of a couple of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Other projects will go into priority order, and some will be more complicated, for example drainage on fields near wetlands.

Peter then said that this would be his last formal meeting as Superintendent. After seven years as Richmond's part-time Superintendent, he is happy to pass the baton to Beth going forward. He will be around informally, but he will be spending his time trying to get a high school built and trying to accomplish the merger of two districts.

Special Education Director's Report: Beth reported in Mary Shook's absence that Mary has now completed the Circuit Breaker Training. The School Psychologist position has been filled at one day per week. We had hired an SLP position for 3 days a week, but she has taken another position. Student Summer Services will be available from July 5th through July 28th, based on IEP's. There are four students in speech and three in language, reading, math and writing.

Review of Policies: Peter noted that Policy L, which is under review today, is the last section in the book and has only 4 subsections:

La - Education Agency Relation Goals - Will be working largely with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and also with Early Childhood Education.

Lb - Other schools and school districts (i.e. Pittsfield, Lenox and Berkshire Hills).

Dufour Buses transports Richmond students, Messini takes care of the other towns, but there is excellent cooperation between the two companies.

Lbc Non Public Schools Relations - Children's Study Home, with which Richmond has a relationship, as well as Berkshire Country Day School in Stockbridge. Some grant funding that we receive potentially has to be shared between Richmond and those schools.

Student teaching and internships. Richmond might have potential student teachers and interns from Beth's relationships.

Peter then noted that after the second reading of the L section of Policies at the next meeting, that work would be done.

Peter suggested posting the completed Policy Book online for convenience of access.

Financial Report: Peter reported that there will be some monies that will be returned to the Town.

Ina formally thanked Peter for his leadership style which she felt had been very helpful in making things move along smoothly.

There being no further business before the Committee, Ina moved that the meeting be adjourned at 7:03 PM. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion was adopted by unanimous roll-call vote: Kimmie, aye; Ina, aye; Karen, aye; Nathan, aye; Tom, aye.

Submitted by Phyllis LeBeau