

# Final

## **RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING August 15, 2023 - 6:00 PM - via Zoom**

**PRESENT:** Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Beth Choquette, School Super/Principal; Karen Youdelman; Nathan Steele; Tom Forstner; Mary Shock, Special Ed.

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

**Review of the Minutes of the June 13, 2023 Meeting:** Ina moved to approve the June 13, 2023 minutes as amended. She was seconded by Karen and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Karen, aye; Nathan, aye; Tom, aye;

**Public Comment:** None

**Correspondence:** None

**School Committee Functioning Responsibilities:** Evaluate the Superintendent; Develop and Oversee School Budget; Advocate for the School System with citizens and Town government; Establish Policies in accordance with State laws and regulations.

The Mission of the Richmond School Committee is to support an educational environment that encourages positive self-esteem; critical thinking; responsibility; mutual respect; citizenship and a lifelong love of learning.

Prior to each meeting, Ina will send the Committee a quick reminder to allow everyone to respond as to whether or not they will be able to attend so that the Committee can be sure that they will have a quorum.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:** Beth reported on OWL technology for School Committee Meetings so that they can be done virtually or as a hybrid of virtual and in-person. The State has moved the deadline for virtual meetings up to March of 2025. The committee discussed the various options and costs. Karen felt that a demonstration of each system would be helpful in making a choice. Tom agreed and noted that hybrid meetings

provided a convenient way for parents to attend. Beth will ask Mitch, our Information Technology guru, to attend the next meeting to discuss this further with a greater fund of knowledge.

Opening Day - August 28 and 29, 2023. Beth has sent the staff a letter with the agendas for those two days. That will include: training around Universal Design for Learning led by people from the Katie Novak Education Organization. Katie will also be at Richmond School in March for a full day of working with staff, and a member of her organization will be here on one of our opening days to begin some more in-depth training around UDL, which Richmond started doing this past year. Teachers will be given time to do some training on the new reading curriculum, as well as work on finalizing our electives and advisories for the Middle School. Staff will also be training in Restorative Practices with a program called Creating a Culture of Care Through Restorative Justice. Every year, staff need to do a series of mandated trainings, which will take place during Opening Days.

Emergency Evacuation Drill with the State Police on the second day in the afternoon.

August 30th is the first day of school for grades one through eight

August 30th, 31st and September 1st is Pre-K and Kindergarten Orientation for parents to sign up for meetings with teachers and specialists.

September 5th is the start for Pre-K and Kindergarten

**New Staff:** David Heath is out of retirement to fill the Spanish Teacher role.

Michael Vecchia will replace the School Psychiatrist, who has retired.

Ellen Austin, a Hancock Para, will be working with one of our students.

Zachary Houle is a Special Ed teacher replacing Julia Sabourin.

**Custodial Staff:** The school is down a Night Custodian and has only Tracey Bullet on staff at the moment. Beth has spoken to some cleaning services and wanted to thank Natalie and Ryleigh for doing the cleaning over the summer.

**Maintenance Update:** Beth reported that of the \$68,000 earmarked for updating the heating at Richmond, the estimate from Nexus to extend Phase One came in at under that amount. The fire panel must be replaced. They have been ordered and are expected to be installed next week.

Berkshire Fencing is fixing all the fences by the parking lot, baseball field, and playground. The fencing around the tennis court will be the responsibility of the town. In addition, the town is paying for a new parking lot at Richmond School. A roof drain caused damage to the back parking lot near the basketball court, which was repaired so a total new lot is ready to be paved.

Nathan asked what the heating update consisted of. Beth explained in detail what was contained in Phase I, installation, demolition and training, all of which was included in the \$64,000 estimate. Richmond School has \$68,000 earmarked for that work.

Center for Leadership and Educational Leadership (CLEE). Beth reported that she, Dr. Dillon and Mary worked with a facilitator from CLEE last year on the new pilot rubric for evaluations and, during that time, Berkshire Hills signed up to do a mentoring program with CLEE and asked Beth if she would be a mentor for one of their new principals in Berkshire Hills. Beth has signed on to be a mentor for two years for a new principal, working with the same facilitator in CLEE.

Pre-K Update: Starting this year, pre-K classes will be free to Richmond residents. There are 14 children enrolled in the Pre-K, ten of which are Richmond residents.

**Superintendent's Report:** Beth reported that the end-of-year budget, with a notation of what funds are being returned to the town, will be discussed at the next meeting as the complete information is not ready at this time. The FY23 budget that Amy sent to the Committee is not accurate as it has not been fully reconciled.

Grants: Beth is finishing up FY24 Title I, II and IV grants. She noted that this is the last year that our ESSER 3 funds may be spent and we are through with ESSER 2. Beth will complete these by the end of the week.

State Updates: Governor Healy signed off on the State Budget and voted for Universal Hot Lunches again.

Enrollment: Beth said there are 158 (144 students less preK) of which 80 are Richmond residents and 7 or 8 from Hancock, plus one student from New York City who will be attending 6th grade, which means the overall

enrollment is 159 divided as: Pre-K 14; K-15; 1-13; 2-18; 3-17; 4-15. 5-18; 6-17; 8-18

**Special Education Director's Report:** Mary Shook, Director, reported that she is working on two grants: 240 and 262, which she intends to complete in the next week or so. One is for Pre-K teachers' salaries. Mary has been working with the aid of the GEM Administrator to learn the new system for submission of grants to the State.

Summer services ended at the end of July and the teachers said it went well; students showed up when they were supposed to, including the virtual student. Mary said she is looking forward to working with Beth.

Mary has written out accommodations for students for all the teachers including the Specialist and David Heath, the Spanish teacher. She wants the Special Ed teachers to meet with Physical Ed., the Art Teachers and the Specialist to go over those accommodations. Mary will meet with the Special Ed teachers on the first day to go over goals, benchmarks, attendance at meetings on time, etc.

Nate asked if there is a program of Special Ed training for new teachers. Mary and Beth outlined the steps of that training.

Tom asked what process Beth might have in place to vet any Choice-In students. Beth explained that the process is strictly a lottery. She did note, however, that if she discovers that a choice-in student has problems that need addressing, she will contact the previous school to get what information she can to be prepared to offer that student what he/she needs.

Karen asked about the Spanish classes. Are they designed as English-Learner Spanish? Beth said Spanish is presented as a Foreign Language and that the 6th grade will have a double block of Spanish once a week; 7th grade will have Spanish I and 8th grade will be learning Spanish II so that they can all be well prepared for the real Spanish I in High School.

Karen then asked about the possibility of a foreign language in the lower grades, when learning a second language is much easier. Beth acknowledged that is true and she noted that several parents have inquired about that possibility. She is looking for someone who wants to teach a foreign language as an after-school program.

**Superintendent/Principal's Report:** Beth has decided that the best course for clarity is to present the two reports separately. At the next meeting, she will have a set of Superintendent's goals that will look more at school and district issues and a set of goals for her role as Principal which will be more school Specific and will be open for the Committee's input.

Ina agreed that having those reports separately allows the Committee an easier way to assess what Beth is doing in each role. The Committee agreed. Ina moved that Dr. Choquette present the School Committee with separate goals for her roles as Superintendent and Principal. She was seconded by Nate and the motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Ina raised a question about Professional Development that is required for teachers. These will be done on the first two days of school. This year Beth will begin training in Restorative Practices. UVL will be in its second year and they will go in depth with Novak Education. They previously did a book study. Now the real experts will be coming in to work with us.

Ina asked for a rundown of the Budget in order to familiarize herself with the various line items.

## **POLICY REVIEW:**

### **Policy L - Second Reading**

La - goals for relationships with other districts and schools. - No Change

Lb - Relationships with other school districts and with other schools our students are attending for mutual support around funding.

Lbc - Private schools. There is always a possibility of needing to share the funds from Title Grants 1, 2 and 4 if any low-income students attend that school.

Lda - Student Teachers and Internships. Beth will be reaching out to institutions that have training programs that might need a teacher to take on a student teacher or have a student come to Richmond to do a Practicum. Beth would support that.

Ina moved to accept Policy Section L; Education and Agency Relations. Karen seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**Financial Report:** The report Amy sent the Committee June 30, 2023 is FY23 and is not accurate as it has not been reconciled and the reallocation of funds has not been recorded. Next meeting we will have the final version and we will then know what the school is giving back to the Town.

The FY24 that Amy also provided is not ready for discussion as we are right at the beginning of that year.

Beth noted that because Richmond is a one-school district, we do not have teams. Beth has created a team with Amy and Sharon Harrison, Business Manager, and invited Mary to join them.

Cell Phone Grant for acquiring devices that will allow access to a student's phone in case of emergency, but will otherwise keep them out of their hands and reduce distractions.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Ina moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM. She was seconded by Karen and the motion passed by voice vote: Ina, aye; Karen, aye; Tom, aye; Nathan, aye.

Submitted by P. LeBeau