

# Final

## **RICHMOND SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday August 9, 2022 - 6:00 PM - Via Zoom**

**PRESENT:** Ina Wilhelm, Chair; Peter Dillon, Superintendent; Kimmie Leeco; Mary Shook, Special Education; Joy Mullen, Teacher

Ina called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. She read Governor Baker's Proclamation of July 16, 2022 extending the provision of the Open Meeting Law that allows the Committee to meet either via Zoom or in person or as a hybrid of both until March 31, 2023.

**Review and Approval of the Minutes of the May 10, 2022, June 7, 2022 and June 23, 2022 meetings of the School Committee.** Ina had questions regarding the reference in the June 23rd minutes related to the Social and Developmental Plan for the School. Peter clarified that issue for her. Ina then asked how the addition to the agenda of "Correspondence" for all meetings would be accomplished. Peter suggested placing it after the Financial Report and that any such correspondence be attached to the minutes but not read out during the meeting.

In the June 7th minutes Ina questioned the issue of lengthening the Parent/Teacher meetings. Joy Mullen responded that there is nothing specific in the contract, but it had been discussed at a faculty meeting. The conversation ended in Joy pointing out that Peter and the new Principal will have that discussion.

In regard to the Social Emotional Goals, Ina asked whether there is a plan in place to be used while the "Pilot" program is going on. Peter responded that for many years the RCS Cares plan has been deemed appropriate for the early grades, but not for the middle school grades who needed a more specific approach for their age levels and an opportunity for them to provide more input.

Ina then moved to accept the amended minutes of the May 10, 2022, June 7, 2022 and June 23, 2022 meetings of the Richmond School Committee. The motion was seconded by Kimmie and passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Kimmie, aye.

**Superintendent's Report:** Peter reported that the Search Committee found several excellent candidates for the Principal's position, but selected Beth Choquette, who will step into her position on August 22, 2022. Beth comes to the position with many years of experience as Principal of Northampton's Bridge Street School, and a doctoral degree from Boston College. Dan Weston, Beth and Peter will meet with her on her arrival.

Peter noted that the State has discovered \$5 million in excess funds that they are looking to spend. Everyone will get a small refund out of that money.

The Budget is complete. The Federal Government has covered the cost of the free lunch program for the past two years and the State will pick up that funding for another year for both breakfast and lunch.

End of Year Budget - The school was able to return \$50,000.00 to the Town of Richmond.

**Special Education Director:** Mary reported that she has completed the liaison lists for staff working with the school Psychiatrist for PD Day on step-by-step instructions for the whole staff on the Child Study Student Support Team; how it should be structured and what steps need to be taken. Vicky will show the staff how to collect data and graph it so that it will be available for future needs.

Mary has been following an online Civil Rights for Staff 504's which satisfies everything needed for the State.

Mary noted that she is looking forward to working with Beth.

#### **POLICIES:**

Section G - Personnel. This comes right out of the MASC Model Handbook. Goals: Equal Employment Opportunity - tied to Mass General Law.

Conflict of Interest Training - all staff need to complete this every two years  
Staff Conduct

Gifts - \$50 or less or up to \$150 as one gift from a class. A gift card for school supplies is exempt as are homemade gifts, flowers, cookies, etc.

Drug Laws - Strict ban

Tobacco Laws - Strict ban

Security/Safety - Pre-employment physicals for symptomatic individuals

Employee Assistance Program - help with drug or alcohol abuse, etc.,

Domestic Violence Leave Policy

Family and Medical Leave Policy: Ina asked whether there is a Sick Leave Bank available to staff. Kimmie asked whether the school participates in Short Term Paid Disability Leave through the State. If so, the employer is not allowed to use sick time or vacation time to offset income and no taxes are taken from those funds. Peter will check on whether the school participates in that program.

Staff Participation in Political Activities: It is everyone's right as a citizen to participate in political activities but staff may not use school or district materials or time and there must be no pressure applied to students.

Personnel Records: Mass General Law and the Teachers' Agreement both hold it sacred in Mass. that employees can review and respond to their records. The Superintendent is responsible to note remarkable or unremarkable work.

Staff Grievances - The process starts at the Principal's level then goes to the Superintendent and if unresolved can go all the way to the School Committee. Peter

noted that he could not remember the last time there was a formal grievance and they should all be very proud of that fact.

Salary Schedule - Some groups have specific schedules - others start at a point and then increase yearly.

The Principal is hired by the Superintendent.

Extra Compensation for work done other than during the regular day (i.e. Field Trips, After School Programs, etc.)

Recruiting and Posting of Positions - The school uses internal postings and then expands to job boards and newspapers. Peter noted that Richmond School has never experienced a real challenge in recruitment.

Hiring - tied to State anti-discrimination laws.

Substitutes - The daily rate increased this year. In response to a question, Peter said he will check on whether the school still has a permanent substitute position.

Staff Development - There is specific language in the contract. Ina asked whether PDP's were offered free through the school for certification. Peter outlined several options available to obtain those PDP's. He also noted that the District does not track those, that is a function of State Licensing and records are kept by the individual teacher against possible future audits at the time of license renewals. Ina asked about a fund to reimburse teachers for the cost of training. Peter responded that there is earned credit for additional degrees obtained that can result in salary increases which is usually accessed during the early part of a teacher's career.

Professional Teacher Status: Awarded after three years in the district, but may be accelerated for an experienced teacher coming from another district.

Evaluations - This was unfinished business in the recent negotiations. A working group was formed to refine the evaluation process, which had not been updated for many years.

Resignation Language: The employee is expected to remain in the position for 30 days after submission of a resignation. This could be waived. Peter noted that, in response to the teacher shortage, new rules now allow teachers to work more post-retirement than was the case previously.

Suspension and Dismissal of Professional Staff - tied to Mas. General Law.

Tutoring - It is considered bad form to recommend your own student for tutoring and then get paid to tutor that student. If you are tutoring a student who you may teach in the future, there are rules calling for disclosure.

Support Staff: Contacts and vacations. Peter wants to look at Policy Ggg to update the language to be consistent with the language of the contract.

Evaluation of Support Staff and Support Staff Retirement: Teachers retirement is through MA Teachers Retirement, Support Staff through Berkshire County Retirement. Peter will update the vacation language.

Health & Wellness Policy - Physical Activity, Nutrition. This is a second reading. The policy is tied to state evaluation of the school. Ina reiterated her question about the amount of time teachers need to spend in order to fulfill all of the obligations listed in the policy. Peter assured her that a lot of that is done routinely during the day.

Ina moved to approve the Richmond School Wellness Policy on Physical Activity and Nutrition. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Smart Goals / Role of the Superintendent and the School Committee: These are articulated in the School Improvement Plan. The primary charge for the School Committee is hiring and firing the Superintendent, setting the budget, setting policy. Peter noted that in a school as small as Richmond, the School Committee actually is involved in more than that.

Number one Goal - Supporting Beth as the new Principal and social/emotional learning. The goals of increasing the math scores and increasing the level of effective writing and communication skills is always present.

Peter suggested that ideas for goals should be made visible in such a way as to be immediately accessible. The goal is to have everyone from the Principal down to the youngest students able to articulate the school's goals and to know their part in them.

**Financial Report:** Most of the percentages in the next fiscal year report are at 0 as not much spending has been done so far. One change Peter noted was that the salary for the Principal will increase from \$100,000 to \$115,750. He acknowledged that it is a substantial increase but it is necessary to obtain a principal with a doctorate and years of experience.

Ina asked about the line item for School Committee Expenses. She wanted to know how to go about accessing the money provided for attendance at conferences, especially as the conference being held in November is seeking early registration. Peter remarked that next week Amy will make the necessary reservations. Kimmie will not be available, Ina will attend part of the schedule and Peter may attend the first two days.

There being no further business before the Committee, Ina moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:07 PM. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Ina, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Submitted by Phyllis LeBeau