

**DORSET BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 9, 2010– 6:00 P.M.
THE DORSET SCHOOL LIBRARY**

DORSET BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

Robert Allen: 768-8065; Liz Berard: 362-2949; Stephanie Breed, Clerk: 867-2531; David Chandler, Chairperson: 867-5533; James Salsgiver: 867-4115; James Merryman, Principal: 362-2602; BRSU Superintendent Daniel French: 362-2452

Regular scheduled meetings held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, unless

s otherwise noticed.

PRESENT: Board Members: Robert Allen (through SKYPE & Phone), Liz Berard, Stephanie Breed, David Chandler, and James Salsgiver; Principal Jim Merryman, BRSU Supt. Dan French

ABSENT: None

AUDIENCE: Jennifer Allen, Renee Bornstein, Vicki Burgess, Rhonda Davis, Pauline de Laszlo, Beth & Bill Eyre, Kelly Gardner, Jack Gilbert, Vickie Haskins, Tricia Heaton, Norman Levitz, Amy Panetta, Erin & Neil Reilly, and Megan Thorn

Chairperson David Chandler called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. in the library at The Dorset School.

AGENDA ITEMS:

● **MEETING MINUTES:**

Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2010 were approved as corrected – Moved by Mrs. Breed, seconded by Mrs. Berard, and so moved unanimously.

► **PUBLIC COMENTS/AUDIENCE:**

Mr. Chandler asked the numerous members of the audience whether or not their comments/questions/concerns could wait until later in the meeting or if they would prefer to open the meeting to their questions immediately. General consensus of opinion was to open the meeting to general audience members and begin public comments/questions immediately. The audience members were generally concerned about any cuts the board might be considering to the overall educational programs at The Dorset School. Other audience members also expressed their concerns about the proposed rise in tuition costs for BBA, ultimately resulting in cutting costs and programs at Dorset. At this point, Superintendent French and Board Chairman Chandler made a statement that BBA Headmaster Mark Tashjian had just announced that as of 2/10/10, the BBA faculty had agreed to “freeze” their salaries for next year, as well as reducing the school’s workforce and adopting a variety of other budget cutting measures. The end result of these actions resulted in lowering the proposed 2010-2011 BBA tuition rate from \$14,100 per pupil to a new figure of \$13,725 per pupil. Mr. Chandler further stated that very soon Dorset residents will be asked to look at consolidation of school districts/supervisory unions within the State. Mr. Merryman added that he looked at the present budget situation as comparable to when Act 60 caused such pain to the Dorset School District, coupled with declining elementary student numbers and tuition student enrollments. He

further remarked to continuing questions from audience members about what cuts in programs and teaching positions would occur during 2010-2011 school year at The Dorset School, that the educational system in Vermont was not the problem but rather the State of Vermont should be working on a sustainable program to bring new families and businesses to Vermont. Mr. Merryman answered several other concerns from audience members about the number of classes for next year, and he stated that there would only be one section of 6th and 7th Grades and two for 8th Grade. He continued by reporting that one teacher was planning to leave at the end of the 2009-2010 school year for "personal reasons" thereby eliminating the need to "RIF" any staff member. Mr. Merryman added that there are currently more Dorset students at the secondary level and a declining enrollment at the elementary level. As part of the plus side of the proposed staffing for next year, the library and computer lab will be open five days per week instead of the more limited days for this school year.

Another area of concern from the audience was not having the 5/6 grade "looping" continue for next year, especially since this was such a successful program for her child this year. Audience member Arthur Levitz stated that the school was the "heart" of the community and any consideration of consolidation in the future of schools should "warrant some serious considerations!" Pauline de Laszlo stated that she personally "loved" the 5/6 model used this year, but she urged that teacher assignments for the 2010-2011 school year be made soon because it will influence which school some students will attend for the 2010-2011 school year. Another audience member urged the board to make the current Spanish Program more important, especially at the middle level. Jennifer Andrus directed her concerns to the board about having Linda Mitchell perform two jobs next year instead of just one, and were any other options considered. Ms. Andrus also inquired what would happen if The Dorset School ceased to function as a public school and became an independent school, and if that did happen, what effect would this have on the projected tax rate?

Superintendent French responded to several other questions from audience members about secondary special education costs and placements, new federal funds, early education requirements, and technology. He stated that he planned to have several BRSU informational meetings to discuss the profile of any new programs for any underserved students, use of certain Federal funds for enrichment and virtual learning courses. He continued by explaining that the BRSU Early Education Program Coordinator was retiring at the end of the 2009-2010 school year, and therefore, there are plans to rebuild the entire early education program dictated by the new Act 62. The new requirements of Act 62 will require the supervisory union to go outside to provide needed services at home or designated Early Education Program, i.e. Northshire Day School. Further study in this area will be undertaken and have the Boards of the BRSU decide what actions will be taken.

Prior to a 10-minute break in the meeting, Chair David Chandler took this opportunity to publicly acknowledge two members of the Board who will be "stepping down" after this evening's meeting: Stephanie Breed and Elizabeth Berard. He stated that Mrs. Breed had served as a board member

for the past eight years and Mrs. Berard for the past six years. He thanked them profusely for their years of dedicated service and all of their contributions during their tenure on the board.

At 7:00 pm., Mr. Chandler called a 10-minute break. The meeting reconvened at 7:10 p.m.

● REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS:

Mr. French reported on the following:

► **SECONDARY TUITION REQUEST:**

Superintendent French informed the board members that he had received the following secondary tuition request for Dorset student:

NAME OF STUDENT	GRADE	SCHOOL TO ATTEND	SCHOOL PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED
Stannard, Jonathan	9	Burr & Burton Academy	Arlington Memorial High School
Tyminski, Samantha	12	Burr & Burton Academy	BBA

A motion was made by Mr. Allen, seconded by Mrs. Breed, to approve the tuition requests as printed, and so moved unanimously.

► **BRSU MARCH INSERVICE:**

Superintendent French informed board members that a March 19 BRSU Inservice would be held on "Technology Integration." One aspect of this Inservice will be to present a panel of BBA students who will demonstrate and discuss how they use technology. Board members are urged to attend.

► **DORSET TOWN MEETING:**

Superintendent French discussed the press release from BBA Headmaster Tashjian and the new figure for the BBA tuition. This reduction in cost results in a 3.2% increase. This presents the board with making the choice to leave the Warning as printed, which is no longer a valid figure with the new announced BBA tuition charge, vote it down and bring back another ballot, or vote it in as it is printed because in this way there is money available in the budget to cover any new secondary students that enroll and perhaps have some money left over for the 2011-2012 budget. Mr. Allen stated he would like to encourage voters to vote on the original printed budget and go with the original \$4,783,856 proposed budget figure, and have the board take a positive position on this issue. Superintendent French further explained that another option could be to introduce this on the floor and bring it down to the new figure, however, if the higher amount, as printed, is voted on and defeated, then when would you plan to resubmit for a second vote? You would also have to consider the additional cost connected to the second vote. Mrs. Breed commented that if no additional Dorset secondary students enroll for the 2010-2011 school year, then the additional money left at the end of the 2010-2011 school year can go towards the next year's existing budget.

► **SUMMARY OF THE BUDGET**

Mr. Chandler led the discussion on the summary of the proposed 2010-2011 Dorset School Budget. Essentially it listed an overall 4.1% increase over the 2009-2010 school year's budget. Changes in staffing included a reduction of 1.88% from the K-8 Program and 1.0 administrative staff position. It also includes an anticipated deficit of \$20, 873. Changes are projected to take place with the early education programming, inclusion of an after-school program and administrative duty costs, as well as special education service needs at the secondary level and secondary tuition rates. The tax rate is anticipated to rise by 11.5 cents. Mr. Chandler added that the bulk of the increase is really from the State and special education costs.

Additional conversation was held by the superintendent and board members concerning State Senator Robert Hartwell's proposed bill that would cut the number of supervisory unions within the State to no more than 16. Superintendent French reported that he had recently testified on the issue of consolidation. Other proposed legislation by the Superintendent's Assoc. was to offer an incentive for consolidation resulting in larger districts, establishing statewide "virtual high schools" and having the Governor appoint the Commissioner of Education. He also added that it was way too early to project what would ultimately happen.

► **TECHNOLOGY PLAN:**

Superintendent French distributed copies of the BRSU Technology Plan 2009-2012. This plan contains a larger framework for implementation, staffing and evaluation of the Plan, which the Dorset Board approved in December 2009.

► **PRINCIPAL REPORT:**

Two recommendations for hire were made by Mr. Merryman:

- A. Susan Mogensen was recommended to be hired for a term of 30 days, beginning on February 22, 2010, dependent upon board approval. A Motion was made to offer employment as stated above by Mrs. Breed, seconded by Mrs. Berard, and so moved unanimously.
- B. Amanda Chalmers was recommended to be hired as a long-term first grade teacher for approximately 30 days, beginning date dependent upon the physical condition of the current first grade teacher Ms. Chalmers will be replacing for the 30 day period. Motion was made by Mrs. Breed, seconded by Mrs. Berard as stated above, and so moved unanimously.

Mrs. Breed inquired about the date when teacher-classroom assignments for the 2010-2011 would be announced. Mr. Merryman replied that it was his job to assign classroom teachers, and he has up to June 30 to complete this task. Superintendent French reminded the board members that the teacher-class assignments would have to wait until the budget was approved for the upcoming school year. Audience member Rhonda Davies asked what protocol was followed for informing parents of his decisions. Mr. Merryman replied that this was generally done through the DNN or a bulk mailing.

► **ACCOUNT MANAGERS REPORT:**

Mr. Cepela had prepared the Warrant for the board's approval and the following report for:

REVENUE RECEIVED:

HOT LUNCH REVENUE	4,291.00
BREAKFAST REVENUE	249.00
TUITION - WINHALL	2,750.00
HULBERT- PARENTS	580.00
8TH GRADE FUNDRAISERS	1,463.00
EDUCATION SPENDING - ADVANCE	580,000.00
MILK	22.00
STUDENT COUNCIL RECEIPTS	383.00
LUNCH - FED REIMB	1,315.00
BREAKFAST - FED REIMB	84.00
LUNCH - STATE REIMB	141.00
BREAKFAST - STATE REIMB	42.00
COBRA REIMB	452.00
EFFICIENCY VERMONT	100.00
EASTERN STAR - SPED EQUIP DONATION	500.00
DONATIONS	50.00
4TH GRADE RECEIPTS	110.00
TOTAL	\$592,532.00

WARRANT SUMMARY:

FUND ACCT #	100	100-200	106	108	700	116	
FUND NAME	GENERAL	HOT LUNCH	SUPP FUND	BLDG FUND	8TH GRADE	HULBERT	TOTAL WARRANT
PAYROLL AP WARRANT: 1/22/10	15,884.62						15,884.62
PAYROLL WARRANT 1/22/10	48,225.34						48,225.34
AP WARRANT 2/03/10	60,741.33	555.06	385.00	11,029.00			72,711.87
PAYROLL WARRANT 2/05/10	47,554.32						47,554.32
PAYROLL AP WARRANT 2/05/10	16,379.88						16,39.88
TOTAL	188,785.49	555.06	385.00	11,020.48	0.00	0.00	200,756.03

The Warrant was approved and signed.

► NEW BUSINESS:

Audience member Pauline deLazlo asked Mr. Merryman how did he intend to revamp the Spanish program for the coming year. Mr. Merryman informed her that while next year's scheduling takes place, he is looking at attempting to have five weeks in grades 7 & 8 for Spanish and have a certain cut-off grade for those students participating in the program. Since taking Spanish is not mandatory for students in grades 7 & 8, invitation to participate will be optional. Ms. DeLazlo

additionally complimented Mr. Merryman and the school for the 5/6 looping program offered this year, however she wondered if it was a “good” thing to have the same teachers for four years.

Mrs. Breed inquired about the Dorset School NECAP scores, which were not printed in the recent newspaper stories on statewide test results. Superintendent French replied that the printed report did not contain BBA results because of the high rate of student absences during the specified testing period. Manchester Elementary Middle School also had unreported scores for the same reason. Mr. Merryman reported that he had called the State Dept. of Education to ask for another testing date due to the high rate of student absenteeism and was told that it could not be done, so the Dorset School District had no choice but to schedule the test for the students who were in attendance.

► **OTHER BUSINESS:**

Mr. Chandler informed board members that he had received letters from The Dorset School 6th grade on several issues being used for debate within their classroom. He asked board members to take a look at tem at their convenience.

There being no further business to come before the board, Chairperson David Chandler adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Betty Morsch

3/2/10

NEXT DORSET BOARD MEETINGS:

MAR. 1, 2010 (Town Meeting)

MAR. 23, 2010 (Board Reorganization)