

Southwest Vermont Regional Technical School District (SWVRTSD)
Regional Governing Board Meeting Minutes: March 15, 2005
Assembly Room, Career Development Center

Members Present: Lance Matteson, Chair; Claude DeLucia; Brian Doxsee (arrived 6:45pm); Kevin Goodhue; Leon Johnson; Frank Lamb; Ed Letourneau; Jon Peaslee; Rick Pembroke.

Staff and Others Present: Carol Barbierri, Human Services Advisory Committee (left 7:15pm); David Barker, Asst. Director; Pat Crandall, Resident (left 7:15pm); Tim Corcoran, Clerk (left 6:15pm); Charlie Gingo, Human Services Advisory Committee (left 7:15pm); Wes Knapp, Superintendent; Greg Lewis, Business Manager (left 7:00pm); Sean-Marie Oller, former Board member (arrived 6:15pm, left 7:15pm); Donna Oyama, Director; Stephannie Peters, Human Services Teacher, CDC (left 7:15pm); Joe Silver, Board Training Facilitator; Mark Upright, Resident (left 7:15pm); Pam Upright, Child Care Provider (left 7:15pm).

Videotaping live for CAT-TV: Nathan Wallace-Senft.

Recorder: Richard Bump

Knapp called the meeting to order at 6:00pm, and asked all board members to introduce themselves to people present as well as the viewing audience. Knapp also noted that the Clerk, prior to the opening of the meeting, had sworn in new board members.

1. Board Reorganization:

- a. *Chair:* Knapp requested nominations for the position of Chair of the Regional Governing Board (RGB) to which
 - Peaslee moved and Pembroke seconded a motion to nominate Johnson as Chair of the RGB
 - Lamb moved and DeLucia seconded a motion to nominate Matteson as chair of the RGB.

Upon hearing no other nominations, Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to close nominations and the motion passed unanimously. Upon consensus that the voting should take place by the showing of hands, Johnson received three votes and Matteson received five votes, and Knapp declared Matteson the Chair of the RGB.

- b. *Vice-Chair:* Matteson requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the RGB to which Letourneau moved and Goodhue seconded a motion to nominate Lamb as Vice-Chair of the RGB. Upon hearing no other nominations, Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to close nominations, and the motion passed unanimously. Matteson then called the motion on the floor to nominate Lamb as Vice-Chair of the RGB and the motion passed unanimously.
- c. *Secretary/Clerk:* Matteson requested nominations for the position of Secretary/Clerk to the RGB to which Johnson moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to nominate Letourneau as Secretary/Clerk to the RGB. Upon hearing no other nominations, Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to close nominations, and the motion passed unanimously. Matteson called the motion on the floor to nominate Letourneau as Secretary/Clerk to the RGB and the motion passed unanimously.
- d. *Committee Chairs:* Matteson recommended and members concurred to defer appointments of committee chairs and committee assignments until the next meeting. Matteson also reported that both the Marketing/Outreach and the Finance Committees are scheduled to meet the week of 3/21/05, and noted that he will appoint acting chairs for those committees such that they can meet and conduct business as necessary.

2. Public Comments: Corcoran noted that certain minor, technical changes need to be made to the SWVRTSD by-laws, and that those changes should be made by the end of the year.

3. Other:
- a. *Designated Signers for Off-Schedule Warrants:* Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to authorize two of the three following positions, Chair, Vice-Chair and the Clerk, to sign off-cycle warrants. After a brief discussion, Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded an amendment to the motion to authorize any two board members to sign off-cycle warrants, and the motion passed unanimously.
 - b. *Bus Acquisition:* Matteson reported that CDC administrators are recommending a transfer of up to \$9,700 from the Transportation Revenue Fund to the Bus Purchasing Expense line item (currently at \$15,876.67), the purpose of which is to facilitate the purchase of a used school bus. In an extended discussion, members and staff variously noted that
 - due to government regulations, the CDC has known that two of its vans need to be replaced by more traditional yellow school buses before 1/2007
 - one of the two vans was replaced last year
 - the current bid process closes at the end of the week
 - the motion need not specify which bus will be purchased, it just increases the available funding
 - one of the buses under consideration is 5 years old with 24,000 miles, the purchase price is less than the book value, the bus has been carefully inspected by CDC staff, and is coming from a private school
 - buses need to be inspected every 6 months, and there is no age limit for a bus
 - it's more economical to rent a handicapped accessible bus when and as needed, rather than purchasing one outright
 - the used bus may cost up to \$25,000, whereas a new bus would cost \$55,000-\$60,000
 - there is no available state reimbursement
 - people operating the vehicle must have a Commercial Drivers License.
 Johnson moved and Lamb seconded a motion to approve the recommendation of CDC administrators to transfer up to \$9,700.00 from the Transportation Revenue Fund to the Bus Purchase Expense line item, the purpose of which is to purchase a used school bus pursuant to a full bid process. The motion passed 5 in favor, Peaslee and Pembroke opposed.
 - c. *2005-2006 Meeting Schedule:* After an extended discussion about changing the meeting schedule for next year for those meetings which would typically fall on a holiday, members reached consensus to leave the schedule as is (to meet on the third Monday of every month), and to adjust the meeting dates on a case by case basis as necessary. And after considerable discussion, members also agreed to not change the 4/18/05 meeting date, as scheduled.
 - d. *Nanotechnology and Microtechnology Workforce Sector and the Implications for Education:* Matteson announced that a seminar on this topic will take place 4/4/05 at the Equinox Hotel in Manchester VT from 9:00am-2:00pm. The session will be taped and released to local access TV channels as well as distributed within the various school systems.
 - e. *Marketing Students Competition:* Oyama was pleased to announce that CDC Marketing students won 23 awards in a recent competition in Burlington VT.
4. Consent Agenda: Pembroke moved and Johnson seconded a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed without discussion 5 in favor, Peaslee and Goodhue abstained. The Consent Agenda, as approved, included
- the Minutes of the RGB Meeting January 17, 2005
 - the Minutes of the Outreach and Marketing Committee Meeting February 10, 2005
 - the Minutes of the RGB Meeting February 21, 2005
 - the Minutes of the SWVRTSD Annual Meeting February 28, 2005
 - Payroll Warrants #48 - 49 in the amount \$80,815.81
 - Vendor Warrant #51 in the amount \$52,116.41

- the FFA Field Trip Request to Colchester VT 5/18 - 20/05
- the Adoption of *Policy#4328C - Military Leave*
- the Adoption of *Policy #4400C - Safety and Security of Employees*
- the Adoption of *Policy #5005C - Child Abuse and Neglect.*

5. Child Care Lab Presentation: Peters reported that many students in her Human Services program are interested in pursuing careers in pre-school, elementary, or special education, and that reopening the CDC Child Care site lab would be of tremendous benefit to those students. Peters distributed and then briefly reviewed a document noting that

- the previous on-site lab was temporarily closed in 1999 due to the simultaneous retirement of key administrators
- the license for the lab has been kept current
- in the interim, Human Services students have been placed in Co-op arrangements to gain experience working with small children
- this arrangement worked in some instances but never allowed any real control or input by the instructor over her students, and made evaluation of student co-op work essentially impossible
- a decision was made two years ago to reinstate the on-site lab, and since then, she, the Human Services Advisory Committee, and the Education Committee have discussed a wide array of issues concerning the reinstatement of the center (management, age range for children, daily and yearly schedule, etc)
- as a result of those discussions, Peters released a Request for Proposals to see if a private/public outside agency would be willing to conduct an on-site childcare program accessible to Human Services students
- an agreement is being developed with the Community College Of Vermont, in which a Human Services student could receive as much as 13 college credits for completing a specified set of requirements within the Human Services program
- Pam Upright, the person who submitted the only response to the RFP, is already known to CDC students and staff given that her privately run childcare program has been a co-op placement for Human Services students over the last five years
- the details of the arrangement and the contract are still under legal review.

Peters then introduced Charlie Gingko and Carol Barbierri, both members of the Human Services Advisory Committee, who spoke strongly in support of the need for an on-site lab, noting that

- it would be extremely expensive to try to manage the child care center in-house (as had been done before)
- Peters and the Advisory Committee reviewed all the available options as well as what all other technical centers are doing in Vermont in this area
- students will be able to take advantage of the on-site lab on a daily basis, without transportation or oversight issues
- there is a strong demand for people with human service skills in Bennington County
- the on-site lab will help CDC, MAU, and the Bennington Community with a much needed quality care center for children.

Oller, who had been chair of the Education Committee and presided over that committee as it reviewed the issues and progress of the childcare proposal, also noted that everyone discussed in detail questions about insurance, rent, schedules, management, supplies, parking, etc, much of which was distributed in a handout at the previous RGB meeting.

Matteson thanked Oller for her continued support of the CDC and the childcare program.

Peters then introduced Pam Upright who noted that

- she has been operating a private home day-care for children for over 15 years
- has worked as a co-op placement site for the CDC for over 5 years

and that her proposal is

- for a full day, five days per week, full year program for pre-school children aged 3 to 5 years.
- the pre-school curriculum she uses meets state standards

- the license allows for a maximum of 15 students, and given the need for this service in the community, there should be no problem maintaining enrollment at capacity levels
- the program would be fully funded by tuition, with nominal costs, if any, to the CDC
- initial considerations are that CDC district staff and students would have enrollment priority.

In subsequent discussion, members and staff noted that

- MAU Building and Grounds crew has indicated that there will be no significant issues with the on-site, year round center
- because there will be no tuition reduction offered CDC district members, enrollment of their children in this lab cannot be construed as an employee benefit
- infant care is already provided by the Sunrise Program and it would not be practical to offer infant care at the CDC site
- administrators need to be mindful about giving preferential enrollment to teachers, staff or students
- the space where the child care center took place has not been used since the center closed
- the fencing in the playground area needs replacement and there is funding available in the current budget to cover this expense
- the state Safety Committee has inspected the site and full approval is anticipated
- there is a very strong demand for childcare services during the summer
- it is not the responsibility of the board or CDC administrators to evaluate business prospects for the daycare center
- the CDC is under no financial risk: it's Upright's business, not the CDC's.

In closing discussion and in response to a recommendation from Pembroke, members agreed that the Finance Committee should review the proposal as well as all associated documents before full board action is taken. Oyama noted that the Human Services Advisory Committee is developing an evaluation component within the Human Services program to determine if the goals and objectives of having an on-site lab are being met. Matteson also noted that, had this meeting of the RGB not been moved forward, the Finance Committee would have had chance to review this proposal and make recommendations as appropriate. Peaslee moved and Johnson seconded a motion to approve the proposal as detailed above and in supporting documentation, and as **subject to final contract and lease review and approval by the board**. Pembroke went on record to note that he is in favor of the project but cannot vote approval of it until all documents have received legal review and board approval. After hearing no further discussion, Matteson called the question and the motion passed 6 in favor, Pembroke opposed, Doxsee abstained.

6. **Board Training:** Matteson introduced Silver who then facilitated a discussion about the roles and responsibilities of school board members in Vermont. During that discussion, Silver noted that in order to create an effective and healthy board dynamic, it is critical that board members, aside from all their legal and formal responsibilities, socialize with each other and get to know each other better. Silver also noted that he worked with the RGB in October and November last year to establish board goals and objectives. Silver distributed copies of the Vermont School Board Association's *Resource Directory*, a valuable document which informs board members about legal and ethical responsibilities, and contains newer information regarding student membership on school boards, complaint resolution process, etc. Silver suggested that there are two major responsibilities of school board members.

The first is to provide leadership to the district in the development of policies and the establishment of goals.

The second responsibility is to provide oversight for all aspects of the school district.

In meeting these responsibilities, board members also have to be careful not to micromanage the district's administrators of the district, and that, instead, members should rely on administration to conduct the daily business of the district on their own. Silver also directed board members to pages 47-49 of the *Resource Directory*, which differentiates between the roles of school board members, superintendents, and principals. Silver also

noted that the *Resource Directory* has not been updated to reflect issues and concerns specific to independent technical school districts.

- a. *School Board Code*: Silver reported that this document (formerly known as the *Code of Ethics*, and signed by the board last year), has been slightly revised. Given that there are several new members, Silver recommended that the entire board review the document and be prepared to sign it at the next meeting. The document should then be posted in a public place.
- b. *Board Goals*: Silver distributed and then reviewed the three goals and activities established by the board during the previous year, as follows
 - Goal 1: Improve marketing and outreach to increase student enrollment
 - Goal 2: Align CDC programs and offerings for students with the present and future needs of the region
 - Goal 3: Increase leadership efficiency and effectiveness of the board and the CDC organization.

Silver also noted that the Action Steps associated with each goal need further development and specification. In subsequent discussion, members and staff variously noted that

- although there have been several attempts to discuss these goals, the budget process has been the agenda focus for the last several meetings
- the Marketing/Outreach Committee is very active, and some activities have already been completed
- the Marketing Committee needs to determine how to resolve the very real geographic, social, and cultural 'disconnect' for Stamford and Readsboro students (who automatically look to North Adams), for Wilmington students (who look to Brattleboro), and for Dorset and other Northshire students (who look to Manchester), none (or few) of whom consider Bennington or the CDC as a viable educational option
- time management is a real challenge (stating the goals is the easy part: funding the time to do anything with them is the hard part)
- members need to be specific and concrete when discussing steps towards achieving goals (who, what, how, when, what next) and when defining the goals themselves
- success measurements for each step/activity should be developed and used
- "Goals" should be a standard agenda item, and in order to allow time, perhaps meetings could start 1/2 hour earlier during which discussion would be limited solely to goals (and Oyama agreed to provide a light supper if required)
- if the meeting starts earlier, the 'business' part of the meeting should be organized such that the meeting ends at a reasonable time
- board meetings would be much more effective if background material for Agenda items is distributed with the Agenda packet, rather than during the meeting

During the discussion above, members agreed, given that most administrators will not be in attendance at the April meeting, to use part of that meeting to establish committee and goal assignments, and to then break down into three groups with each group working on one each of the three goals. Pembroke noted that the board should be mindful of the fact that CAT-TV televises the meetings live, especially if the board breaks down into smaller work groups. Board then agreed to meet at 5:15pm 4/18/05, and Oyama ensured that three separate locations would set up for goal committee discussions equipped with large sheets of paper, markers, etc.

- c. *School Board Assessment Survey*: Silver distributed and then reviewed an assessment survey which he suggested should be completed every two or three years by board members, administration and staff. This would provide the board with the opportunity to know on a regular basis whether or not there is the perception that the board is effectively overseeing its responsibilities. Silver noted that the survey could be completed on-line through the VSBA who would then collate the responses and return

those findings to the board. Silver also noted that the survey could be downloaded from the VSBA website and printed locally. As a way of gaining some community input, Silver suggested that members of the various CDC Advisory Committees should be asked to complete the survey as well. Upon reaching consensus, the board requested, and Oyama agreed to take steps to have the survey completed by board members, administration and staff, and Silver agreed that he and VSBA will assist in this project. Silver anticipates that the results of the survey will be compiled and distributed by 6/30/05. Barker suggested that at some point in the future, a sampling of parents could also be surveyed, given that mailing lists for parents are on file. In subsequent discussion, members noted that there are some questions on the survey about which staff and community members would have no way of being able to form an opinion (“it’s not a perfect survey” – Silver), and Silver suggested that these non-responses could be factored out of the collation of responses and subsequent report. Silver also suggested that if a community survey is desirable, it could be structured more as a standard business survey rather than as something specific to board oversight.

After members thanked Silver for his assistance in this project, Pembroke moved and Peaslee seconded a motion to adjourn, and at 8:15pm, the motion passed unanimously.