



**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING MINUTES/MOTIONS**

In order to comply with Connecticut General Statutes regarding minutes of meetings, the following will be used to record information during all public meetings that take place. An original must be submitted to the Town Clerk of Rocky Hill within 48 hours of the meeting being adjourned. Motions should be complete, showing the maker and second of the motion as well as how each member voted. Unanimous votes may be listed as unanimous.

NAME OF PUBLIC BOARD OR COMMISSION	Board of Education
DATE MEETING AGENDA POSTED	April 23, 2009
LOCATION	Rocky Hill Town Hall Council Chambers
DATE OF MEETING	April 30, 2009
TIME MEETING STARTED	7:02 p.m.
PERSON PREPARING MEETING MINUTES	Jo-Anne Booth, Recording Secretary
VERBATIM NOTES TAKEN	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
AUDIO, VIDEO OR LIVE TRANSMISSION OF MEETING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

MEMBERS PRESENT AT MEETING

1. William MacDonald, Chairman	2. Rene (Skip) Rivard, Vice Chairman
3. Nadine Bell	4. Raffaella Calciano-Coler
5. Charles McMonigle	6. Maria Mennella
7. Catherine Vargas	8. Also present: Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Villar
9. Assistant Superintendent Marian Hourigan	10. Interim Finance Director Frank Connolly

NUMBER REQUIRED FOR QUORUM 5 QUORUM PRESENT Yes No

TEXT MOTIONS AND RESULTS VOTES

1st MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Nadine Bell, seconded by Catherine Vargas, to move Item # 14 (New Business – Summer Reading Program) up on this evening’s agenda before “Approval of Minutes”. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent).

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

2nd MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Rene (Skip) Rivard, seconded by Catherine Vargas, that in recognition of the dedication, expertise and diligence of the very cooperative Summer Reading Committee, the Board of Education endorse the Summer Reading Program as presented to the Board of Education. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

3rd MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, to approve the Minutes and Working Notes of the March 19, 2009 Board of Education Executive Session (Minutes only), the March 19, 2009 Board of Education meeting and the March 26, 2009 Curriculum Committee meeting. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: MacDonald, Rivard, Bell, Calciano-Coler, Mennella, Vargas
ABSTAINING: McMonigle
MOTION CARRIED**

4th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Nadine Bell, seconded by Charles McMonigle, to accept the Consent Calendar of April 30, 2009. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

5th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Charles McMonigle, seconded by Nadine Bell, to approve the policy regarding employee use of the district's computer systems. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

6th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Maria Mennella, seconded by Rene (Skip) Rivard, to approve the policy regarding student use of the district's computer systems and internet safety. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

7th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, that June 25, 2009 will be the official graduation date this school year. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

8th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Maria Mennella, to approve the Personal Finance & Technology Course, as presented, to be offered in September at Rocky Hill High School. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

9th MOTION Passed Failed Tabled

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

LINK TO WORKING NOTES (will be attached if available)

ACTION

CORRECTION(S) (will be attached if available)

TIME MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:34 p.m.

TIME DELIVERED TO TOWN CLERK: _____.

**TOWN OF ROCKY HILL
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING OF APRIL 30, 2009**

Members Present: William MacDonald (Chairman)
Rene (Skip) Rivard (Vice Chairman)
Nadine Bell
Raffaella Calciano-Coler
Charles McMonigle
Maria Mennella
Catherine Vargas

Also Present: Dr. Jeffrey Villar (Superintendent)
Marian Hourigan (Assistant Superintendent)
Frank Connolly (Interim Finance Director)

Members Absent: Frank Morse
Charles Wisnioski

A special meeting of the Board of Education was held on Thursday, April 30, 2009 in the Council Chambers of the Rocky Hill Town Hall. Chairman William MacDonald called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Moved by Nadine Bell, seconded by Catherine Vargas, to move Item # 14 (New Business –Summer Reading Program) up on this evening’s agenda before “Approval of Minutes”. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent).

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

NEW BUSINESS

14. Summer Reading Program

Superintendent Dr. Villar asked Assistant Superintendent Hourigan to summarize the work of the Summer Reading Committee and to share information with the Board of Education that was generated in a recent Curriculum Committee meeting. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan told the public that there were copies of the Summer Reading Proposal on the back table in Council Chambers. A Committee of teachers, parents, students, administrators and the Town Librarian began meeting last fall to look at the current Summer Reading Program. They met to make suggestions for a possible revision.

She thanked the Committee members for their hard work and their participation. She mentioned the names of all of the Committee members: Mrs. Darlene Brown (Language Arts Coordinator); Principal Mario Almeida; Assistant Principal Edward Malizia; Mrs. Patricia O’Brien (English Department Chair); Mrs. Raisa Bublick (RHHS Librarian); Ms. Elizabeth Holder (RHHS Science Teacher); Mrs. Karen Tabshey (Parent); Ms. Jan Berg (Parent);

Ms. Pooja Shah (Student); Mr. Evan Pelletier (Student); Mr. John Crowe (Cora J. Belden Librarian); Ms. Barabara Wysocki (Cora J. Belden Librarian); and Ms. Mary Hogan (Director of Cora J. Belden Library).

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan provided some historical background on the Rocky Hill Summer Reading Program. On May 7, 1998, the Board of Education approved the current Summer Reading Program. The reading list was expanded to one hundred and twenty titles at that time and this was grouped by grade levels. She gave more detail with regards to how many books the students were required to read and what else they were required to do. She also told everyone about another summer reading requirement that there had been prior to 1998.

According to the participation data that was collected by the English Department from the 2008 Summer Reading Program, two hundred and six students out of seven hundred and seventy-three participated in this. Seventy-six students read all three books and passed all three essays. Seventy-seven students passed two essays and forty-one students passed one essay. There were concerns that existed with regards to the lack of student participation, the loss of grade points and the use of a written essay as a grading criteria for participation in this program. Students, teachers and parents have been very vocal regarding the current program's weaknesses. This is why a Summer Reading Committee was formed in November. This Committee reviewed programs from other districts, analyzed the current program, and made suggestions for the creation of a new Summer Reading Program.

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan mentioned that the goal of the new Summer Reading Program is to encourage students to develop an enriching and enjoyable lifelong habit of reading for appreciation and for learning. She explained more about the new Rocky Hill High School Summer Reading Program and discussed the details of the Proposal they have.

Parents will receive a letter in June 2009 that explains the Summer Reading Program. There will be a form attached to this for parents to verify that their children have completed the summer reading assignment and students will be asked to sign off on this as well. During the first week of school, students will be required to return these forms to their homeroom teachers. After the students have shared their responses with their mentors, they will receive a ticket for every book they have read. The tickets will be placed in a drawing for donated items that are solicited by the Student Council from the school and the business community. There will be a schoolwide assembly celebrating summer reading and this is when the students' names will be drawn. Recognition will be given for the top classes, homerooms and participating students. This multi-tiered approach is designed to provide a positive incentive for participation in the Summer Reading Program. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they are looking for Board of Education approval for this Proposal.

Chairman MacDonald asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to speak on this before the Board of Education members talk about it. Poojah Shah said she is a junior at Rocky Hill High School and she is a member of the Summer Reading Committee. They started working on this program last year. She had done the Summer Reading Program as a freshman and a sophomore. She also wrote the essays. To her, it doesn't seem fair after reading a book to try putting it into words on paper for points or for getting points deducted.

She thinks it restrains students from exploring their own imagination and their own interests if they are restricted to reading books on the list for the Summer Reading Program. Students will be allowed and encouraged to go out and explore new ideas and new books with this new Summer Reading Program as well as also be able to gain feedback from other students in a discussion and share their thoughts.

She hoped all of the members of the Board of Education would be able to approve this new program. There was limited participation in the old Summer Reading Program. She thinks because so many of the students read and have so much feedback that this should be put into a discussion in school. Other students can learn about themselves with this new program.

Manuela Silvestre said she is also a junior at Rocky Hill High School. As the Secretary of the Student Council, she came to this meeting to show her support for the new Summer Reading Program. She is an avid reader but she couldn't bring herself to do summer reading last summer. She thinks all of the students can get excited about this new program. This new program shows what reading should be about. The program should be about showing passion for reading and it puts a whole new spin on reading for students. She thinks this can be a really great addition to school if some of the suggestions in the plan can be implemented.

Chairman MacDonald asked if anyone else wanted to speak. Mrs. Bell said she thinks the Committee did a fantastic job of capturing the essence of what they want reading to be over the summer for children. She was sure that the entire Board of Education joined her in thanking every single person who is on the Summer Reading Committee along with Assistant Superintendent Hourigan who did a tremendous amount of work. Mrs. Bell said she is really pleased with the results.

Mrs. Vargas said she is a member of the Curriculum Committee and they had a couple of very long meetings. Summer reading was one of the main topics. From all perspectives, there were very good discussions. The students, administrators and parents were heard from. There was a lot of give and take. She said for her personally that there was a lot of good information. She is very happy to see the new Proposal. This is a work in progress and they are going to see how this goes for next year. Hopefully, this will take off. She is very excited about it. She said they can revisit this next year to see if this has to be tweaked at all. She said she would be supporting this, this evening.

Chairman MacDonald said he is a parent of a student in the high school who selected a book based on the size of it being the smallest book to choose from that was left in the library. This new process is a good example of where they have teachers, parents and students, etc. involved. He thinks this is a great movement ahead and he applauded everyone for their efforts.

Moved by Rene (Skip) Rivard, seconded by Catherine Vargas, that in recognition of the dedication, expertise and diligence of the very cooperative Summer Reading Committee, the Board of Education endorse the Summer Reading Program as presented to the Board of Education. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, to approve the Minutes and Working Notes of the March 19, 2009 Board of Education Executive Session (Minutes only), the March 19, 2009 Board of Education meeting and the March 26, 2009 Curriculum Committee meeting. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

FAVOR: MacDonald, Rivard, Bell, Calciano-Coler, Mennella, Vargas

ABSTAINING: McMonigle

MOTION CARRIED

CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent Dr. Villar said St. Vincent DePaul's Place has recognized West Hill School for their generous donation of two hundred sandwiches.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said St. Vincent DePaul Place also thanked Griswold Middle School for its generous donation of food as well.

Superintendent Dr. Villar said there was a letter from the Connecticut Association of Schools that recognized Dr. Gail Thibodeau, who is a teacher at Griswold Middle School. Dr. Thibodeau has been nominated for the 2009-2010 Middle School Educator of the Year Award. She has been selected as a finalist and is representing Rocky Hill quite well in this statewide competition. Superintendent Dr. Villar congratulated Dr. Thibodeau and thanked her for her service to Rocky Hill. Mrs. Vargas asked Superintendent Dr. Villar when the Board of Education will find out how this works for Dr. Thibodeau. Superintendent Dr. Villar said Dr. Thibodeau will have interviews on the afternoon of May 4, 2009 and hopefully they will hear something back about a week after that.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Meeting Open to Public

Chairman MacDonald asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to speak about any item. No one from the public wished to speak.

Report of Student Representatives

Chairman MacDonald asked if there was anyone from the Rocky Hill High School Student Council who would be reporting. There was no one.

Report of Students from Stevens Elementary School

Emina Cecunjanin and Geycel Muniz were present. They were reporting for Stevens and Moser Schools. Several of the classmates were in Colebrook, Connecticut this week enjoying Nature's Classroom. Visits have been made to Dinosaur State Park. They learned the difference between bases and acids. With recycled goods, they made paper mache alligators.

On May 4, 2009, Stevens School will be celebrating May Day in the gym from 9:15 a.m. to 9:45 p.m. and from 2:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. The fourth grade will be celebrating spring by performing a ribbon dance. On Friday, May 15, 2009, the Annual Stevens School Spring Concert will be held at 9:15 a.m. and on May 18, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the gym.

The Invention Convention was held in early April and twenty students participated in that. Six of these students will be attending the Statewide Convention at UCONN's Gampel Pavilion this weekend. These students are Richard Murray, Summer Vinci, Brae Lamontagne, Arian Gokhale, Jacob Franzen and Matthew Valente.

Moser School made their annual springtime deliveries recently to their senior neighbors at the Harold J. Murphy Senior Complex. Moser School held its annual school walk for diabetes last week. West Side Market donated apples for all of the students. Moser School, the "Little School with the Big Heart", raised over \$1,500.

1. Consent Calendar

Moved by Nadine Bell, seconded by Charles McMonigle, to accept the Consent Calendar of April 30, 2009. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

COMMITTEE REPORTS

2. Personnel and Negotiations

Mrs. Calciano-Coler said she has given reports in the past as a result of the contracts that were signed as well as where they were with these. She wanted to backfill some of the procedural process that takes place because she didn't think everyone was aware of this. There has been a lot of discussion recently with regards to how contracts are settled.

Contract negotiations usually involve representation from the Board of Education Personnel and Negotiations Committee, which is made up of three Board of Education members. The representation also includes the Board of Education's Attorney and a representative from the Association that they are negotiating with at the time as well as various members from the Associations. Meetings are scheduled at which articles are exchanged and they keep having discussions. Four contracts had to be settled so there were plenty of meetings this year. If the parties agree in those discussions then it is a "done deal". It is recommended to the Board of Education and to the Association. It is then signed off on. There are two options if the parties don't agree. One of the options is they would go to mediation.

If it is settled there then the process continues with this coming back to the Board of Education and to the Association. If nothing is agreed upon in mediation then that is followed with binding arbitration. Binding arbitration and mediation incur a cost which can be quite substantial to both parties. Binding arbitration is a State Statute that each Association has the ability to do. This removes the decision making and control out of local hands and places it in the hands of the three independent arbitrators. She gave an example of what could go to the arbitration panel.

The Personnel and Negotiations Committee settled four contracts this year: the teachers'; the paraprofessionals; the secretaries' and the nurses'. Two of these contracts went to mediation. There had been some recent publication as to what the teachers' contract entailed. The general wage increase for the teachers' contract for 2009-2010 is 2.65%, for 2010-2011 it is 2.70% and for 2011-2012 it is 2.75%. There are stipends involved in addition to this. All of the contracts that were settled also had substantial changes in them and Mrs. Calciano-Coler mentioned what these were. The changes that all of the Associations agreed to, have given them a lot more ability to be able to go out and bid on contracts when they are looking for new insurance. On the budget of the Board of Education, this also has a great long term effect. Comparables were looked at from other settled contracts in the area when these were settled. The full Board of Education was then gone to and they ratified what the recommendations were.

With regards to the four contracts that had been settled, Mrs. Calciano-Coler said the Associations were very professional with the Board of Education and it was a collegial environment. The Associations were thoughtful and they were responsive. All of the members of the Board of Education are taxpayers just like the public is and they are mindful of this when they come to these kinds of meetings. None of the Board of Education members has gotten a bonus and everyone is on the same page. They want to provide the children with what everyone thinks they should have but they also have fiscal responsibility that they need to maintain. At this time, they are not open for opened renegotiations with any of the contracts that have been settled thus far because the economy and budget don't call for it.

Mrs. Calciano-Coler said she would entertain questions or she would entertain the rest of her group who worked on these contracts if they wanted to add anything in. Mr. McMonigle told Mrs. Calciano-Coler that she did good. Mr. McMonigle said because contracts are structured differently from district to district that it is difficult to compare them. With regards to base salaries, a lot of districts pay their teachers tuition reimbursements and Rocky Hill doesn't do this. There are a lot of different facets in the contracts so the total value of the package has to be looked at. When this is done, he thinks this district is very comparable. Rocky Hill has to attract and retain the best teachers. Rocky Hill teachers do a great job. He thinks they have done well with the negotiations. He thinks they have great working relationships with them and the contract is just one facet of this.

Vice Chairman Rivard referred to the meetings that had been held for this and he thought it was important for the public to know about the work the various Committees and the Board of Education put into it. This was his first time in negotiations and there was a lot of work on both sides.

Chairman MacDonald said this was his first time too through a contract negotiation on the Board of Education side. The team worked very well together. He would put up their negotiating team against anyone out there. They looked at every item. The best and brightest teachers have to be attracted for the children and a fair wage has to be paid. There is a lot of talk about how teachers' pay should be cut and how they should take furloughs. He said they have an obligation to teach the children. The Board of Education put together a budget that is financially strong and they spent a lot of time on it. He stands by this. This is maintaining and moving the school district ahead. There are a lot of things they would like to do but they recognize the economy everyone is in. He thinks the biggest component of their cost is salaries and benefits. In his opinion, the Personnel and Negotiations Committee is the most important one especially in this time when the four contracts were negotiated from both sides. The actual results were unanimous. They looked purely at what is best for the children. He complimented everyone who is on the Committee.

3. Policy

No report was given.

4. Finance

Vice Chairman Rivard said they have monthly meetings outside of the Board of Education monthly meetings. The Finance Committee had met on April 22, 2009. During the course of their meetings, they receive public comment for discussion. They also have discussions and updates on their legal expenses during the course of those meetings. The possibility of a new time card system is being discussed. They are also working with CAFE for policy management. As the fiscal year comes to a close, the Committee is going to continue to monitor account balances. He thinks they are very fortunate now to have Mr. Connolly as the Director of Finance and Operations. Interim Finance Director Connolly has been able to provide the Finance Committee and the Board of Education with responsible data to work on. Vice Chairman Rivard thanked Interim Finance Director Connolly.

5. Curriculum

No report was given.

6. Professional Development

No report was given.

7. Facilities

Mrs. Bell said the next Facilities Committee meeting is scheduled for May 11, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. She believes that the Town Council is revisiting the budget that evening also at 7:00 p.m. She said they could leave Superintendent Dr. Villar with making whatever necessary change is needed. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are going to work on rescheduling that Facilities Committee meeting.

8. Technology

No report was given.

9. Transportation/Accommodations

No report was given.

OLD BUSINESS

10. Policy Regarding Employee Use of the District's Computer Systems (Second Reading)

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he was going to speak to this Item along with Item #11 on this evening's agenda because they are related although these are separated out for the Board of Education to vote on independently. Recommendations were brought to the Policy Committee some time ago with regards to the acceptable user policies needing to be updated for computer technology in this district. Based on his personal experience and after discussion with the Board of Education's legal counsel as well as dialogue with Mr. Ames, they felt they should have a policy that directed acceptable user policies for adults and employees separated from the acceptable user policies for students. The original policy is dated 1998. They felt this needed to be updated to more current language. Superintendent Dr. Villar told the Board of Education members that they had before them the recommended policy that was approved by the Policy Committee to come before them. This is the second reading on this. He told them that he attached the regulations for their information. If necessary, the regulations can be modified as they move forward but the policy gives them the flexibility and the background to keep up with the times.

Chairman MacDonald confirmed from a process standpoint that each of the policies needs to be approved independently and he asked if this could be done today. Superintendent Dr. Villar said yes. Chairman MacDonald asked the members of the Board of Education if they had any discussion on these. None of them did.

Moved by Charles McMonigle, seconded by Nadine Bell, to approve the policy regarding employee use of the district's computer systems. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

11. Policy Regarding Student Use of the District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety

Moved by Maria Mennella, seconded by Rene (Skip) Rivard, to approve the policy regarding student use of the district's computer systems and internet safety. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

NEW BUSINESS

12. Virtual High School Presentation

Superintendent Dr. Villar asked Assistant Superintendent Hourigan to introduce the guest with regards to this. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan introduced Mr. Dana Koch.

Mr. Koch said he is the Director of Global Services from Virtual High School. He thanked Superintendent Dr. Villar, Assistant Superintendent Hourigan, Chairman MacDonald and the district staff in attendance as well as the community attendees for coming this evening.

Mr. Koch said he had a brief PowerPoint presentation to make to walk through a general overview of Virtual High School. He has been in a number of conversations regarding this program with Superintendent Dr. Villar, Assistant Superintendent Hourigan and high school administrators. Mr. Koch told everyone he also wanted to field questions they might have about the program.

Mr. Koch said Virtual High School is a nonprofit consortium of member schools. There are five hundred and fifty participating member schools. These schools come from thirty-four different countries and twenty-nine different states. Since 1996, they have been involved in providing online courses for students and schools. This program was originally funded by the U.S. Department of Education through a technology innovation grant.

The objective of Virtual High School is to provide and create a collaborative of schools that enable schools to expand the course of study that is available through teacher facilitated, cohort based, student centric online courses. These courses would not be offered at the local level. This is a supplemental program. Economic challenges are creating a bit more complication. Courses that would not be offered under normal circumstances because of low enrollment numbers are now courses that students would be able to access. He gave examples of this.

Mr. Koch said they want to give students an opportunity to get involved in these unique content experiences as well as give them a global classroom experience. There is a lot of reference to the development of 21st century skills for students especially at the middle school and high school level as they prepare and consider higher education as well as work and career kinds of positions that will involve the work of a lot of the 21st century tools that are out there now.

There are very specific policies they have on how to approach their offerings. They are not a full time enrollment cyber charter school but they are strictly a partner with school districts. They provide supplemental courses. No diplomas are issued. He mentioned what is determined at the local policy level. In Connecticut, there are over sixty middle schools and high schools that participate in this program currently. The first participating school in this state started in 2001. The course experience for the student is very unique. He gave more details about this.

Mr. Koch referred to some documentation that he had handed out to the Board of Education members. He spoke about a newsletter from Spring 2008 that was part of this. He spoke about the story from a young woman who is from Marlborough, Massachusetts and how she had sent an e-mail to the scientist who cloned Dolly the sheep. He said students want to explore and reach out beyond their local area to learn more about the subjects.

Mr. Koch spoke about the instructional model of Virtual High School which is designed around an interactive experience. In many cases, students may be in classrooms with international students because of the global nature of these classrooms. Students have an opportunity to hear from very diverse backgrounds and experiences with other students.

Mr. Koch told the Board of Education members that he provided them with the 2009-2010 Academic Year Course List. He also had given them a general overview document that covers some of the things he spoke about during the brief presentation.

Mr. Koch asked the Board of Education members if they had any questions. Vice Chairman Rivard asked Mr. Koch if Virtual High School has separate accreditation or if it falls under the accreditation of the sponsoring institution seeing that degrees or diplomas aren't granted. Mr. Koch said they have separate accreditation through the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools.

Chairman MacDonald told Mr. Koch that the Board of Education has had several meetings on Virtual High School. Chairman MacDonald said he is really excited about it. This is changing the way students are taught. This is a great example of a way to provide a lot of unique courses with the economic challenge that Rocky Hill faces as well as many other Towns. Some of the courses offered for Virtual High School are courses that Rocky Hill will never be able to offer financially. He thinks this is an excellent opportunity and the presentation hit all of the high points on this.

Mrs. Bell was curious about some of the classes. She referred to Algebra I and Algebra II. She asked Mr. Koch if they have many of these classes seeing these are one of the core academics of any public high school. Mrs. Bell asked why these classes would be offered. Mr. Koch said Algebra I is offered during the summer school credit recovery program only and it is not offered during the regular academic year. He wasn't sure if Algebra II is a mandated required math course in Connecticut because it isn't in all states. In some instances, Algebra II is an elective. Mrs. Bell asked if there are other classes and other disciplines that would be for summer school. Mr. Koch said the only other two would be English IX and English X. Mrs. Bell asked if they would need to have a staff member at Rocky Hill High School available during the summer if there are summer classes. Superintendent Dr. Villar said the administrative guidelines are being worked on now and these will be brought to the Policy Committee so that they can understand clearly how this will be implemented. One of the regulations that is very common across the state is that a student can't sign up for an online course that is physically offered in the school unless there is a condition that creates a scenario where the Superintendent would approve it. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they would have to elect to have students participate in the summer program and at this time they don't have plans for this. One of Rocky Hill's teachers is preparing to teach an online course in exchange for her time. She will be teaching this online course to twenty-five students internationally. There will be twenty-five seats for Rocky Hill students to sign up for any of the courses that are there. There has to be a stipend position where someone will follow up and coordinate to make sure the home-to-school connection is happening with Virtual High School. There are budgetary constraints. This is included in the current budget proposal. The Board of Education will have to revisit this topic as they wait to see what the Town Council allocation is.

He believes this program will qualify for expenditures under the new ARRA funding that is coming from the federal government. This will be a Board of Education decision at a later date but he is very optimistic about the ability to fund this.

Vice Chairman Rivard knows there is a misperception out there about virtual learning being easier than classroom learning. He asked Mr. Koch how he would address this for people who might be listening. Mr. Koch said there is a misconception around this. A student who is interested in participating in online learning opportunities needs to have some degree of motivation around this. Students who are very strong academic achievers will be very successful in an online course and any of the options they pursue. The other category of motivated students is students who have a unique area of interest. Motivation is the key term but it is not simply about the highest achieving students. Vice Chairman Rivard said this is not an easy way to get a grade. Mr. Koch said it isn't. The courses aren't for the "faint of heart". Vice Chairman Rivard asked Mr. Koch if he had any feedback on the interaction with the diversity of students they have on an international level as well as on a national level. Mr. Koch shared a brief story with regards to this.

Chairman MacDonald thanked Mr. Koch for his presentation. Superintendent Dr. Villar thanked Mr. Koch for coming this evening and said he appreciated it.

13. Graduation Date

Superintendent Dr. Villar told the Board of Education members that in their packets they would find that June 25, 2009 will be the official graduation date assuming that the Board of Education would make a motion to approve that date this evening.

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, that June 25, 2009 will be the official graduation date this school year. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

Before this motion was voted on, Mrs. Bell said she noticed that Wethersfield High School just closed for two days. They indicated on their website that this did not change their last day of school or the graduation date. She asked if this district should have to close for any particular reason, if this is a situation they would encounter. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they are required to make sure that they have one hundred and eighty days of school. They have to get their days of school in before the end of the fiscal year which is July 1st. He is not certain how Wethersfield is accounting for this and he said they may have had extra days built into their schedule. Rocky Hill would have to have dialogue with the State Department of Education if it ran into the scenario where it closed school and this brought them past July 1st. In his Superintendent's Report this evening, he said he would speak to this same type of question that was raised by other Superintendents in a meeting this morning. This would be of concern so Superintendent Dr. Villar said they have to make sure they are very mindful of school closings. Mrs. Bell asked if they would have to go back and change the graduation date. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they would have to have some discussions. There are possible avenues they could take that may allow them to maintain the spirit of the law and get approval from the State Department of Education.

They would have to take this as an individual case by case basis in communication with the Commissioner. Mrs. Bell thought that many families would plan for this graduation date and might have out-of-town people coming in. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is an issue of concern.

Mr. McMonigle asked if they have to go to the State Department of Education only if they are going to go past July 1st. If Rocky Hill had to close schools for a day, he asked if they would have to automatically move this date to June 26, 2009. Superintendent Dr. Villar said in his experience that he has seen districts set the graduation date and then they had to close individual schools due to some catastrophic building failures. Students at those schools were asked to return to those schools post graduation date. There was one instance he knew of where a waiver was issued. The State Department of Education had brought it to the legislature for legal consideration. There is significant pressure on many districts because of the current concerns of the swine flu and this has the Commissioner considering what he is going to do but he has not made a statement at this point. Mr. McMonigle confirmed if this district has to close for a day that it doesn't mean that graduation won't be on June 25th. Superintendent Dr. Villar said that was correct.

At this point, this motion was voted on.

Vice Chairman Rivard recommended that the Curriculum Committee meeting for that evening be cancelled.

15. Perkins Grant – Personal Finance Business Course at Rocky Hill High School

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they were seeking Board of Education approval this evening for a new Personal Finance and Technology Course. This was developed by Mr. Greg Gomes in the Rocky Hill High School Business Department. This had been brought forward already to the Curriculum Committee and the members of that had approved this. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan explained why Mr. Gomes is developing this course. Mr. Gomes' goal is to look at the current computer essentials course and to develop this course in a more relevant context but with the same technology skills. The development of the course will be funded completely through Carl J. Perkins funds. A primary text, supplemental text and two textbooks will be provided by these funds. This will also provide funding for course writing, technology and supplemental materials. There had been a program review meeting this week with the State Department of Education and there had been a representative there who was in the content area of specialists for business. This representative saw this course proposal and was very impressed. This is exactly the direction the state is going in for the 21st century schools. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said she could answer any questions and she told the members of the Board of Education that she hoped they would approve this.

Chairman MacDonald asked the members of the Board of Education if they had any questions or comments. None of them did.

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Maria Mennella, to approve the Personal Finance & Technology Course, as presented, to be offered in September at Rocky Hill High School. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

16. Update on Winter Sports

Mr. Tom McCabe said they had a fairly successful winter season. The Boys' Basketball Team had a below five hundred season but the team worked very hard. The Girls' Basketball Team made the tournament. It was over five hundred and there were a lot of individual awards for these players. The Ice Hockey Team also made tournament. They are in negotiations now for a new rink and they are going to try to move over to Cromwell. He had a concern of the late night practices for the children. Cromwell is going to give Rocky Hill some prime time and more ice time for the same amount of money. Practices will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and games will be moved to an earlier time. For Boys' Swimming, there were two new coaches. There are some swimmers in this program looking to do some AAU swimming. This team had a very successful year and did very well in the state tournament. Wrestling had a good year. The Cheerleading Team had competed in three tournaments. They came in, in the top five, in all of these tournaments. The girls worked very hard and did a good job. The Unified Basketball Team won their tournament in Berlin. They did a very good job.

There were forty-five All Academic Athletes. There were seventeen All Conference Athletes and there were five All State Athletes. For the indoor Track Team, there was a relay team of four boys who competed at the Reggie Lewis Center in Boston in a New England meet.

For personal bests there was Joyce Grodovich for Girls' Basketball. She reached the 1,000 point plateau this past season. For the Hockey Team, Logan Gauvin, the Captain broke the school's all time scoring record and broke the all time best scoring and assist record. He played in his first annual All Star hockey game this past winter.

Last night, Terrence Thompson from Rocky Hill High School was honored by the Unified Sports Association for his participation in Unified Sports. He had written an essay and he was honored at the Aqua Turf. Andrew Duarte and Kelly Miskunas will be honored as the Scholar Athletes for Rocky Hill High School this Sunday at the Aqua Turf.

During the winter, the Student Leadership Group put on a Coaches versus Cancer night. Over \$500 was raised that night for cancer. A successful pep rally had been run in conjunction with "Cool Schools". Another Parents' Night was run for information for them. A speaker was brought in and this was well received. The Winter Sports Assembly went well and they had worked in conjunction with the Sports Boosters that put on a pizza dinner which was well received by the children. The Tri-M Music Group is trying to bring back school dances.

An outstanding dance was put on by this group in February. There were over one hundred children at this.

There was great coverage by the Athletic Trainer this past winter. There were nothing but good reports from the coaches and the athletes. Another coaches' preseason meeting was held. This was received well. Mr. McCabe is in the process of putting together a handbook for the coaches for next season. He is hoping to bring this to the Board of Education members for them to look at it the next time he is at a Board of Education meeting.

Mr. McCabe met with all of the winter coaches and all of the end of the season winter coach evaluations are done. They are continuing to streamline their sport registration process. It went well this winter and spring.

He is working closely with Ms. Maureen Shaffer, the school nurse, with regards to the physicals. Mr. McCabe said Ms. Shaffer is phenomenal. Any student who is participating in a sport has their paperwork in and the parents are doing a great job of getting this in.

Mr. McCabe said *Pippin*, the play, is this weekend. This will be held on Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. He told the Board of Education members to make sure they get to this to support those children.

Mr. McCabe said he was at the Connecticut High School Coaches' Association Athletic Director's Workshop three weeks ago. Rocky Hill High School is forty-three out of one hundred and eighty-four schools for school participation. Eighty-two percent of the students at Rocky Hill High School are participating in sports. This is phenomenal. He told the Board of Education members that this would not happen without the support they are giving. He said they appreciate all of the support and hope that it continues.

Mrs. Vargas said lacrosse was approved at the last Board of Education meeting and she asked Mr. McCabe how that is going. Mr. McCabe said this is going great. He is presently working with the Parks and Recreation Department to schedule the fields. Lacrosse has been able to be scheduled in without upsetting anything. The fields have been lined and they look terrific. Mrs. Vargas asked how many children they have for lacrosse. Mr. McCabe believes there are thirty boys and twelve girls. If the girls come up short then they are going to combine teams with the other girl clubs so they can play. He said this is going to be a homerun down the road. He thanked the Board of Education members for their support on this.

Superintendent Dr. Villar thanked Mr. McCabe for the hard work he did this year. Superintendent Dr. Villar told Mr. McCabe that he brought a high level of professionalism and he was very impressed with his work.

17. Assessments Update (formerly CMT/CAPT Update)

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said she was going to share the results of the Rocky Hill High School's Class of 2008 Scholastic Reasoning Test. She told the Board of Education members that she distributed some information to them in addition to the report that they had received with their packets. She told the public that this information was in the back of Council Chambers if they wanted to look at it.

One hundred and forty-seven Rocky Hill High School students took the SAT test in 2008. There were seventy-three males and seventy-four females. Overall, the school's participation rate was seventy-nine percent. This is a twelve percentage point decrease from last year. There were decreases in reading and math and there was an increase in writing. Critical reading scores dropped three points to 503 which is above the national average but below the state average. Math scores decreased from 523 to 509 and this is slightly below the state and national averages. Writing scores rose from 513 to 521 and this is considerably above the state and national averages.

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan referred to Attachment A that the Board of Education members had. This depicts the historical comparison of Rocky Hill SAT scores from 1998 to 2008. She mentioned that the bold vertical line indicated when the tests changed for the 2006 school year. She said what the changes were. It is very difficult to make accurate comparisons back to 1998 because of the tests changing. She spoke about Attachment B which has a graphic representation of the results from 2006 to 2008 and this encompasses the period of the new test.

For the 2008 scores, there were differences by gender and ethnicity on each of the tests. Females outperformed males in reading slightly and more significantly in writing by ten points. For the math test, the male average scores were twenty-three points ahead of the female scores. In terms of ethnicity, the white students scored higher in all areas of the test with significant discrepancies noted in writing and in math. Twenty-eight students represented various minority groups out of one hundred and forty seven test takers. This information is depicted in Attachment C.

Attachment D shows the results of the SAT subject tests for 2008. These were one hour multiple choice tests that students had the opportunity to take if they wanted to.

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan mentioned what activities Rocky Hill High School engages in to prepare for the SAT. They are going to continue to look at the high school program to be sure they are aligned on the material that is covered both on the CAPT and on the SAT.

Chairman MacDonald said there are a lot of graphs and charts. He asked Assistant Superintendent Hourigan how they are doing and if there is something they should be concerned about. He asked if the Board of Education should be doing anything specific. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said they see a lot of ups and downs and they have to look very carefully at their programming. They can't see a consistent trend. The discrepancy is not that much between the points for most years. They had the highest class of seniors in 2008 and the second highest number of test takers. Eighty-one percent participation is above the state average which is seventy-six percent. She doesn't think there is a cause for alarm at this point but she said they can improve in all areas.

Chairman MacDonald asked if they don't track the ACTs because there are a low number of students taking those. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan thinks this is something they should start to track. Some students are opting to take this as opposed to the SATs. There are reports of students shying away from the expense of the SAT if they aren't going to four year colleges and don't have to take this. She thinks there are a number of things they should investigate to find out why the participation rate dropped.

Mrs. Bell asked what the criteria would be for taking the ACT test versus the SAT test. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said these are totally different tests. The ACT is divided up by subject area. For the next meeting, she said she could get more information about the ACT so the Board of Education members could look at the comparisons between the two. Any child can opt to take either one. Mrs. Bell asked if some schools are looking for the ACT versus the SAT and she asked if this is a geographic consideration. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said the ACT website is stating that test is becoming more widely accepted. This is also curriculum based and if the SAT is looked at, student achievement is being projected. ACT looks at what students have actually been taught in high school and how they achieved on the particular area they studied. Mrs. Bell asked if any correlations or trends are found between someone who scores low on the SATs or high on them that this is comparable on the ACTs. She asked Assistant Superintendent Hourigan if she had any data on that.

Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said she didn't but that this is something they should look into. She isn't sure if the students are taking both the SATs and ACTs..

Mrs. Vargas referred to when Assistant Superintendent Hourigan had said that one year the scores go up and the next year they go down. Mrs. Vargas said different groups of students are being dealt with. She said it really couldn't be said if this is a curriculum issue and that this could be the caliber of students in that particular year. She said there could be more children who skew the percentage. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said this makes perfect sense and this is the same thing for the CAPT and the CMT because there are different groups of students so they can't be compared. She said they would hope if the curriculum was being delivered consistently year after year that they would account for the variability in the scores. They want to always make certain that the curriculum is being delivered consistently and it is where it should be.

Mr. McMonigle asked if some colleges aren't taking a lot of the weight off of the SATs now and he said some don't even require students to take them anymore. Assistant Superintendent Hourigan said it is being said that colleges are looking at the ACT more favorably because they think it is a more accurate representation of what students have actually achieved.

18. Monthly Financial Report

Interim Finance Director Connolly told the Board of Education members that the Financial Report was sent out to them in their packets. This report covers nine months of the fiscal year through March 31, 2009. He highlighted some of the more salient features of this report. At this time, the bottom line of the budget is on schedule. The balance is within 3.1% of this same time last year and he sees no surprises. They have a little bit of a larger balance but part of this is because of the way some of the state and federal grants are being applied to the budget as they are going through the year. There are deficits in Account 250 (Unemployment Compensation), 331(Professional Services), 511 (Student Transportation) and 561 (Tuition). They are tracking the salary accounts very closely now (Account 111: Certified Salaries and Account 112: Non-Certified Salaries) as well as the health benefits. Surpluses are being seen in these accounts and this will help to offset the deficits.

Interim Finance Director Connolly referred to the page that has the comparative analysis. This compares year-to-date data. On the next page are the Object Codes and on Page 4 are the details as to what the surpluses and deficits are. He went over Object Code 331.

Interim Finance Director Connolly said the cover page of the financial report gives the big picture of what is going on in the budget. It is very easy to track to see where the deficits are and where the surpluses are occurring to date exactly by tracking this down by Object Code. The Excess Cost Grant was applied this month and Account 561S (Special Education Tuition) was credited so that reduced the deficit. A deficit is still anticipated in this account but it will get further reduced because one more grant is coming in on the Excess Cost reimbursement.

With regards to the health insurances, they will be starting next week on the positive enrollment. He explained what this is. A series of informational meetings will start next week to review all of the different health programs. All employees have been notified that they have to reregister if they want to be on health insurance. Basically this is an audit of all of the coverages and the people who are covered. The changes in the state law regarding health insurance will be reviewed also. Positive enrollment is different from open enrollment. Positive enrollment is a requirement. There were informational seminars that were run for the last two weeks on the new HSA health insurance that was negotiated in the recent contracts. There is a lot going on with regards to the health insurances and this will eventually be impacting the financial reports.

Mrs. Vargas thanked Interim Finance Director Connolly for his report. Mrs. Vargas referred to the summary on this where he states that there is 25.16% of the balance remaining for the rest of the year. There is a quarter left of this year and she asked if all of this will be expended or she asked Interim Finance Director Connolly if he had an idea as to how much expended funds there might be by the end of the year. Interim Finance Director Connolly said he will be getting a better handle on this as they get closer to the end of the fiscal year. At this point, he anticipates a surplus but he said that things change every day. After reviewing everything with the Finance Committee, they will be preparing a suggested list of possible expenditures that could be spent per the Board of Education's direction in the event there are surpluses in the budget. They will start running financial reports almost every other day when they get into June. They are anticipating staying within budget and possibly having a slight surplus in the 25.16% compared to 22% at the same time last year. Part of this is offset by the way they are handling grants now. Mrs. Vargas noticed this percentage doesn't just reflect actual spent but it also reflects encumbered funds as well. Interim Finance Director Connolly said yes. Mrs. Vargas asked Interim Finance Director Connolly if he will keep the Finance Committee apprised of this so they can discuss this. Interim Finance Director Connolly said yes.

Mr. McMonigle asked if they have the lottery results by now for the magnet school enrollments as well as projected enrollments for the upcoming budget. He asked how this lines up with what they have in next year's budget. Superintendent Dr. Villar said they don't have the list from CREC yet. They may also need to bring the Hartford Public School situation, which they have been tracking, to the Board of Education at some point for a decision to be made. Hartford is looking for reimbursement for tuition. This is under debate among Hartford area districts. He thinks some direction from the Board of Education will be sought in the very near future. This could be a substantial bill. Certain big numbers that are attached to magnet schools will have to be brought to the Board of Education very shortly.

Mr. McMonigle asked if there will be some going back and forth with the Town Council once they have hard enrollment numbers. Superintendent Dr. Villar said this is a wild card that is out there and that is why he made sure that he mentioned this in his presentation.

19. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Villar said he was going to focus on an update on the swine flu. He spent an hour this morning on a conference call with approximately one hundred Superintendents along with the Governor, local health officials and state health officials to learn more about the swine flu as well as the reactions to what is happening in the country, state and globally. The Governor is urging that this is not a time for overreaction but it is a time for caution and preparation. In Connecticut, there are three probable cases to date. This is out of 3.5 million people in this state. The CDC is not recommending that schools be closed. If there is a probable or confirmed case of the swine flu, the state officials are recommending that the Superintendent through collaboration with local health officials makes a determination on whether or not to close a particular school that is impacted. Districtwide closures are not being recommended. Closing schools would be a reactive measure and it is not designed to slow the spread of the virus and it wouldn't. Closing schools is more to respond to community concerns regarding the welfare of faculties that attend work in the school in question and the students. The current understanding is that this virus doesn't survive long on surfaces. It travels through normal respiratory means like the flu everyone is accustomed to. He mentioned what is being urged (i.e. close contact be avoided with sick individuals and people should cover their nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, etc.). If Rocky Hill is presented with a case of the swine flu, it will take all necessary steps to protect all of the community members. At the schools, a policy has already been instituted with regards to a good cleaning at the schools with nightly disinfecting of desks, etc. If a school has to be closed because there is a case, it is recommended that it be closed for seven days. This would be in the case if there is a positive flu determination. The state officials and the CDC are not recommending the cancellation of school field trips and no travel restrictions have been placed in the United States. At this point, everyone needs to just be cautious, mindful and follow the recommendations.

20. Board Chair's Report

Chairman MacDonald said he received a one page letter, double sided, that had been sent home with all of the children today with regards to the swine flu and precautions, etc. He thought this was an excellent proactive measure in reaching out to the parents.

Chairman MacDonald referred to the *Broadside*, the Rocky Hill High School newspaper. He told Principal Almeida that it is outstanding. Chairman MacDonald asked Principal Almeida if he can bring copies of these to the future Board of Education meetings. Chairman MacDonald thinks people in the public should read this.

Chairman MacDonald said Superintendent Dr. Villar had presented the Board of Education's budget to the Town Council on April 27, 2009. The Town Manager came up with a budget for the entire town. The Town Manager's recommended budget for the school is \$300,000 less than what they had presented. Superintendent Dr. Villar had explained to the Town Council what the key drivers are and the fixed costs, etc.

There were follow-up questions from the town that he provided information on. There had been a final review for the budget yesterday and this was pushed over to May 11, 2009. Chairman MacDonald thinks this district had sent a letter home to all of the parents through the children notifying them about the final review for the budget on April 29, 2009. He said another letter should be sent out stating that May 11, 2009 is the scheduled review session. He encouraged anyone from the public who wanted to attend to do that.

Moved by Catherine Vargas, seconded by Raffaella Calciano-Coler, to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. (Frank Morse and Charles Wisnioski were absent.)

**FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,

Jo-Anne Booth
Recording Secretary

Accepted by: _____ Date: _____