ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING

May 17, 2006
5:30 p.m.

In Attendance: Jill Conrad, John Dunn, Emily Hansen and Suzanne Plaut

Staff: Leann Asgari, Melissa McComas, Jim McDermott and Julie Stelzer

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the April 19, 2006 board meeting were unanimously approved.

John Dunn reiterated that Jim McDermott should include the accreditation and school improvement plans when he sends out the IGA for approval.

Executive Director Report
Regarding the safety issue raised by Susan Tabacheck at the April 19th meeting, Jim proposed that if the school needs to call the insurance company for an incident, the BOCES should also be notified. The BOCES agreed with this recommendation.

As a follow up to the discussion last meeting, Jenn Brauner’s class finished their Project Citizen expedition with a display at the state capitol. One of the student groups had a display regarding drunk driving and breathalyzer laws. Nancy Spence took those students to meet a legislator that will include their work in a bill being introduced at the next legislative session.

Concerning the Wolf Forum organized by the middle school, the morning went well with representatives from the community. At the end of the event, the representative from the Department of Wildlife stood up and mentioned that if people in the state were as thoughtful and informed as the RMSEL students, we could probably resolve the wolf reintroduction issue in about 30 days.

Last year, the RMSEL community raised about $8,000 at the annual auction event. The event was moved away from Exhibition Night this year in order to have it as a separate event. There was music at this year’s auction performed by “A Band Named Sue”, and everyone appeared to enjoy the evening. The auction was a resounding success and over $21,000 was raised to benefit expeditions and special programs at RMSEL.

Negotiations are currently underway with DPS on the Intergovernmental Agreement. The changes proposed initially were basically boiler plate changes that DPS was including for their contract and charter schools. Since RMSEL is neither a contract nor charter school, many of these proposed changes are not applicable to us. DPS wants to reduce the PPR from 100% to 98.5% or about $31,000. This represents a fee to cover the cost of doing business with RMSEL. When DPS was asked to detail the cost of doing business, it was determined that this is for the October count. Jim has asked DPS to come to an agreement for an hourly rate that RMSEL would be charged in lieu of the 1.5%. Jim stated that he appreciates the work that Ethan Hemming and Sherry Eastlund have put into these negotiations.

A reference was included in the IGA that benchmarking would be consistent with the Denver Plan. Jim proposed language that we integrate appropriate assessment consistent with the sponsoring districts. The Denver Plan might be an example.

The Special Education section was updated at length. While some of these changes were helpful, Jim suggested that the other districts pay attention to this section as there is reference to extended costs to be borne by the districts. It also states that required transportation costs would be the district’s responsibility. This would probably not impact us as we support only mild to moderate needs. We have a full time Special
Education Coordinator and contract through JFK Partners for a psychologist, nurse and social worker. We are currently charged $306 per FTE by DPS for special education services. In addition, DPS retains the funds received from the state for special education. For the $306 per FTE, DPS provides RMSEL with speech language and OT/PT services. John asked to get a copy of the IGA with the proposed changes reflected. Emily Hansen asked for clarification about the process for changes to the IGA. Typically, this is an intergovernmental agreement that addresses how the entities involved, the five sponsoring districts and RMSEL, will work and function together. Each district’s school board will need to approve the IGA, and we are trying to finalize it for approval at the June school board meetings. The boards have reviewed this recently as we made changes to the special education section.

Another charge that is deducted from our PPR funding is for the use of Infinite Campus. We are currently investigating the feasibility of working with Centennial BOCES to run Infinite Campus through them. This would give us additional features. DPS also sends automatic messages to our families through their IC and moving off their IC would eliminate this.

Monday, May 22nd is our portfolio reading day; Tuesday, May 30th is portfolio presentation day where our 3rd, 5th, 8th and senior classes defend their work in order to make passages and move to the next grade level.

Senior graduation is being held at the Westin Tabor Center downtown on May 31st at 6:30 p.m. John Dunn and Emily Hansen will be in attendance. The ceremony for the 8th grade students will be held on June 1st at 6:00 p.m. at the Heather Ridge Country Club.

The Community Council reviewed the wellness policy, and their changes are reflected. The Community Council suggested we use crew trip planning as a way to focus on nutritional values. Jim mentioned that of the 92 middle school students, 59 will be running in the Boulder Bolder. We do not have a food service program, so we are in a unique situation. This may impact our “pizza man” that serves lunch out front. We do not have vending machines. We do have a company that comes in twice a week to serve lunch for students who purchase the service in advance. We also have pizza lunch on Fridays. Jill Conrad mentioned that Udi’s had contacted her looking for an opportunity to work on a program with the school. Jill will give them Leann Asgari’s contact information. Suzanne motioned to approve the school wellness policy as presented, and it was unanimously approved.

With regard to a flag display policy, the statute is now being enforced, so we will need to have a flag displayed in each classroom. Because we are the principle building of the district, we will also need a flag displayed outside on a pole. We are hoping that one of our neighbors that has previously volunteered to help us get a flagpole would still be willing to do so. Emily moved to approve the flag display policy as presented, and it was unanimously approved.

The goal of our Capital Campaign is to raise $320,000 which is designated to pay for minibuses, field renovation, air-conditioning and stage improvements. We started our campaign by creating campaign materials and sending them out to our community. We got to a point where we were stuck, so we hired a consultant from the Robert Sharp Company. The consultant, Suzanne Connors, informed us that we went about our campaign backwards. We should have focused on our lead gifts and then gone public with our campaign when we were sure that the average people in our community could put us over the top. Based on that advice, we have put together a committee, and to date, the committee has pledged $81,000. Many staff members have pledged through payroll deduction, and if that were to continue over the next two years, we would have approximately $4,000. We have expended $25,644 on air conditioning window units and electrical work, consulting fees to the Sharp group and campaign materials. We are working with the Boettcher Foundation on a grant for $25,000. The Boettcher grant is contingent on RMSEL raising the rest of our goal by July. Jim is working with Tim Schultz of the Boettcher Foundation to get a year extension. Our goal is to have this campaign wrapped up in the fall. John suggested that Jim send all of the board members multiple copies of the campaign materials, so they could be distributed within the districts.
Air conditioning units have been installed in several classrooms, and the electrical wiring has been updated as well. Currently, we are in the process of soliciting bids to put in a hybrid central air system. Leann is seeking approval from DPS to hook the air conditioning up to the existing boiler system as well as determining whether DPS or RMSEL would be responsible for the system maintenance. We feel the central system is the best option both from an efficiency and cost standpoint. Jim is very reluctant to ask the capital campaign committee to raise the additional money for this central system. Jim stated that the school is in a very sound financial position right now. Our total equity at the end of June 30, 2005 was $747,000. The BOCES has required that RMSEL maintain a 10% reserve and 5% contingency fund out of that equity. That still leaves us with equity of $347,000. Jim is proposing that we use some of the $347,000 equity to install the air conditioning system this summer. We would still plan on $60,000 from the capital campaign to repay that equity. Years ago, when we originally got a bid from DPS for central air conditioning, we had our old boiler system and the bid was about $400,000. Now that we have the new boiler system, installation of central air conditioning seems more attainable. We will request a couple more bids so that we have at least three (3) bids for comparative purposes. Jill made a motion to support the use of the contingency fund for installation of air conditioning contingent upon DPS’ approval of installation and bids. Emily revised the motion to reflect using equity instead of the contingency fund. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Budget**

Julie Stelzer stated that the current 2005-2006 budget is on target. She expects that we will be adding between $100,000 and $120,000 to equity.

With regard to the 2006-2007 budget, the items of note to the revenue section are as follows:

- Gifted and Talented, Title I and Title V Federal Funding are not budgeted because we typically do not receive these funds and have no way of knowing what, if any, funds will be received.

- There has been a change with regard to funding financial aid. Due to the increase in fieldwork fees for 2006-2007, the 15% used for financial aid for fieldwork fees is deducted from the increase to fieldwork fees. In past years, fieldwork fee financial aid was deducted from the general fund. The 20% financial aid for kindergarten tuition will continue to be deducted from the general fund.

- The $6,000 under professional development is from the Teacher Prep Program and was rolled into this year. This revenue will be deferred into 2006-2007 in hopes of having the Teacher Prep Program start again. We are working with the University of Colorado at Denver to restart the TPP program. In the event that this does not happen, we will look at what to do with that money.

The items of note to the expense section are as follows:

- Many of the general and administrative and facilities budgets have been reduced because not all of the budgets will be expended for 2005-2006.

Suzanne Plaut questioned the audit expense and wondered if we still intended to put out a request for proposals. Most of the districts have responded regarding their auditing firms, and a RFP will be sent in the fall to those audit/accounting firms.

Emily noted that it was surprising that the technology budget was reduced. Jim stated that some of the classroom technology will come from fundraising.

- The utilities expense has been increased for both gas and electric. We continue to work with Xcel Energy to get an actual, and not estimated, meter reading each month.

- Under the repairs and maintenance expense, we are continuing to get bids for installation of a concrete pan to correct the drainage problem in the parking lot.
A new expense has been added for assessment, and this budget includes funds for MAPS & ERB testing.

The greatest increase under the expense section is with payroll and benefits. Schedule A reflects pay rate changes for all employees. All crew leaders with 0-10 years of experience fall within the Crew Leader Salary Structure. A 3% increase has been budgeted for any employee outside of the Crew Leader Salary Structure. This includes crew leaders with 11 years or more of teaching experience as well as administrative, instructional coach, aides and facility management staff. Crew leaders within the structure will receive the step increase, and anyone outside of that will receive a 3% increase. Those eligible for a step increase will get the step increase but not the additional 3%. Jim mentioned that we are scheduled to review the salary structure in the fall. John stated that Littleton is getting ready to vote, and they intend to settle at 3% plus steps. LPS’ administration receives what the steps would have been, so they will be at about 4.6%. John mentioned that 3% seemed kind of low compared to the other districts. Emily will send Julie an email with comparison chart for Douglas County. Julie mentioned that RMSEL has historically followed PPR increase. Jim suggested we run some comparative increases starting at 3.5% to see where we are for the next meeting of approvals. Julie will e-mail this information to the BOCES.

Jill asked if RMSEL or any of the sponsoring districts include the benefits in their compensation numbers. RMSEL and the other districts budget for insurance and benefits separately. Emily mentioned that she had asked her district about RMSEL piggybacking on Douglas County for health insurance but discovered that since we are not all Douglas County employees, that is not an option.

- Health insurance rates through Kaiser Permanente are increasing by 13.3%.

- The budget for stipends also increased, but the increase will actually come from .20 FTE of savings on the instructional coach position.

- The budget for interest income has been increased to $25,000, and Julie questioned whether it should be increased to $30,000. John felt the increase to $30,000 would be fine and still on the conservative side.

Emily made a motion that the step schedule be approved, so Julie can prepare contracts for signing at the next meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Emily asked what the function of the Secretary/Treasurer position on the BOCES entailed. Julie responded that the last Secretary/Treasurer spent some time with her to review the budget. Emily mentioned that she would entertain the idea if nobody else volunteered.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 8th at 5:30 p.m.

The board adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Bee Kirk, President

John Dunn, Vice President