ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL OF EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING
MINUTES OF BOCES MEETING
November 15, 2006
5:30 pm

In Attendance: Aagie Barber, John Dunn, Emily Hansen, Suzanne Plaut and Susan Tabacheck

Staff: Leann Asgari, Meg Blair, Jim McDermott, Keri Melmed and Julie Stelzer

Guests: Dean Johnson and Scott Siegfried

Introductions
Dean Johnson, the auditor from Johnson, Holscher & Company, P.C., and Scott Siegfried, Executive Director of Student Achievement Services for Cherry Creek, and the service link for RMSEL were introduced.

Open Forum
Emily Hansen presented a schedule for the meeting and expressed her intention of adhering to the allotted agenda times for each item and ending the meeting at 7:00 pm. She will ask for a volunteer timekeeper at the next meeting to keep the meeting on schedule.

Julie Stelzer stated that notebooks were prepared for the board members. These books include reference information pertinent to RMSEL that the board might find useful. We want to move forward with the current vision and ensure that there is accountability to be on track for both the board and staff.

Emily also requested input from board members regarding the board’s role versus the staff roles. This information will aid incoming board members and staff members in their new positions. John Dunn suggested that a calendar be produced for the board to know what needs to be accomplished at each board meeting. These binders will travel with each new board member.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the September 20, 2006 board meeting were unanimously approved.

Audit Presentation
A copy of the draft audit was sent to all board members. Dean Johnson presented the audit. He stated that net assets and the fund balance continue to increase. With regard to the scope of the audit, it is complete with the exception of the Integrity Check report from the Automated Data Exchange (ADE) which will be sent to CDE. The Management Discussion and Analysis discusses the financial highlights. The basic financial statements and auditor’s opinion follow, and the auditor’s opinion is unqualified, meaning there are no questions. An unqualified opinion is the best rating that an audit may receive. The statement of net assets and statement of activities are included. The most useful report is the financial statement which is presented in normal fund structure. The pattern of expenditures was similar to prior years. The fund balance increased at the end of 2006. With regard to the reserve and contingency amounts, Julie stated that the BOCES had suggested in the past to set aside 5% for contingency and 10% for reserve. The footnotes to financial statements discuss the basis of accounting and present in more detail, the retirement plan, investments, leases and movement in capital assets. Julie explained the large increase in assets was due to the purchase of the minibuses. The final section of the audit is the draft management letter from the auditor to the board. This letter would explain any significant audit adjustments; however, RMSEL did not have any significant audit adjustments. Dean stated that there were no disagreements or difficulties in preparing the audit, and he had not suggested any areas requiring improvement. Susan Tabacheck stated it was difficult to believe that the audit was perfect. Dean explained that if her definition of perfect meant no exceptions, then that is correct. Julie stated that RMSEL has no grants and that simplifies the audit. Jim McDermott stated that the school is small and has only one fund to be audited.
Emily asked for a motion, and Susan moved to approve the draft audit as presented. A line vote was conducted, and the motion to accept the audit was unanimously approved.

Julie reminded the board of the final ADE and integrity check report, so one more motion would be required to accept the final audit. Julie stated that this is the first year for RMSEL to meet the ADE requirement.

Susan inquired about the length of time to prepare the audit. Dean stated that the field portion of the audit takes a week, with some preplanning and scheduling sent ahead of time. Julie stated that once she receives the requested information, she compiles it for the auditors. Susan further inquired as to whether or not the information requested ever changes, and Julie stated that it in fact changed this year because there is no grant activity.

Bylaws and Constitution
A copy of the bylaws and constitution was included in the September meeting packet. Julie stated that a draft is also in the notebooks. Jim stated that the changes to both the bylaws and constitution were mostly editorial in nature. Aurora was added to the BOCES, and this impacted the changes. There were not any operational or procedural changes. Suzanne Plaut questioned the wording around Aurora being invited to become a member of BOCES. She was under the impression that Aurora was already a member, and it had been voted on. Jim responded that this was one of the changes. Susan stated that she distributed the bylaws and constitution to the Aurora board members for their approval but has not yet heard back from them. John motioned to accept the revised bylaws. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. Emily stated that the bylaws and constitution are a living document that may be changed in the future, if needed. Jim stated one of the corrections was the Community Council being a decision making body. This has not been true for many years since their function is an advisory council. This change has been approved and understood by the Community Council. Emily asked if the Community Council fulfills all obligations under state law for a school advisory committee. Jim stated that the Community Council does this through the school’s improvement plan. John asked if any Community Council members go to the member district’s accountability meetings. Jim stated that he is not aware of any attending these meetings; however, one of the parent representatives is active in the Cherry Creek DAC, and has been able to bring that perspective to the council. Emily further inquired whether we follow the DAC requirement under the law, and Jim stated that we probably function as the DAC, being both a school and a district. Jim will check to make sure that this information is correct and send follow-up information to board members.

Executive Director Report
The status of Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) is that Littleton had not yet approved it due to concerns with the special education wording. Jim will arrange a meeting with DPS and Littleton to discuss unresolved issues. We are waiting for Littleton’s approval since the other districts have approved the IGA. Emily asked if the IGA need to be renewed every year, and Jim stated that it is typically renewed every five (5) years. Any interim changes would be included in an addendum.

An electronic version of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was e-mailed to all board members. Susan asked if an updated SIP could be e-mailed to her. Jim confirmed that he would send it out. The original plan had an explanation how to develop target scores. There was a concern about the data presented to the Community Council. They felt it was difficult to read and wanted to begin with the professional development focus. Target scores in reading are high, and we are working with Jerry Difford at CDE. Jerry is assisting with our accreditation. The goal is to move all students up each year: partially proficient to proficient and proficient to advanced.

Suzanne mentioned some typographical corrections. Susan asked how the lows on writing and math are being addressed in the action plan. Emily stated she sees the MAPS testing and CSAP but does not see any other measurement for students. Jim stated that some of the data is from last year’s students. MAPS data is also used to see where students are in relation to CSAP. With regard to addressing the concerns, there has been a math study team at the secondary level formed to discuss how the connected math piece fits in with the CSAP standards. The high school is using self-assessments which are proving successful. Emily suggested
that in the future we should look into including more than CSAP to really assess student’s progress. Keri Melmed suggested we add some text about passages into the assessment of students. Emily stated that this should be in the administrative realm of things, but the board should have some input about whether students are on track. John asked if member schools have a common template they use for the SIP. If so, the templates should be forwarded to Jim. Susan asked if we have to worry about AYP, and Jim explained that we don’t because of our size, our sub groups are so small, we make AYP every year. Suzanne stated she would like to see the analysis and goals for each sub group. Jim will gather this information and e-mail before the next meeting. Susan requested to receive a copy broken down by ethnicity.

Suzanne asked about staff discussion surrounding the disparity between reading and writing. Jim stated one issue was the analysis from CSAP tends to be weighted heavier with grammar and punctuation. Keri informed the board that our staff is discussing how we teach math, and our K-5 teams are looking into various professional development programs to assess writing. The 2nd through 11th grades took the MAPS language, reading and math summaries. Science was taken by 5th, 8th and 10th grades. In the spring, we may just give math and reading summaries due to the amount of time and use of the technology lab. Getting support from other member districts and the contacts at the NWEA have been helpful. Elizabeth Spruill, our Technology/Media Coordinator, put many hours into this project and Keri has proctored all the testing. Next year, we may not give the test to the 2nd graders in the fall as they would be better prepared in the spring.

Emily asked how the students responded to the testing. Jim stated that for the most part they were open and positive. Elizabeth kept track of how long each student took taking the test. Julie mentioned that a line item for assessment was included in the budget this year.

With regard to the Capital Campaign, we are going to make our goal. We had some great anonymous donations and pledges which helped tremendously. Mike Aitken, a RMSEL parent, has an engineering company and will be donating all the engineering services for the air conditioning. We want to have a K-12 celebration inviting parents and have a symbolic burning of the minibus lease. We had a telethon gathering at one of our parent’s businesses. He let us use the phones and provided food and drinks. We had a great time with lots of success. Emily suggested as a board they should write a letter of thanks to the Capital Campaign committee for all their support. Jim will write the letter and forward to Emily. We will still pursue grants as expenditures were little higher than originally estimated. Our goal is $320,000 as of today, we have raised $291,000. When we reach $295,000, the Boettcher Foundation will donate $25,000. Emily suggested that 100% of board member’s support would be great! Emily also stated that each board member should solicit their district boards for funds.

Susan requested more information about RMSEL before presenting to her board. Jim stated that he would be happy to attend an Aurora board meeting and give a short presentation about RMSEL. Emily said to get him on the agenda.

Budget Update
Julie stated that we had a couple of outstanding issues with DPS. First, we have not yet been billed for the November 1st lease. The second issue is the concrete drainage pan. DPS was billed for $7,500 for the replacement of concrete drainage pan in the south parking lot. Leann Asgari stated that DPS agreed to only pay $2,000, but since the drainage problem is a result of a structural problem, DPS should be responsible for the full amount. The contract has been paid, so the contractors are not waiting for funds. Susan inquired as to whether our attorneys should become involved in the problem. Jim said that we were trying to avoid using legal action and keep the relationship on friendly terms. Susan asked what was stated in the lease agreement in reference to repairs. Leann said that it states in the lease that any structural problems are the responsibility of DPS. All contractors that submitted a bid stated that the drainage situation needed to be corrected prior to resurfacing the parking lot. DPS said they would pay to install a shorter pan; however, all contractors said that the concrete pan needed to extend to Holly Street in order to correct the drainage problem. DPS was asked to pay for the drainage pan, and RMSEL would pay for the costs of resurfacing. Julie stated that the resurfacing work would not be guaranteed by the contractor if the drainage pan was not installed all the way to street.
Emily suggested that Jill Conrad should work on her end, and requested that Jim will get her a letter detailing the situation.

With regard to the minibus lease payments, this is not an item that is included in the budget. Two years ago, the board approved the purchase of minibuses from the 10% reserve. These funds were to be repaid from the proceeds of the capital campaign. Last year, we will able make the minibus lease payments out of operating funds and the reserve was not touched. When a disbursement is made from the capital campaign, it will go directly into reserve.

Julie inquired as to what the board wants to see on a monthly basis with regard to the budget. John suggested a management summary to accompany the budget report at every BOCES meeting. The budget approved by the BOCES should be included in the notebooks.

Enrollment
Leann provided a brief explanation of enrollment the report. Any student coming from an expeditionary learning school receives preference and siblings have preference as well. Littleton was down last year, and this year we were able to bring that percentage up. We are over-enrolled by 2 in Douglas County and 2 in Littleton due to the enrollment of siblings. We are low this year in Cherry Creek. We received the same number of applications but not in the grade levels needed.

Leann presented another document which is a breakdown of our current enrollment by ethnicity and gender. This information is to remain in binders and will be updated every year. It will also be sent electronically to each board member.

Future Meeting Action Items
Julie will be sending out a request for proposal (RFP) for a new audit firm. The RFP letters should go out in December or January. A list of prospective auditors and proposals will be provided to the board. Emily would like to narrow down the list to three or four possibilities for the board to review.

The SIP template needs to be received from all board member schools.

A summary will be prepared for the notebooks of how RMSEL works to include passages, portfolio assessment and how grades work.

The Faculty Field Guide and Student Parent Handbook are being revised and will be a part of the notebooks.

Susan inquired whether it is appropriate for someone to attend the BOCES meeting in her place if she is unable to attend. Jim explained that this was acceptable; however, they would not be allowed to vote unless they were an Aurora school board member.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 17th at 5:30 p.m.

The board adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Emily Hansen, President

John Dunn, Vice President