The regular meeting of the Rockford Board of Education was called to order by President David Kelley at 4:42 p.m.

Present: President David Kelley, Vice President Harmon Mitchell (arrived 4:50 p.m.), Secretary Jeanne Westholder (arrived 4:52 p.m.), Mr. Robert Evans, Ms. Lisa Jackson, Mrs. Jude Makulec, Mrs. Alice Saudargas (arrived 4:50 p.m.)

Absent: None.

**Motion** that the Board hold a Closed Session in Room 202 to consider the appointment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of employees or legal counsel; the discipline of students; pending or imminent litigation; or other matters provided for pursuant to §2 (c) of the Open Meetings Act.

**Approved** unanimously by those present.

The Board was in closed session from 4:43 p.m. until 7:05 p.m.

I. Call to Order – President David Kelley called the regular meeting of the Rockford Board of Education to order at 7:21 p.m.

II. Moment of Silence

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Roll Call

Present: President David Kelley, Secretary Jeanne Westholder, Vice President Harmon Mitchell, Mr. Robert Evans, Ms. Lisa Jackson, Mrs. Jude Makulec, Mrs. Alice Saudargas.

Absent: None.

*On behalf of the entire board, Mr. Kelley thanked the Auburn Media Students for their assistance in operating the camera and sound equipment in order to telecast this board meeting.*

**Motion** by Mr. Kelley *seconded* by Mrs. Saudargas that the board *accept* the amended agenda to include Administrative Appointments A & B, Administrative Transfers, and Designated Representative to Receive Nominating Papers.

**Approved** unanimously.

V. Petitions & Communications – the guidelines were read by Mr. Kelley.

- **Russ Milano** – Stated that the Regional Office of Education conducted an audit of the teaching staff credentials. The auditor said that after several weeks, the Administration has not provided a response to the request of information.

*Mr. Evans reminded everyone that according to the Petitions & Communications guidelines, comments about individuals and responses by board members at this time are not appropriate.*

- **Shannon Symonds**, former teacher – Terminated in March despite her positive evaluations and participation in district sponsored continued education. Overlooked for placement and told that the qualifications of those chosen are confidential. She was promised a Round 4 position, but a new-to-district candidate was placed despite principal recommending her for the position. Requested that her circumstance be evaluated and she be placed in a qualified opening.
• Samuel Sarpiya, Rockford Partners for Excellence – Working to bring hope, healing and stability in the community of West Middle School. Asked that bus service be provided to students from Fairgrounds Park neighborhood to eliminate inequalities among students from the neighborhood.

• Jane Hayes, Watchdog for Ethics in Education – Stated that the Shaheens were verbally attacked in public comment. The family has spent their lifetimes encouraging literacy and human accountability. Public demeaning of Mrs. Shaheen and a board member is inexcusable. Half a million dollars without respect for grade-level reading can fall far short of the intended rationale. She questions irresponsible expenditures by administration and board members supporting them.

• Colleen Magee, Watchdog for Ethics in Education – Concerned by the top-heavy administration. Submitted a request for titles, job descriptions, names, salaries, certifications, and credentials of all certified and non-certified administrators above the school building level.

• Dyanna Chandler – When she came tonight, she was very angry about a particular issue. She since spoke to the Chief Financial Officer and her concern was dissolved.

VI. Recognition – Mr. Bonne provided a summary of the recognitions.
A. Rockford Sharefest – The Guiding Star Award presented by Mr. Kelley.

VII. Board Member Comments
• Mrs. Saudargas thanked Friends of West for the 75th Anniversary Celebration.
• Mrs. Westholder shared her experience attending the West Anniversary Celebration and thanked the principal for her acknowledgement of Dr. Sheffield’s special attention to making personal visits to the homes of truant students.

VIII. Consent Items
A. Personnel
B. Payroll
C. Accounts Payable Checks
D. Purchase Orders
E. Bids & Recommendations
1. Hearing Officer Services – pulled by Mrs. Saudargas
F. Recurring Contracts
1. Discovery Education Assessment Service
2. Early Childhood Center Contracts
   a. Circles of Learning
   b. Trinity Day Care Center
3. Special Education Private & Residential Placement Contracts – pulled by Mrs. Makulec
   a. ABRASAX
   b. Allendale School
   c. Barbara Olson Center of Hope
   d. Camelot School
   e. Dolan Center
   f. Easter Seals School
   g. Larkin Center
   h. Oconomowoc Developmental Center
   i. Rock River Academy
   j. Summit School
   k. Walter Lawson Children’s Home
   l. Willowglen

G. Closed Session Items
1. Administrative Appointment A – Jennifer Carlson as 12-month Assistant Principal of Curriculum for Early Childhood
2. Administrative Appointment B – Kevin Lynch as 10-month Assistant Principal of East
3. Administrative Transfers – Thomas Newton to 11-month Assistant Principal at Auburn
4. Staff Discipline – pulled from agenda.
5. Superintendent’s Goals for 2010-2011 – pulled from the agenda.

H. Other Consent
1. Designated Representative to Receive Nominating Papers
2. Freedom of Information Act Log

Motion by Mrs. Saudargas seconded by Mrs. Makulec that the board approve Consent Items Not Pulled.

Approved unanimously.

Consent Items Pulled

- Hearing Officer Services – Mrs. Saudargas said she was surprised to find out that the existing hearing officer is being replaced. The existing provider told her that he was not aware of the bid posting.
  Dr. Sheffield clarified that the change has been discussed numerous times in closed session over the past year. The goal is to drive down costs, obtain a better product, and respond to board member concerns regarding the process. We tried to recruit by posting the position as an administrative position, but did not receive applicants. The formal bid process was then pursued as an alternative. The discipline process is very formal, which is managed by district general counsel.

  Mrs. Makulec understood that in the past, the district attorney chose the hearing officer. Her concern is why the existing hearing officer was not informed of the opportunity to participate in the bid process. She pointed out that the position does not require an attorney to provide the services.

  Atty. Hoadley stated that the goal was to maintain the integrity of the bid process, so no providers were contacted directly. The bid was posted over three weeks, which is longer than usual. Advertisement was placed in the Rock River Times and Demand Star (typical government contracting site.) Seven law firms reviewed the Demand Star bid posting and four requested packets, but only one responded with a bid proposal. This proposal is for an hourly rate of $125/hour with an annual cap, in comparison to the previously paid $180/hour with no annual cap. She provided a summary of costs for the past several years. In summary, the lowest responsible bidder was the only bidder, and yields a significant cost savings. She further explained that if this bid is reposted, the bidding process is compromised in that once bidding is closed, they become public information. The provider being recommended is a local attorney who has served as a due process hearing officer for the State of Illinois, and very familiar with the Special Education aspects. However, both the existing and recommended providers are qualified service providers. She confirmed that the position does not require an attorney, but the hearing officer must know the law and know how to apply the law.

  Mrs. Westholder clarified that at their last meeting, the board discussed the expectation that a bid was to come forward at the August 24 meeting for these services.

  Mr. Evans stated that there is a problem with rebidding the contract because the rates have now been discussed publicly.

  Mr. Mitchell discussed the timeline of events, in which the bid did not come through Operations Committee, the hours of service per year, and hourly rates.

  Mr. Kelley stated that the board has had ongoing discussions for the past year on the issue of reducing outside legal expenses, of which a significant amount is for the hearing officer.
Motion by Mr. Mitchell seconded by Mrs. Makulec that the board postpone consideration of Hearing Officer Services until the September 14, 2010 Regular Board Meeting.
Ayes: Mrs. Saudargas, Mrs. Makulec, Mr. Mitchell.
Nays: Mrs. Westholder, Mr. Evans, Mr. Kelley, Ms. Jackson.
Absent: None.
Failed 3-4-0.
Mrs. Saudargas suggested that the board attorney take on the responsibility of doing hearings. She stated that in the past, the district attorney conducted the administrator trainings.
Mrs. Westholder emphasized the qualifications of the provider, and discussed duties which would be billable hours. Based upon her qualifications, she expressed her support for the recommended provider.
Atty. Hoadley stated that billable hours would include preparatory time, conducting hearings, report writing and trainings; however, each will require a variable amount of time. The recommended provider is highly qualified with knowledge of school law, has experience serving as a due process officer. The three-year contract is intended to lock-in pricing for the benefit of the district; attorney/client relationships may be terminated at any time regardless. When the position was advertised in the Communicator last fall, she had a conversation with the existing provider informing him of the intent. She is not aware of anyone from the district contacting the provider when the decision was made to proceed with the bid process; nor would she have been comfortable doing so. In the past, district general counsel would determine which outside counsel to use. The reason she recommended using the bid process was to ensure that the selection process is impartial.
Mr. Mitchell expressed concern that the contract is for three years and that there was so little interest by service providers.
Mr. Kelley clarified that this matter is not a personnel matter, because the service is provided through a contract, not through employment of an individual.
Dr. Sheffield reminded Mr. Mitchell that the changes in packets were made to accommodate requests by the board to make the process more user-friendly. Through the evaluation of the process, more fiscally prudent options were pursued.
Mrs. Makulec confirmed that it would simply take a consensus vote of the board to rebid or continue to use the existing provider.
Motion by Mrs. Saudargas seconded by Ms. Jackson that the board approve Hearing Officer Services.
Ayes: Ms. Jackson, Mrs. Westholder, Mrs. Makulec, Mr. Evans, Mr. Kelley.
Nays: Mrs. Saudargas, Mr. Mitchell.
Absent: None.
Approved 5-2-0.

- Special Education Private & Residential Placement Contracts – Mrs. Makulec expressed concern about tuition expenses for students that may not be attending regularly. Ms. Cyrus explained that she reviews the monthly attendance sheets with the invoice for students placed with residential facilities. As long as a seat is held for the student, payment is required. In the case of significant absences, an Individual Education Plan meeting is held to determine necessary supports. Reimbursement is set by the State at a specific percentage regardless of attendance rate. Placements at ABRAXAS are directed by the court.
The board proceeded to approve Special Education Private & Residential Placement Contracts.
Approved unanimously.

IX. Superintendent's Report
A. Superintendent's Comments: Dr. Sheffield made the following comments: "Good evening. We are very excited about the opening of schools tomorrow. Our teachers have been hard
at work in meetings to familiarize themselves with new textbooks and curriculum, and our facilities crew has done a terrific job preparing our buildings and grounds for the return of our students.

As was our practice last year, a central office administrator has been assigned to assist in each school. The administrator will be available to greet parents and students, help resolve any concerns and complete a check list evaluating the school's overall readiness. I'm confident that we will experience a smooth start and that our schools will achieve great things in the coming year.

Sunday afternoon, it was my great privilege to attend the 70th birthday party of West Middle School. I'd like to say that I escaped the heat, but that would be stretching the truth! I'm not stretching the truth in the least, however, to say that staff, students and alumni celebrated in style. A crowd of at least 1,000 people turned out – despite the temperature and lack of air conditioning – to mingle with old friends and former teachers, view memorabilia and listen to presentations about the school's architectural significance and storied history.

As you may know, West is one of three schools recognized as landmarks by the City of Rockford – the other two being East High School and Lincoln Middle School. As you probably also know, because a certain member of this Board won't let us forget, the West Warriors have a distinguished history on the basketball court. One presentation, a documentary film, focused on the state championship that West won in 1955 under the leadership of the team's late coach, Alex Saudargas. Mrs. Saudargas, of course, received a hearty round of applause. Fresh from its summer makeover by our friends with Sharefest, the art deco-style school looked phenomenal. West is in good hands of Principal Alex Brewington, and I expect the school has a future as bright as its illustrious past.

This weekend, we have another exciting event taking place with the one-day construction of a new playground at Barbour Language Academy. Barbour's playground is a joint venture between the school's PTO, corporate sponsor Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois and KaBOOM, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization focused on giving every child in America a great place to play within walking distance. More than 200 volunteers are signed up to participate in the build, with a ribbon-cutting scheduled for 2:30 p.m. – if everything progresses according to plan! Funds for the playground have been generated entirely through the partnership, and the design is based on drawings created by students who participated in a Design Day event in June.

In sports, it's a little too early yet for my regular update, but I am able to report that our football seasons kicks off this week with middle school games on Wednesday and high school games on Friday night. You can view game schedules online at www.rps205.com. This is what's in store on the gridiron: In high school football, it's Auburn @ Belvidere, East @ Guilford, Freeport @ Jefferson; sophomore start time is 5:00PM; varsity start time is 7:15PM. In middle school football, it's: Eisenhower @ Freeport, West @ Harlem, RESA @ Flinn, and Lincoln @ Kennedy; varsity start time is 4:30PM, followed immediately by junior varsity. Best of luck to all of our sports teams!
Motion by Mrs. Westholder, seconded by Ms. Jackson to approve Life Safety Financing Bond Sale.
Approved unanimously.

B. Proposed Tax Incentive for Project Eagle (No discussion.)
Motion by Mr. Mitchell seconded by Ms. Jackson that the board approve Proposed Tax Incentive for Project Eagle.
Approved unanimously.

XII. Other Business/New Business/Agenda Recommendations (No discussion.)

XIII. Adjournment
Motion by Ms. Jackson, seconded by Mrs. Westholder, that the board adjourn at 8:37 p.m.
Approved on voice vote.

President: [Signature]
Secretary: [Signature]

Approved: 10/12/2010

/jh