

Rochester School for the Deaf
Town Meeting #6
Monday, April 28, 2008

The meeting began at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Mowl opened the meeting by giving a brief update from the last town meeting held on November 1, 2007. He also reminded the group of issues that were previously raised for discussion.

Dr. Mowl informed the group of a decision the Board recently made. The school colors have reverted back to orange and navy blue. The JrNAD brought this action to the Board.

Some dates to remember:

- ❖ May 2, RSD Prom at Burgundy Basin Inn
- ❖ May 8-9, Rathskellar
 - Please contact Ron Rood if you are interested in tickets.
- ❖ May 16-17, “Quisted Tale of Cinderella”—A play by RSD’s students.
- ❖ June 5, Sports Award Program
- ❖ June 16, Academic Awards Program
- ❖ June 26, Graduation

Discussion Regarding the Board of Directors

A question was raised regarding deaf members of the Board. Dr. Mowl informed everyone that the Board is a non-profit group and they pick their own members. Board member Bernard Hurwitz said that he serves on the Nominating Committee, and they are always looking for names of individuals to be submitted. All of the Board members have email addresses posted on the RSD website. If a person would like to submit a name for consideration, please send an email to Mr. Hurwitz. The Board has deaf members. In the past, a few were not able to stick with the commitment of being an RSD Board member.

The Board tries to maintain a balance of different areas of expertise. When considering new members they look for people who are well known and connected in the community, have a background with deafness and education, and people who have professional and business skills. The Board is very active. The full Board meets quarterly and members are asked to join at least two committees. Some of the topics the Board handles are budgets, finance, personnel and other issues. There was a brief discussion about the committees.

After a brief mention of the situation at St. Mary’s School for the Deaf in Buffalo, NY, a couple of suggestions were made regarding Board communication. They are:

- ❖ Monthly reports from the Board members
- ❖ Sharing the minutes of Board meetings

Next, there was a brief discussion concerning the cancellation of Spring Festival. Dr. Mowl said that the decision came from the Administration. After 14 years, it was time for a break and we are taking this time for reflection and change.

A request was made, that when big decisions are made (ex. Spring Festival), staff should be involved in the decision making process. Staff and community members would like to understand the reasons behind the decisions; administration should not allow room for speculation.

Faculty and their Skill Set

An issue was raised concerning the skills and knowledge of RSD's faculty. Discussion ensued from there. Highlights include:

- ❖ Dr. Mowl announced that he is always proud of our program here. Last year RSD had 17 graduates, half of them with a Regents diploma.
- ❖ Teachers are the backbone of the school. Administration encourages professional development, and teachers are able to have development in areas of their choice. Between the Administration and the UFA a new evaluation process was developed in order to best showcase a teacher's strengths and identify weaknesses.
- ❖ Board member Jerry Walter informed the group that he's working with RIT on a project called *Project Fast Forward*. The program allows high school students to take a web design class and if they pass all the tests and requirements, they will receive 3 college credits transferable to RIT. This past semester, 19 students from RSD and another school took the class. Seven students earned the college credit; all were RSD students. RSD not only allows this type of program on campus, it welcomes these opportunities also.
- ❖ RSD holds students to a higher standard, and the students achieve that.
- ❖ A need was expressed for more staff get-togethers and team building activities.

Marketing of RSD and Parent Involvement

- ❖ The school should be advertising the activities that we have, that the public schools do not.
- ❖ RSD has an excellent support team for families. This should be known throughout the community.
- ❖ The School and the PSA need to find ways to encourage parent involvement with activities. Participation is wonderful in the ECC, but it lessens as children move up.
- ❖ A point was made to educate CSE chairpersons on RSD. Another comment suggested marketing RSD as private schools do.
- ❖ Focus needs to be given to all levels of the school, not just the ECC. If we market to the parents, they will ultimately convince everyone involved that RSD is the best place for their child.

Dr. Mowl thanked everyone for taking the time to attend and sharing their thoughts.

The meeting ended at 8 p.m.