



Regular Meeting of the Board of School Commissioners
Tuesday, August 18, 2026

School Board Members Present:

Charlene Seward, Chair
Marybeth Lennox-Levins, Clerk
Brandi Barclay
Karen Bossi
Herbert Ogden
Jen Rondinone
Cathy Solsaa
Christina Sweet
Danielle Goldberg, Student Representative
Sophia Wu, Student Representative

Board Members Not Present

Ryan Carney
Courtney Collins Whitcomb
Stephanie Stoodley

Also Present:

Pam Reed, Superintendent
Bianca McKeen, Assistant Superintendent
Kerry Coarse, Director of Support Services

Jeanne Collins Deweese, Sophia Buckley-Clement
(Rutland Herald), Chris Donahue (PEGTV), Peter Franzoni
(Rutland City Alderman), et al.

I. Call to Order - Chair Seward called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- A. Roll Call - As noted above.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance - Chair Seward led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- C. Board Norms - Chair Seward read the Board Norms.

II. Approval of Agenda

Chair Seward noted that under the Board's newly adopted Policy Governance framework, a formal motion to approve the agenda is no longer required because the overall work schedule is pre-established via the annual work plan. She asked if there were any additions, deletions, or expected changes to the evening's agenda; none were raised.

III. Approval of Consent Agenda

- A. Minutes of Previous Meetings - June 23, 2026, and August 4, 2026
 - B. Personnel Memo #679 (attached)
- Motion by Lennox-Levins/Rondinone to approve the consent agenda. ***Motion carried.***

IV. Ownership Linkage (Policy 4.2.1)

- A. Public Comment - None
- The Board discussed the public comment guidelines under the ownership linkage policy, with a specific focus on public speaking limits. Commissioner Bossi expressed concern that a strict five-minute limit per person might be unnecessary and unwelcoming during regular meetings when few members of the public have signed up to speak. To address this, the Board discussed amending the guideline language. Instead of stating that each person "will" be limited to two minutes, the Board proposed that each person "may" be limited to two minutes. This modification provides the Chair and the Board with the flexibility to grant more time when appropriate, while retaining the authority to restrict speaking times if public attendance is high.

V. Board Professional Development (Policy 4.0)

- A. Policy Governance Training with Jeanne Collins Deweese, Consultant

Commissioner Seward introduced Jeanne Collins Deweese, a facilitator from the Vermont School Boards Association, who led a professional development session on monitoring reports, board self evaluation protocols, and student representation on policy governance boards.

Monitoring Reports

Jeanne refreshed the Board on the core principles of Policy Governance, emphasizing that monitoring is the foundational starting point of board accountability. Under this model, the Board establishes expectations through Executive Limitations (EL) and Ends policies, then regularly monitors them to assess whether the Superintendent is in compliance. The frequency and timeline for these reports are set annually in the Board's collaborative work plan. Jeanne walked the Board through the high-level components of a typical monitoring report, noting that it must include the policy name and number, indicate whether the interpretations are new or updated, and provide the superintendent's explicit interpretations, rationales, and observable conditions for successful compliance. The report must also include supporting data or evidence and conclude with the Superintendent's sign-off on their compliance status. It was noted that the RCPS work plan includes monthly monitoring reports, with one exception in February.

Review of Monitoring Report 2.5 (Emergency Superintendent Succession)

With guidance from Jeanne, the Board reviewed Monitoring Report 2.5, which outlines the succession plan in the event of an emergency. Superintendent Reed interpreted "sudden loss of services" to mean an unexpected, lengthy absence, "executives" to mean credentialed Rutland City Public School administrators, and "reasonable proficiency" to mean individuals who possess an understanding and application of school laws and policies who can temporarily assume responsibilities. Lastly, she interpreted "identification to the board" as providing the specific names of her designated successors.

During the discussion, Commissioner Rondinone questioned whether the phrase "lengthy absence" was too vague and if a specific minimum timeline should be specified. Jeanne reminded the Board that Policy 2.5 is a highly temporary, interim measure designed to ensure immediate leadership continuity until the Board can exercise its authority to name a replacement, and advised the Board that its role is to assess whether the Superintendent's interpretation is reasonable and consistent with the current policy text. If the Board feels a policy lacks specificity, the proper procedure is to accept the report if the current definition is reasonable and then move to amend the policy language at a future meeting. If the policy language is amended, the monitoring report will be updated at the next scheduled review; however, the Board may ask the superintendent to resubmit it. The Board can request a monitoring report at any time by changing the work plan. The superintendent is bound by the new policy language once it is passed.

Following this section of the training, the Board practiced the suggested three-step discussion flow: first, discussing whether Superintendent Reed's interpretation is reasonable; second, reviewing the adequacy of the evidence; and third, formally voting to accept the report. There was discussion about whether the first two questions needed a formal vote, and it was suggested that only the third question, whether the Board accepts the report, needs the formal action. The response to the questions and a motion to accept are found below in section VI.

Compliance and Tracking Procedures

Jeanne discussed how the Board should handle non-compliance, noting that a superintendent may legitimately be out of compliance due to sudden external factors (such as federal funding delays) or because a new policy requires substantial system development to fully implement. In any instance of non-compliance, the superintendent must provide a timeline for returning to compliance. If a superintendent discovers a non-compliance issue outside the scheduled monitoring cycle, they are expected to report it to the Board at the next scheduled meeting rather than wait for the annual report. Jeanne recommended maintaining a public, one-page running tracker of all monitoring reports on the school district website alongside the policies and annual work plan, which the Board agreed would be a helpful public resource.

Board Self-Evaluation Process

The Board self-evaluation process is a state requirement under district quality standards. A draft RCPS PG Board Self Evaluation form containing baseline questions to assess board preparation, adherence to the agenda, boundary maintenance between governance and operations, future-focused discussions, and connection to district owners was reviewed. Commissioner Bossi expressed concern regarding the first question, noting that evaluating whether individual board members were prepared and participating could feel like personal criticism and lead to friction. The Board reached a consensus to rephrase the question to focus on whether the Board as a collective was prepared and engaged. After discussing various delivery formats—including Google Docs, which were ruled out due to open-meeting laws and domain restrictions—the Board decided to try individual, anonymous paper cards. The cards will be filled out at the end of each meeting and compiled by Chair Seward or a designee to provide a quick summary of the Board's performance that evening. Commissioners felt it was important to discuss the results on the night of the meeting, while members were present and the meeting was fresh. Jeanne noted that the Board could try one method of self evaluation (like anonymous cards) and move to a different method if the first does not work. She also reminded the Board that their policies require the superintendent to inform the Board if the Board is not following their own policies. The Board then encouraged student representatives to do the same.

Student Representation

Jeanne addressed the role of student representatives, highlighting that Vermont statute encourages student representation on school boards. She presented examples from Winooski and Mount Mansfield that use two-year staggered terms and allow student representatives to cast advisory, non-binding votes. Student representatives Sophia and Danielle, along with Board members, discussed the ethics of student voting and agreed that, because students are elected by the student body rather than municipal taxpayers, and under Vermont law, casting a non-binding advisory vote is the most appropriate way to represent student perspectives. Board members agreed that recording these advisory votes in the official minutes would be highly beneficial for documenting the student perspective on key issues and for allowing the representatives to communicate their stances back to their peers. The Board established a consensus that student representatives will continue to serve staggered two-year terms, as has been the practice at RCPS, and are encouraged to participate in all regular discussions and cast advisory votes. Student representatives do not attend Executive Sessions. Commissioner Ogden was tasked with drafting a formal student representative policy reflecting these parameters for the Board to review at a later date. Superintendent Reed will provide student representatives with background on meeting topics.

Scenario Policy Governance Practice

Jeanne led the Board through several scenario exercises and noted that such exercises are important to run regularly. Topics covered included properly screening off-agenda items to ensure public notice, handling community complaints about specific school incidents (such as buses or fights), routing public personnel criticisms through the proper administrative chain of command, and maintaining the distinction between the Board's governance role and the Superintendent's operational authority.

VI. Monitoring (Policy 3.4)

A. Monitoring Report: Policy 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession

Superintendent Reed presented a monitoring report for the policy noted above, identifying Bianca McKeen, Assistant Superintendent, and Kerry Coarse, Director of Support Services, as emergency superintendent succession designees. Superintendent Reed reported compliance with the policy. The Board agreed that Superintendent Reed's interpretation is reasonable and that there is adequate data and evidence to support compliance.

Motion by Rondinone/Bossi to accept Monitoring Report: 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession.

Motion passed.

VII. Governance Process (Policy 4.0)

A. Policy Review and Approval (Policy 4.2)

First Reading

1. C11 - Student Freedom of Expression in School-Sponsored Media
2. C13 - Students Experiencing Homelessness
3. D6 - Class Size

Motion by Bossi/Ogden to send the above policies to second reading. ***Motion carried.***

B. Establishment of a Capital Improvement Fund

The Board discussed a request to authorize an article on the November 3, 2026, city election ballot to establish a Capital Reserve Fund under the control and direction of the School Board for Rutland City Public Schools' building and equipment renovations, repairs, and replacements. Clarification was made that the ballot article only seeks authorization to establish the fund. If approved by voters, any future funding would come from budget surpluses or other board-directed sources, thereby protecting funds for building and equipment improvement projects, upgrades, replacements, and repairs. If approved, the Board would control and approve all fund transfers into and out of the fund.

Motion by Lennox-Levins/Bossi to establish a Capital Improvement Fund. ***Motion carried.***

VIII. Communication and Support to the Board (Policy 2.8)(Incidental Information)

A. Superintendent Report

Superintendent Reed highlighted key community events from her written report. All Board members were invited to the District Convocation on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 8:00 AM at the high school, which will feature staff recognition, a keynote speaker, and a brunch. She also highlighted ongoing summer partnerships, including the Rutland Recreation Department's free Friday family events at Whites Pool and the Flynn Theater's back-to-school Playing Fields celebration at the Rutland Intermediate and Middle School fields on September 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

IX. Anticipated Executive Session - None

X. Next Meeting - September 8, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Longfellow Building, 6 Church St, Rutland, VT 05701

XI. RCPS Meeting Self Evaluation (Policy 4.1)

Chair Seward asked Commissioner Ogden to guide the Board through their first self-evaluation checklist. Commissioner Ogden and the Board unanimously agreed that the Board was engaged and prepared, successfully adhered to the agenda, operated at the governance level, and referenced policies throughout the meeting. Commissioner Ogden noted that while discussions were future-oriented, the Board still has work to do to fully develop the Ends Policy. Finally, Commissioner Ogden noted that community linkage opportunities had been identified through the Superintendent's report on community partnerships and that future training needs were recognized, specifically, Policy Governance training for new board members and student representatives.

XII. Adjournment - Motion by Bossi/Rondinone to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. *Motion carried.*

Respectfully submitted,
Bethany Sprague, Board Recording Secretary

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Pamela Reed, Superintendent
DATE: August 13, 2026

RE: Personnel Memorandum Licensed

RESOLVE: That the LICENSED SECTION OF THE PERSONNEL MEMO NO. 679 dated August 13, 2026, be approved as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

A. LICENSED SECTION

1. Appointments

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Salary</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Hilary Lambert	Culinary Arts Instructor/STC	\$73,051.00	8/20/26
Melanie Long	K-2 Elementary/NW	\$64,452.00	8/20/26
Evans Okai	Elementary Teacher/RIS	\$66,602.00	8/20/26
Margaret Schwartz	School Social Worker/RIS	\$47,252.00	8/20/26
Victor Marando	Special Education/RIS	\$66,152.00	8/20/26
Milka Wanjiru	Mathematics Teacher/ RMS	\$66,152.00	8/20/26