

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, March 8, 2016
Oxbow High School

APPROVED MINUTES

Beth Cobb convened the meeting at 7:13 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Shannon Darrah, Erin Sterner, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Beth Cobb, OESU Superintendent, Charlie Buttrey (arrived 7:36 p.m.)

PUBLIC PRESENT: Kristen Downey; Dan Grossman, Dana Grossman (departed after swearing in)

SWEARING IN OF BOARD MEMBERS (Dan Grossman): Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey

BOARD REORGANIZATION: MOTION: (Sterner/Downey) moved/seconded to nominate Darrah as Board Chair. Cobb accepted the nomination (unanimous approval). **MOTION:** (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to nominate Buttrey as Vice Chair (unanimous approval). **MOTION:** (Sterner/Downey) moved/seconded to nominate Acker to serve as Clerk (unanimous approval). Nominations for the three OESU representatives was deferred. **MOTION:** (Acker/Sterner) moved/seconded to appoint Darrah to serve as TA representative (unanimous approval).

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Acker/Sterner) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2016 Board meeting (Downey abstained, unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/Sterner) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 5165 and 5214 and payroll warrants # 5212 and 5190 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: None
Sterner noted the handouts from Town Meeting are on the TES website (www.thetfordschool.org) on the school board page. Hard copies are available at the library.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone): It is literacy week this week. Events included a book character parade and a visit by storyteller, Simon Brooks. Author Jennifer Carson is coming to read with 3rd and 4th graders and to share what it's like to be an author. The week will be concluded with an all school read. Throughout the week there has been a story prompt being passed throughout the school, started off by the

Kindergartners. Each class writes a few sentences. The story will be finished by the 6th grade. The 4th grade wax museum was tonight. Next Thursday is the annual 6th grade vs. staff basketball game and dinner. The dinner starts at 5 with the game at 6:30. All proceeds go to the Thetford Food Shelf and the 6th grade.

Petrone received a letter from GMP about electrical credits that will expire a year from the month they were earned. Currently the credits are worth about \$1,400. This is different from RECs. Petrone shared the GMP letter with Sterner, who explained that more energy was generated than expected. The credits may be awarded to any other GMP customer. The deadline is November. TTSD can also credit a separate TTSD GMP bill, such as the septic system. Sterner suggested the Board look at the credit status in June and January each year and to apply the credit to the septic account. Discussion followed.

Petrone stated he shared the Act 46 power point presentation from the town meeting with the staff. They felt it was helpful. Sterner asked if emails sent to advertise the last forum were effective. Discussion followed. Board members agreed it is important to get the word out about the upcoming forum in many different ways.

The last ski day was Friday. Not many trails were open. The professional development for that day was for the teachers to join the kids in any of their activities. Sterner thanked TES for offering the Montshire program for students who chose to stay at school instead of skiing.

ACT 46 UPDATE

UPDATE ON NORWICH, STRAFFORD, SHARON GROUP: This group meets tomorrow at 4:30. Buttrey reported Sharon recently suggested a 5 town RED, including Sharon, Strafford, Tunbridge, Stockbridge, and Thetford. Buttrey invited Strafford to come to Thetford's upcoming forum. Discussion followed about deadlines for the individual boards to vote. Options need to be narrowed down. Buttrey attended a Strafford School Board meeting. He feels Thetford and Strafford have a lot in common. Whatever the decision, there is going to have to be compromise. Doing nothing is not an option.

UPDATE ON RIVENDELL GROUP: Acker attended the study group meeting last Thursday. Consultant Gersen was away, but the group decided to meet to discuss updates following a Rivendell board meeting and TTSD's town meeting. David Ricker compiled a list of guiding principles. The list was pared down. The intent was to use that document to create a survey for the Rivendell community. Ricker drafted a survey that is very detailed. Several versions have been edited. Acker is concerned with how much detail was included in all the options. Sterner was surprised that options were presented despite the exploratory committee's ideas not yet being discussed by the study group. Acker does not think the two communities can be asked about any of these models because the feasibility has yet to be determined. Discussion followed and there was agreement that broader questions are more appropriate at this point. Acker reported she

met with some Thetford parents who weren't able to attend Town meeting. For those parents, a Rivendell option was not one they initially wanted to entertain but were more open after further discussion. Acker referred to an email from Gersen regarding what would have to happen for TTSD to engage in a side by side with Rivendell. Discussion followed regarding many different partnering options outlined by Gersen. Although TTSD can make a recommendation, TTSD does not technically choose their side by side district, the AOE does. Acker stated the only way it is going to work would be if Rivendell reconfigures. It is unclear if the Rivendell board has queried their community. Acker emphasized the survey is a draft. She reviewed the latest draft with the Board. Acker stated she plans to respond to Ricker about the survey, suggesting no specific discussion about Thetford, and that the survey should not come from the study group but rather the Rivendell board. The next meeting is March 17 at Rivendell. The Rivendell District meeting is on March 15.

DISCUSS PREPARATION FOR 3/22 ACT 46 PUBLIC FORUM: The meeting will be held in the TA gym. Acker suggested an earlier start at 6 with the option of pre-order pizza beforehand, and trying to end the meeting at 8. The pizza will be a pre-order, paid for by attendees. James Dixon will moderate. The power point presentation will be repeated with some modified options and time for questions and answers. Downey clarified the goal of this forum: is it to disseminate information or collect information? Board members agreed the goal is to collect information from the community. Downey suggested small group work to elicit ideas and opinions, noting at a huge forum it is difficult for all voices to be heard. Discussion followed with ideas about how to hear from as many people as possible. Sterner shared a preliminary survey she developed based on conversations regarding priorities discussed at town meeting. Sterner suggested developing a list of variables that are impacting the options to get sense of which the community feels the most strongly about, without specifying options. This questionnaire would go out before the forum. However, some responses may be based on misunderstandings. Buttrey suggested mailing questionnaires to everyone on the town list, but there is not enough time. Discussion followed about where to make the surveys physically available in addition to posting online. Small group discussion logistics were discussed. Acker recalled that Cobb had the idea of attendees placing a sticky note on the poster that illustrated their first choice. This might overlook other acceptable options. Or, attendees could indicate preferences with colored dots (green (favorite), yellow (acceptable), red (opposed)). Discussion followed about when and how Board members should share their opinions about merger options. Downey summarized the discussion, stating that Rivendell would be a very interesting option if there were more time, and it may be a bigger risk than the Strafford, Sharon option. Darrah added that Rivendell is not required to do anything by law and they have some complexities related to being an interstate school district. The Rivendell option may not be feasible given lack of time, but that doesn't mean TTSD or TA can't collaborate with them outside of Act 46. There are a couple different options with Strafford/Sharon group. Acker recounted that the first public forum indicated the community wants to preserve the current education system. She would like to know if people truly do want to keep it, or are they willing to change

the current model somewhat in order to gain some efficiencies and economies of scale. Buttrey pointed out that a 5 town RED makes it harder to accommodate each district. Discussion followed. Buttrey stated the other unknown is how the tax rate will be affected. The notion that mergers are going to help the tax payer may not be valid. Opportunities for students are a benefit if the merger is done right. There was more discussion about whether Rivendell is a viable option, and how to present this to the public. Rivendell is not working on an Act 46 timeline. They are still assessing what their community wants and got a later start in the process than TTSD. More information may be available after the next Sharon, Strafford meeting. Acker will ask TES to send an email out to parents about the forum and availability of the handouts and slides from town meeting. She will ask TA if they could send a similar email to Thetford parents. Board members agreed they need to meet before the forum. They will meet Saturday morning, March 12.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Downey/Buttrey) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

3/22/15 Act 46 Public Forum, Thetford Academy Gym 6:00 p.m. (time may change)

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Julie Acker, Board Clerk