

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, April 5, 2016
Oxbow High School

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 7:42 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Erin Sterner, Kristen Downey, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Beth Cobb, OESU Superintendent

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved with amendments.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the March 8, March 12, and March 22, 2016 Board meetings (unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 5221 and 5254, and payroll warrant # 5220 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: Correspondence regarding Act 46 were received from Katie Milligan, Ann Swanson, Sue Fritz, and Andy Barrens. Sterner asked if Act 46 questions could be compiled into a frequently asked Q&A sheet that is developed as questions are asked and posted on the Board website. Discussion followed. Correspondence was received from Sara Ecker regarding a bus issue, and Petrone has followed up with her. Petrone reported the issue regarded carrying loose sports equipment on the bus. For example, a loose skateboard is not allowed to be carried onto the bus, but can be carried in a duffle bag or strapped to a backpack. There are no projectiles allowed. There are guidelines by the State, and it is unclear if the bus company has adopted those guidelines. Buses need to be consistent so the drivers do not have to make decisions on the spot. Perhaps this can be addressed in the upcoming bus contract negotiations. Buttrey stated RFP's will be put out in 2 weeks. Darrah stated bus driver training about how to interact with kids is important. Petrone stated that if parents have a complaint about a bus driver Petrone will notify the bus company. Jared Willey contacted the Board regarding the septic service. Petrone and Thompson followed up with him.

Board members noted that public correspondence can be made public in entirety during meetings. The school board has not shared correspondence in this manner in the past, but could, as the select board has done.

Darrah presented a letter of resignation from TES social worker, Piper Clyborne. She is not returning from her maternity leave. Her absence has highlighted how much this

social worker position is needed. The position will be advertised soon. There had not been a temporary social worker during her leave.

Darrah received a letter from the Sharon school board regarding forming a RED to meet Act 46 requirements. The Board was already aware and this option had been presented at the forum.

An Act 250 notice was received. Petrone explained the girl scout camp wants to build a swimming pool. TES is a neighbor which is why they received the letter. Board members expressed support.

DISCUSS APRIL MEETING SCHEDULE: Sharon and Strafford are voting on April 25 whether to join their SU. The next TTSD Board meeting falls during school vacation week. Discussion followed regarding moving the meeting to April 12. Darrah thinks this meeting needs to be available to the public because decisions may be made. This will be a board meeting, not a forum. The Board will review survey results and discuss a path. Acker cannot be there. The Rivendell study group has a meeting on the 12th, which will need to be moved.

TA REPORT: There was lengthy discussion about Act 46 including what the potential outcomes could mean for TA. It is difficult for TA to plan. Another unknown is whether sending towns such as Waits River and Hartland will stay choice. TA needs to attract students from new places. TA has been talking with Rivendell to develop partnerships. In the context of a declining student population, the futures task force is looking at the possibility of a full scale international student program. A proposal was submitted to the Tuck business school. Tuck will develop a business plan for TA. The outdoor education program is going forward, and applying for more grants. TA is trying to hire someone to run a summer camp. The partnership agreement mandates two joint board meetings per year. Discussion followed regarding scheduling and topics.

Buttrey asked for an update about the 6th grade transition to TA. Petrone responded it has been ongoing since the Fall, with some students visiting TA so they become comfortable with the campus. There will be a math placement exam to help place students between 3 levels of 7th grade math. There is currently no formal math program at TES. Teachers have been meeting at the district level with Cobb to develop curriculum from a variety of programs to meet the standards. Math specialist, Mariah Fahey, does a lot of work with teachers to identify resources and best practices. It is a lot of work, but teachers tend to agree that it is better not to be tied to a particular program. Project based learning does not follow a specific program because it follows child interest. Petrone's next meeting with TA will focus on science standards.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone): The Lion King, Jr. performance is this week. Bradford Elementary is coming to one of the performances. The milk machine will be installed without chocolate milk after April vacation. Milk needs to be on the

student's tray before sitting down, according to the AOE. The flow of the cafeteria needs to be changed. This has been the first year of the teacher growth model. Petrone has been making observations throughout the year. Now the teachers need to do self assessments against their two goals, and will write self reflections. The second trimester just ended. Report cards went home on March 17. There are a few glitches in the system, such as previously entered grades not printing. There has already been discussion about making the report card more concise. It is four pages long. Downey asked if Track My Progress reports are sent home regularly. Petrone responded, no, but they could be, or they can be discussed at conferences. Track My Progress is an online assessment tool similar to the smarter balance assessment, which is required by the state. Students can take the assessment up to four times per year. It is a computer adaptive test where the questions adjust in difficulty based on how the child is answering the questions. It follows students throughout their elementary school career. This is the second year of using the Track My Progress program. Darrah asked Petrone about hearing the SBAC scores, since the NECAP scores used to be reviewed with the Board. All the scores were in the paper last Sunday. Thetford did better than the state average on everything except for 4th grade math. Buttrey noted the direct correlation between a town's affluence and test scores. Parent conferences have already started even though there is a conference day on Friday April 15. April break is the 18th - 22nd. The school will be in use by the D&J music camp through Thetford recreation. D&J will be back in the summer for three weeks. The TES staff has been doing a lot of work on the TES mission and visions. The staff is now formulating values. So far value statements include: community, student engagement, continuous staff improvement, school culture and environment, individuality, and sustainability. Petrone feels it has been a great process. Once it is out of draft form Petrone will give an update. Setting goals will be the next step. Saturday is the Vermont climate resilience conference. Petrone and Joette will attend to present the 1st grade farm stand.

PLAYGROUND GROUP UPDATE: Acker stated that since contracts are going out to bid in other areas this time of year, the playground committee would like the Board to consider redefining what is included in the lawn care contract. The playground committee used budgeted money to hire a consultant to assess the current state of the playground and took the suggestions elicited from the parent and community surveys to develop a plan to make the current playground more park-like. As the consultant assessed what is existing, it was clear the trees need a lot of help. For example, the tree that is part of the fort is dead and needs to be removed. Some of the other trees are unhealthy because the soil has been so packed. Instead of just lawn care, TES needs more of a grounds keeping service that includes caring for the trees, perhaps twice a year to aerate and feed. Acker referred to a drawing of the property and stressed the importance of protecting the investment of the trees. If one looks at the cost to plant new trees, the cost of service would be worth it. A climbing wall is going to be installed in May on the outside of the gym wall. Joette has been meeting with Kevin Brown about getting trees planted. This summer E.C. Brown will get the earth moved so the land is set for future projects. Costs will be well within the \$10,000 that was budgeted. Petrone reminded Acker that June

30th is the deadline for spending before the end of the fiscal year. Joette received a grant to install a BMX-style bike path, which will be in a contained space near the gardens. The earth will be shaped for the bike path this summer. Darrah stated that if the lawn care is going to change, it might need to be put out for bids. Buttrey agreed if it's higher than \$15,000 then it will have to be put out for bidding. Darrah reminded the board about the possibility of repaving the parking lot, and moving the basketball court to add parking. Discussion followed with Acker related to the playground plans and drainage remediation. The sledding hill also may be moved because the kids cannot be watched on the back side of the hill. The basketball court could be moved to where the sledding hill is now. Sterner suggested a tree inventory when initiating services with a contractor.

ACT 46 UPDATE: Darrah stated she has looked at the responses from the online survey. Sterner compiled a summary of the online survey, and shared the following: There were 308 total responses, including 44 students. The responses were somewhat different from the poll taken at the forum.

During the forum option 1 (merge with Strafford and form a side by side), and option 4 (form an alternative structure) were favored. Survey respondents overwhelmingly favored option 1, which received almost no negative responses.

In the forum poll and the survey, option 3 (merge with Rivendell), received neither positive or negative responses. Sterner reviewed the comments, and she stated it was clear there wasn't enough information for people to decide if they liked the idea of merging with Rivendell.

Board members concluded that option 5 (maintain current structure, do nothing) is not what the town wants.

The choice vs. designation question survey responses were consistent with the forum responses. Almost 50% of respondents strongly favor designation and 17% strongly favor choice.

In response to the question about high school preference (options were TA, Rivendell, Oxbow and Hartford), almost all respondents chose TA as their first choice with Rivendell second. Hanover and Sharon were not presented as options because of special education limitations. Sterner explained that only Vermont schools that are licensed in all special education categories can be considered. Discussion followed.

The question regarding partnering with the other towns resulted in Strafford as the most popular choice and Stockbridge the least popular. People don't know much about Tunbridge or Stockbridge. There were mostly neutral responses about most of the schools. Sterner speculated there isn't enough information about those schools to make an informed decision or have an opinion right now. There were concerns about bus travel time related to schools farther away. There were 78 written responses. Discussion

followed about how to share the results with the public at the April 12th meeting. Darrah suggested posting a link to the results before the meeting. Board members agreed to post the data. Concern was expressed that there had not been a hard copy of the survey available. The survey could not have been published in the town newsletter until May. The Board will remember this if there is another survey. Acker stated the libraries were prepared to assist the public in completing the survey. In summary, Acker stated she did not hear anything too surprising from the survey and the results reaffirmed what the Board is already thinking. The link for the survey results will be published with the meeting notice in as many ways as possible.

NORWICH, STRAFFORD, SHARON GROUP: Buttrey reported that the last meeting was very well attended. Strafford recently held their forum and presented six Act 46 options for Strafford. Acker pointed out that TTSD is already collaborating with Strafford because TTSD shared a lot of their forum materials with them. Strafford's #1 choice was an alternative structure/keep what they have. Their #2 choice was to merge with Thetford. Buttrey spoke at Strafford's forum. Some of the questions discussed included areas of compromise such as merging teacher contracts, what happens with 7/8: does Strafford they give it up, does TA run it, does TTSD go K-8?

Strafford board member Eric Goodling, came to the meeting with a proposal for an alternative structure, and suggested that four towns (Strafford, Thetford, Tunbridge, and Sharon) seek the \$20,000 grant to work toward merging. Sharon and Tunbridge have held their public forums. Those schools could still go to the White River SU. Strafford does not want to go to White River SU. Their Board is diluted in that SU. Discussion followed. Acker stated that when she looks at the survey results, it is apparent that collaborating with Strafford is a priority, regardless of the form. Discussion followed about possibilities. TTSD was invited to the Stockbridge meeting. Buttrey will attend.

RIVENDELL STUDY GROUP: Darrah stated she had a phone conversation with Marc DuBois from the Rivendell school board. Darrah told DuBois that TTSD is headed toward a new SU that could include Rivendell, too. The Rivendell board is not in favor of this idea. They want Thetford to merge with them. Darrah encouraged DuBois to keep the door open for being in an SU together, but the Rivendell Board does not agree. It is also unclear if the Rivendell community is in agreement with what the Rivendell board is thinking regarding closing schools and designating TA for high school. Darrah encouraged polling their community and to look broader. The study group consultant, Wayne Gersen, has been away. Acker stated an alternative structure is attractive because the option is left open to partner with Rivendell later. There may be a legal hurdle due to the interstate structure. The April 12 meeting with Rivendell needs to be rescheduled. Darrah stated if a merger is not an option with Rivendell there is not much more to discuss. Darrah suspects the Rivendell group will end soon. Acker encouraged getting together periodically with the Rivendell board. Buttrey pointed out that if Sharon, Strafford and Tunbridge join their own SU, TTSD would be left without any partners except for Rivendell.

OTHER BUSINESS:

ELECT OESU BOARD MEMBERS: Three representatives are needed.

MOTION: (Buttrey/Sterner) moved/seconded to appoint Acker, Darrah and Buttrey to the OESU Board (unanimous approval).

VACANT SCHOOL BOARD SEAT: Sterner is leaving the Board and will serve until the end of April. Her term ends in 2017. Darrah will post the opening on the listserv and the newspaper, requesting letters of interest. The Board will then interview candidates. This person will serve the remainder of Sterner's term.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (PERSONNEL): MOTION: (Buttrey/Sterner) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 9:24 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. Out of executive session at 9:33 p.m.

MOTION: (Sterner/Buttrey) to Instruct the Superintendent to Issue a Letter of Non Renewal of Contract to James Tierney (Unanimous approval, Acker abstains).

EXECUTIVE SESSION (STUDENT MATTER): MOTION: (Buttrey /Downey) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 9:35 p.m. to discuss a student matter. Out of executive session at 9:45 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Sterner/Buttrey) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

4/12/16	Thetford Town School District Meeting	7:00 p.m.
4/26/16	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:00 p.m. (library)

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Julie Acker, Board Clerk