

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, May 10, 2016**  
**Oxbow High School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 7:56 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** none

**AGENDA REVIEW:** Agenda approved with amendments.

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Acker/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2016 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Acker/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders #5302 and 5298, and payroll warrant #5297 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PRESENTATION - Melanie Elliott:** Elliott received a letter from VSBIT (Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust) to notify OESU of current members. Thetford is the only school within OESU that does not have unemployment insurance. TTSD is a reimbursable employer with the Department of Labor. If there is an unemployment claim TTSD pays the lost wages. Elliott compiled the data to look at the rate and usage. Periodically Elliott likes to check in with the Board with updated information. It is possible to apply for a July 1 start. Elliott did not look at what is currently budgeted for unemployment, if anything. For the next two years the rate would be 0.1% of the payroll salaries for the first \$8,000 for anyone who makes more than \$8,000. This totals approximately \$415,500. The annual premium would be \$416 for FY17. Or, the other way that rate is determined is to look at the usage over the past three fiscal years. The usage has been \$55 in FY14. The unemployment insurance pays the premium plus 50%. That would be \$624 paid towards future claims. It works that way for the first three years. After the third year insurance pays 100% of claims. Points for the Board to consider include there has not been usage, but if TTSD has insurance the budget can be set and TTSD would be prepared. TTSD would save at least \$208 next year if there are claims. If employees who were affected by the reduction in force don't find employment, they may claim unemployment. Buttrey recalled considering insurance three years ago. The Board declined because the usage didn't justify expense. Any utilization would affect rates in future years. Elliott will investigate if anything was budgeted for insurance. Another benefit is working with Equifax who works with VISBIT

to contest claims. They have a good track record of winning those claims. Discussion followed. TTSD has been lucky in that there haven't been significant reductions over the past five years. Darrah commented this may allow for more responsible budgeting. Elliott reminded the Board there is not a benefit unless insurance is held for 3 years. The premium will change based on salaries and claims. Elliott will email Board members the agreements for review. Buttrey expressed concern about claims coming in the next quarter. After July 1 the next cycle would be October 1. Discussion followed. There are 4 RIFs this year. The contracts run through June 30, which means those employees could not make a claim until July 1. Buttrey is in favor of insurance. Acker stated the timing makes sense to do this now starting July 1. TTSD would need to sign on by May 16. MOTION: (Downey/Acker) moved/seconded for the Board chair to sign on behalf of the Board to enroll in the VSBIT unemployment program (unanimous approval).

**FINANCIAL REPORT AND DISCUSSION RE: AUDIT REPORT - Janet Mitchell and Keith Merrick:** Mitchell reported that on the revenue side, \$10,000 was budgeted for tuition for a TES student, but it was not received as anticipated. Mitchell removed that item. There is more in solar farm and facilities use. State placed aid was received but hadn't been budgeted for. There is \$13,349 in additional revenue that the Board wasn't anticipating. Expenditures over in categories in Principal's office, facilities, transportation, secondary education, and special education. Debt service is not being spent this year. TTSD should come in under budget. At this time the balance is \$101,673. There may be some encumbered expenses. If everything that was budgeted is spent, there will be a \$40,000 deficit. Discussion followed. Merrick stated the deficit will need to be addressed by FY18. Acker asked for a reminder about the warning on the bond vote. Darrah stated the Board has three years from the vote to take out a bond. The Board will keep the bond in mind when building the budget for FY18. Buttrey asked Merrick and Mitchell for their thoughts about the separate accounts issue that was raised by the audit report. Merrick stated he is not impressed with the audit and is not sure it is based on much evidence. For instance, the sunshine fund is misstated. There are due-tos and due-froms from that account. One of Merrick's criticisms was the concern regarding the interest earned not going back to the same account. This was investigated. The total interest was \$8. The accrued interest goes into the general fund. Merrick did agree that the Board needs a policy regarding oversight of finances. Acker asked about regular review of financial statements. Mitchell stated she reviews the budgets monthly, anticipating that she is going to report to the Board. Acker stated it is most valuable when she hears the explanation in person from Mitchell, which currently happens quarterly. Mitchell acknowledged that during budget season she may not attend Board meetings. Acker reiterated it would be helpful to review financials during Board meetings quarterly. Discussion followed regarding scheduling. Ideally, the financials would be reviewed at the OESU meeting monthly, with advance Board review. Merrick agreed to draft an interfund borrowing policy. The capital assets inventory has been checked. There is a list of computers in the school office and other items that are worth more than \$5,000. The auditors have historically kept a list and passed it down. There are pages in the audit itself that list values of assets. Merrick has added this to the ledgers. There is no

breakdown of buildings or furniture. Mitchell added that by law all the audits need to be sent to the State electronically. Northrup assured her that he would send the audit, but he failed to do that within the two week deadline. Mitchell learned this because she received a notice from the AOE requesting the report. Even though the report is not supposed to originate from the SU and are supposed to be electronic, Mitchell worked it out with the AOE and sent a hard copy by priority mail. Evidence of unauthorized signatures has been addressed. Merrick reiterated Northrup did not address anything of significance. Acker stated that Board financial oversight was the only issue that stood out to her, and now there is a plan to meet regularly for a financial review. Mitchell asked Petrone about paying off the expenses for the septic repair, which included installing new pipe. Is this considered a capital improvement? If so, there may be a way to shift the financials to avoid more of a deficit. Mitchell suggested the septic repair could be an insurance claim. Petrone will investigate. Mitchell offered to assist Petrone. Darrah reminded the Board that she would like to keep an eye on other maintenance issues. Drafting a state of the facilities should be added to a future meeting.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone):** Arts night was last night and was very well done with a lot of art work on display. The band and orchestra played, and there was a drumming performance by 5th and 6th grades. Next year's class configurations plan is as follows:

One Kindergarten (Nunez), one multiage K-1 class (Porter), one first grade (Rogers), two second grades (Waldman and Kendall), one third grade (Bradley), two fourth grades (Atherton and Bennett), two fifth grades (Sharpless and Harrington) and two sixth grades (McLaughlin and LaRoche). There are 17 in the rising third grade. Petrone and the staff have had many multiage discussions this year and did several site visits. They decided it is not the right time for the staff to start multiage classrooms schoolwide. Instead they decided to start slowly and use the K-1 as a model. Acker asked how it will be decided which kindergartners and first graders will be in which class? Petrone responded it will not be based on ability. At the recent teacher conferences, the multiage plan was part of discussions with the parents. There was a lot of parent support for the K-1. No classroom assignments have been made. Class placement letters, to get input from parents, are due May 16. May 20th is Kindergarten screening. There is work to do around the para educator assignments because TES is losing 3 paras due to the reduction in force. There will no longer be one para per classroom, although TES is reinstating special assistants. It will be a team based approach, such as K-2, 3-4, and 5-6 special education teams, and moving paras between classrooms. SBAC testing is going well. The fourth grade took the science NECAPs last week.

**TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS** - Buttrey reported he hand delivered a letter to Bette Nunez, who is on the negotiating team, to advise that the Board wants to get started. He told her it is his understanding that the sessions need to be open. There is no date for the first session yet. The Board may want to consider adding more members to the negotiating team. There are four members on the teachers team. Buttrey would like to get some sessions in before the end of the school year. Elliott offered support around health

insurance, since it will be included in the next agreement. Darrah added the Board should discuss with Petrone before negotiations begin.

**ACT 46 DISCUSSION - NEXT STEPS FOR ALTERNATE EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE:** Acker had emailed the Rivendell group about a final meeting and has not gotten a firm date. Monday May 16 is a possible date, but may be too short notice to warn the meeting.

Discussion followed about open meeting law and posting the warning. Warnings are physically posted at least at TES, Baker's, and the Town Hall, as well as on the website within five days of the meeting. There is now a new quicklink on the TES website that goes directly to the school board page. Darrah stated that when the Board last met, a decision needed to be made about entering a pre-study group with Strafford, Sharon, Tunbridge and Stockbridge. Hartland and Windsor have not yet decided what they are going to do. Buttrey went to Strafford earlier tonight. He had hoped to get the two boards together before tonight. Strafford agreed the two boards would meet on May 24. TTSD already has a meeting that night. Maybe the Strafford meeting can happen right before the regular meeting in Thetford and limit the meeting to an hour. The Sharon representative to what had been the Norwich, Strafford, Sharon, and Thetford group, Steve Gagliardone, said Sharon will be ready tomorrow to present an agreement for a \$5,000 grant to explore an alternative structure with Thetford, Tunbridge Sharon, and Strafford. Buttrey is concerned about losing an opportunity with Hartland if TTSD commits to this exploratory group. Buttrey would rather not be in two groups simultaneously. If Hartland goes with Windsor then the decision is made and TTSD goes with Strafford, Sharon and Tunbridge, making the conversation with Strafford important. Buttrey does not believe Strafford is going into the White River SU. If TTSD does not join with anybody, they can stay with OESU. Darrah asked Buttrey, what does Strafford want to do? Buttrey replied they want to determine how to best advance their interests, and discuss if it is best to try to advance together. Darrah stated that Hartland is in a 706 study group and will know their outcome by end of May. The study committee with Thetford, Tunbridge, Sharon, and Strafford is not binding. If Hartland leaves their 706, Hartland could unofficially join the study group. Darrah suggested telling others that TTSD needs until the end of May to decide if they want to be part of that exploratory study group. Buttrey supported meeting with Strafford, and stated an alternate structure may be very expensive. A study group can help determine costs. Acker stated she feels strongly that Thetford and Strafford need to meet before making any other study group decisions. The Board agreed it is important to attend the meeting tomorrow and ask for more time. The TTSD Board will meet with the Strafford Board on May 24 at 6 p.m..

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Ben Williams and Scott MacPhee are the candidates for the open Board position. They will be interviewed in public meeting on May 24. May 19 is the TA joint meeting at 7 p.m. at TA, focusing on the outdoor initiative. It may make sense to discuss Act 46 as well. Darrah would like to plan out the summer and goals for the next year.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (STUDENT MATTER):** MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 9:20 p.m. to discuss a student matter. Out of executive session at 9:36 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (Downey/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

5/19/16 Joint Meeting with TA Board of Trustees, Thetford Academy 7:00 p.m.  
5/24/16 Joint Meeting with Strafford School Board/Thetford Town School District  
6:00 p.m./7:00 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Julie Acker, Board Clerk