

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, November 15, 2016**  
**Thetford Elementary School Art Room**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey (arrived 7:36 p.m), Scott MacPhee, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Melanie Elliot and Keith Merrick (OESU)

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

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2016 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Acker/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 5723 and 5727, and payroll warrant # 5719 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** Darrah announced there is a local concerns meeting for the TES parking lot/trail head on November 17 at 6:30 at TES. There are two proposals for parking lot configuration. There will be a second meeting December 8, at 6:30.

**TA REPORT:** Darrah reported that at last week's TA Board meeting there was a neat presentation from the math department about a relatively new math curriculum ("lab") that includes Algebra 1 Lab, Algebra 2 Lab and Geometry Lab. These lab classes include the same topics covered in the other non-lab classes, but offer a different approach. Learning is done in small groups with hands on projects. The sequence is a little different but the content is the same. It is not a lower level class, just a different approach. The lab curriculum is in its third year. TA is trying to identify students who would benefit from a lab style class. The audit report came back and went well.

The Board discussed the Lyme partnership agreement, which is up for renewal. Lyme differs from Thetford and Strafford because it is a New Hampshire district, and therefore does not designate TA. TA is looking for ways the Lyme School can work with TA, because school choice is a parental decision. TES 5/6 grades have been playing sports with Lyme kids because of low numbers. These new relationships may bring more Lyme students to TA. The joint meeting between the TA and TTSD Boards may take place the second meeting in December.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone):** Last Friday was a successful parent conference day. This year's participation numbers are pending, but in the past there has been greater than 95% parent participation. Some teachers offer three way conferences to include the student. Yesterday was the Veteran's Day assembly, which was run by the 6th graders. It was not as well attended as in the past, perhaps because it was not held on Veteran's Day. Petrone's father was one of seven veterans who attended.

Linda Sullivan is the new para-educator in Susan Rogers' Kindergarten. She is a great addition to the staff. The talent show is tomorrow night, and during the day for the school. The first trimester ends soon. There is a new version of the report card. It was revamped last year to make it standards based, and it has since been revamped again to make it more user friendly and reliable. Cobb led a teacher training on how to use the Vermont comprehensive assessment tool. Report cards will go home on December 2, as well as last year's SBAC scores for 3 - 6 grades.

**FY18 DRAFT of BUDGET:** The budget worksheet was prepared by Merrick with some guesstimates. The para-educator contracts are good through next year, so these were the salaries used. For the teacher's salaries, Merrick assumed they all will take a step. TA tuition is expected to decrease by 11 students. Merrick figured the tuition would be flat. The number of vocational students was estimated at 6. Special education will increase. The revenue was increased accordingly for special education. The bus contract is larger than anticipated for this year. For debt service, the full amount of \$86,000 was entered. The transfer in FY18 was \$26,000 in food service, which makes up for last year's deficit. For taxes, this budget estimates education spending will be up 1.4%, using the same figures as last year. These figures are from the State, and Merrick estimates the tax rate will likely not be as high as 1.4%.

The equalized pupil figure and the common level of appraisal (CLA) are pending from the State, and have a big influence on taxes. Darrah explained that in order to lower taxes, the equalized pupil needs to go up or stay the same. The CLA letter usually comes in early December. If this stayed flat or increased, it would lower taxes. The State bases the CLA on the sales of properties over the last three years. Petrone added that maintenance figures are in the budget. The primary wing has no insulation. There may be grant opportunities. The estimate on the phone system is pending. The phone system would run through the internet, and would divert to a cell tower if the internet went down. Currently TES has EC Fiber for free in return for hosting the hub on the property. The multiuse wing (gym) needs automated lights and sinks to prevent problematic public use issues. Petrone would like to replace keys with a swipe card. Perhaps the town can help with this expense because that space is for public use. A culvert by the garage needs replacement. Darrah asked Merrick to add \$20,000 as a place holder in the budget for the phone system. Acker added that Joette has been trying to get an estimate from E.C. Brown's for grounds upkeep.

**ACT 46 UPDATE:** Buttrey stated he has reconsidered and now supports self-funding the study grant (\$1,200) for an alternative structure with Strafford, Sharon and Tunbridge. Downey arrived at the Board meeting, coming directly from meeting with representatives from Strafford, Sharon, and Tunbridge. She reported that each district had the action item of approaching their respective boards about funding the study group. Sharon didn't vote. Strafford and Tunbridge voted to fund the study. Sharon clarified that it is not that they might not fund the study, but they want to wait at least two meetings because other factors are shifting. Chelsea had an election day vote and voted to eliminate their high school and have a K-8 structure. Strafford stressed they would like the alternative structure study to happen. Sharon seemed divided. The next meeting is December 19.

In the meantime, Downey's action items include: what data does TTSD want to be able to assess; and what data would a consultant need to produce, or can TTSD produce it. Downey volunteered to research consultant options. Discussion followed. On December 12 there is an Agency of Education meeting in Barre to review the draft rules for alternative structures. Acker may be able to attend.

**TEACHER NEGOTIATION UPDATE:** Buttrey reported he and Downey had their first meeting with the teachers to lay out the ground rules. The minutes have been posted on the TES website and on the listserv. Downey and Buttrey meet again tomorrow with the teachers and initial offers will be made. Buttrey is seeking direction from the Board. This should be a one year contract, which is justified by Act 46. Health insurance options are being changed dramatically. Buttrey stated the offer should be VHEI Gold. The district would maintain 86% of that policy. Or, teachers can chose another policy and TTSD will pay the equivalent of the 86%. Discussion followed regarding HRA vs. HSA. Elliott stated that compared to now, one can see more doctors and the network is opened to NH. The cost per paycheck will be lower, regardless of what is negotiated. The cost to see the doctor is influenced by what plan is chosen. There may be some new out of pocket expenses, but those may be off set by other savings.

With the same cost share as currently, the employee savings is approximately \$950 - \$1,500 per year and the employer saves \$4,000 - \$5,000 per enrolled individual. This is a potential savings to the district of \$103,000. This savings is not included in Merrick's estimated budget. The next budget will include six months on the current plan and six months on the new plan. TTSD could also offer to add money to an HSA. Discussion followed. Elliott stated the teachers must have the option of all four plans. The other OESU Boards will try to keep everybody as close as possible by offering the same package. Regarding salaries, Buttrey believes this is an unsettled time in the Upper Valley due to DH layoffs and the economy. If the grid is maintained, every teacher will get a pay increase (1.5 - 5%), depending on where on the grid he/she is. Buttrey proposed keeping the grid as is, with all teachers getting a step.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Superintendent Contract):** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 7:50 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent contract. Out of executive session at 8:05 p.m. No action taken.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Student Matter):** MOTION: (Buttrey/ Downey) moved/ seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:06 p.m. to discuss a student matter. Out of executive session at 8:15 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

12/6/16 OESU/TTSD Meeting

6:00/7:15 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Julie Acker, Board Clerk