

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, December 20, 2016**  
**Thetford Elementary School Library**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Keith Thompson, OESU Assistant Superintendent, Beth Cobb, OESU Superintendent

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Bob Bartlett, Cameron Cudhea, Linda Lanteigne-Magoon, Keith Merrick, Bill Bugg, Suzanna Liepmann

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

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2016 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Acker/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 5776, 5749, and 5762, and payroll warrants # 5767 and 5758 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**TA RESOURCE COMMITTEE AND THETFORD BOARD DISCUSSION ON FY18**

**BUDGET:** Merrick has some updated numbers and distributed a draft budget. The CLA is not available yet. Pre-K spending will be up because of an increase in activity. Merrick projected the following 7-12 Thetford students: 194 to attend TA and 6 vocational tech. He added 3.5 TA students in case students register after the budget is set. Thetford enrollment at TA has decreased due to fewer students. Vocational education spending is up because the tuition increased. Special education is a wild card. Transportation is down because vocational transportation has been moved to the OESU budget. Merrick included the last year of the deficit recovery for debt service. For projecting taxes, the equalized pupil figure did go up, which is good. The cost per pupil is above the excess spending threshold, but if debt service is removed it moves below threshold. There is no penalty expected. The tax rate decreases by 3.0% , however the CLA is not in yet. The CLA may change this figure a bit. Darrah asked Petrone if his anticipated costs are included. Petrone stated, yes, the figures look good to him based on the current staff. These calculations are based on TA's tuition remaining flat. Buttrey stated this may be a good time to put money aside for future capital improvements. This could be warned as a separate article. Buttrey asked Merrick to calculate the effect on the tax rate if \$50,000 and \$100,00 are added to expenses. Darrah pointed out this budget includes current health benefits. Teacher negotiations are pending. Thompson suggested building the tuition reserve back up - it is at zero now. Discussion followed. Merrick reminded Board member he did include 3.5 extra students attending TA, which may address the lack of tuition reserve. The warning needs to be signed by January 20. TA Board attendees were invited to add input. Cudhea reported that

keeping TA tuition flat puts the TA budget at a \$300,000 deficit. The TA budget also assumes keeping the current staffing. After assessing student course needs, the TA guidance department recommended adding 1.7 FTE in order to maximize course programming. That staff increase was not included in the TA budget. Lanteigne-Magoon stated that ideally the tuition rate would increase by 6%, excluding the 1.7% FTE increase. Bugg stated tuition is the same as five years ago. Bugg continued by saying TA needs more faculty now to run the current program. There are several large study centers because there are not appropriate classes for enough students. There is one section in which there are three simultaneous study sections. Large study sections are not the desired outcome. Moving the teacher salary grid forward at the projected enrollment requires a 3% increase in tuition without adding any FTE. TA is negotiating this year. Lanteigne-Magoon stated the projected Thetford student count at TA is about 200. There is a smaller incoming class from TES. Last year, TA budgeted for 323 total students but ended up with 339. TA is budgeting for an enrollment of 325. The Board will vote on the budget on January 12. Merrick did some calculations during the meeting and reported a preliminary figure: A 6% increase in TA tuition would result in a \$19,080 tuition rate. The TTSD budget would then increase by \$124,000. Merrick needs to calculate how such a tuition rate increase would impact the tax rate. The TA representatives agreed it is unrealistic to raise tuition by 6%. Buttrey stated that 1.6% is the consumer price index for New England. It would be good to keep any tax increase below 1.6%. Darrah agreed to keeping any tax increase as low as possible, noting many layoffs this year. Thompson confirmed that the Board requests calculating a budget to include a 3% TA tuition increase, as well as adding \$50,000 and \$100,000 for future capital improvements. This information will be available for the next meeting.

**TA SCHOOL DAY HOURS:** Bugg noted this is the first public session during which the following information will be shared. Bugg has been working on this school start time issue for about four years. There has been a steady stream of parent interest to move the school start time later. TA's current 7:30 a.m. start is the second earliest in the state. Bugg has been working with Petrone and the director of the technical center. Starting school year 2017/18, TA's start time will be 8:05 or 8:10 with dismissal at 2:50 or 2:55 with a combined bus route for TES and TA. There are three bus routes in Thetford. Drop off and pick up would be at TA first, then proceeding to TES. There should be transportation savings that are yet to be exactly determined. Bugg has discussed this with the TA faculty union. As of this morning they have indicated they are willing to discuss the start and end times as listed, and are still discussing scheduling of faculty meetings. Darrah added that many school districts close to TTSD, such as Oxbow and Rivendell, have combined busing. MacPhee noted it is a nationwide trend to delay start times. Thompson stated the cost savings was researched recently and savings will not be significant. Bugg countered that the first and foremost reason for changing the start time is that research shows teenagers need to start later. It is an Academy of Pediatrics recommendation. There will also be a positive impact on the environment as a result of fewer bus runs. The later start time should also help with out of district student recruiting, which in turn helps the TTSD budget. Bugg acknowledged the impact on athletics like the ski team, and the impact on the last period class if athletes need to be excused early. Petrone and Bugg will work on appropriately notifying the public. Bugg added there still may be the option of students arriving early. For example, TA faculty meetings may take place in the early morning. Bugg stated that results from the last poll indicated 66% of parents were in favor of changing school time. Acker noted this change may help with buses being on time at the end of the day for TES. Bugg added that school vacation

schedules may need to aligned.

**ACT 46 UPDATE:** The meeting was rescheduled for early January. Downey stated it is unlikely there will be any new plan. Darrah asked, if there is no merger plan by the July 1, 2017 deadline, does TTSD need to write a proposal for State in order to remain in the newly reconfigured OESU? Cobb will investigate. Acker suggested hosting an Act 46 update meeting before town meeting to avoid dominating town meeting with this topic. Darrah wondered if an Act 46 update could be part of pre-town meeting, or part of the school report? Discussion followed. The Board concluded it is no longer a dialogue, but an update. Darrah suggested including an update as part of pre-town and town meeting. Acker asked TA attendees for an update on proposed changes to independent schools. Cudhea reported he attended the hearing with the State Board of Education held at St. Johnsbury Academy. Eighty people spoke including Cudhea. The majority of speakers were parents defending why their child needs an independent school. Very little attention went to the rules themselves, although that is what Cudhea spoke to. Bugg added, if they new rules pass as currently proposed, TA will not be affected much because most of the changes have to do with offering special education services in all areas, publicly disclosing finances. Requiring licensing of teachers is no longer being considered. The prospect of Vermont money not being able to cross to New Hampshire means New Hampshire could reciprocate. If New Hampshire could no longer send students to Vermont schools, this would significantly effect St. Johnsbury Academy. This would also impact TA, but to a lesser extent.

**TA REPORT:** Darrah reported most of the last meeting took place in executive session regarding special education. In open session the Board discussed the budget.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone):** The 6th grade Greek festival was held today, featuring hands on projects and reports. Families and other grades attended. The sledding hill is open. There is a new ice rink, but it needs a replacement liner after a tear. The fire department has been a great support. The bike loop is closed for the season. There are many bikes but no storage. Petrone has asked parents to pick up bikes now. Riverbend may build a shed to store the bikes. There will be six ski Fridays in 2107 with half days of school for students. Staff will work on the project based learning initiative and revising school wide rules and expectations. Four staff members will present their workshop learning to the remainder of the staff. In past years, 140 students ski, and the remaining 60 students participate in nordic skiing or indoor activities. This year the Montshire is returning for indoor programming every other Friday. Holiday vacation begins December 22, and students return to school January 3. The holiday concert is December 21 at 1:15. There will be band and strings performances, as well as singing. At the last staff meeting, staff participated in a team building and collaboration activity called the marshmallow challenge. Teams of four were challenged to build the tallest tower using spaghetti, string and tape, with a marshmallow on top. Two TES interns completed their student teaching placements.

**SCHOOL REPORT PLANNING DISCUSS TIMELINE FOR TOWN MEETING AND PRE-SCHOOL MEETING:** Thompson shared an example of a condensed school report in the form of a user-friendly colorful brochure. This brochure could also be used to market TTSD. The detailed budget would be available at Town meeting. Darrah stated the Town is publishing its report as usual and mailing it. TA's financial report would need to be shortened. The timing may

not be right to change the format for this year because agreement from several groups is needed. Thompson will bring last year's school report to the January 3 meeting to identify which reports are critical to include. Downey volunteered to work on the content, and Acker volunteered to do the formatting. Darrah will discuss with TA. Town meeting is on March 4. Discussion followed regarding other dates and a timeline. Pre-town meeting could be in February, avoiding school break.

**OTHER BUSINESS - Teacher Negotiations:** Buttrey reported the next meeting is December 21. The teachers and Board know one another's offers. Downey and Buttrey have met with Melanie Elliott and Petrone. Buttrey has been speaking with Neil O'Dell of the Norwich school board. Norwich declared an impasse at their last meeting. Recently, Buttrey joined an Upper Valley group of school board negotiators. In the past, school boards have been negotiating on their own in their own districts. It is important to know what is going on in other districts. Buttrey and O'Dell discussed requirements of open meeting law. While meetings are required to be open by law, any strategic conversations should be during executive session. Discussion must be in open session unless the information shared places you at a substantial disadvantage in negotiations. For tomorrow's meeting, Buttrey would like to have the Board's authority to take the next step. Buttrey would like a statement of their offer, and suggested an executive session for discussion. Darrah agreed strategy discussion should be during executive session.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Teacher Negotiations):** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:25 p.m. to discuss teacher negotiations, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 8:45 p.m. No action taken.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Student Matter):** MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:46 p.m. to discuss a student matter, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 9:01 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (MacPhee/Buttrey) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

1/3/17	Thetford Town School District Meeting (Oxbow)	6:00 p.m.
1/3/17	OESU Meeting - Oxbow	7:15 p.m.
1/17/17	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

---

Julie Acker, Board Clerk