

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, February 28, 2017**  
**Thetford Elementary School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened pre-town meeting at 7:01 p.m. in the art room. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Scott MacPhee, Kristen Downey, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Beth Cobb, OESU Superintendent; Keith Thompson, OESU Assistant Superintendent

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Mark McMahon, Janet Mitchell, Tara Durkee

**Present from TA:** Cameron Cudhea, President, Board of Trustees

Darrah welcomed attendees and invited feedback about the school report's new format. The goal of the new format was to highlight what is happening in the school. Spreadsheets with more details are available on the TES website and at various places around town. Darrah thanked Downey and Acker for creating the report.

Darrah referenced slides while she summarized FY16 accomplishments and gave an Act 46 update. Darrah thanked the public for participating in the forums. TTSD does not have a plan, however many options have been eliminated. The options have narrowed to one: The alternative education structure. This continues to be explored. Downey sits on an exploratory committee with representatives from Tunbridge, Sharon and Strafford. Chelsea may send a representative. This group recently retained a consultant to investigate if an alternative structure could be fiscally and educationally beneficial. It would most likely not be a merger but a supervisory union. As TTSD has more information they will share it with the public. There may be legislation that allows more time for districts to meet the requirements of Act 46. The current deadline to have a plan is July 1, 2017. The new playground is a big accomplishment. Darrah extended gratitude to local donations and volunteers. The next goal is to the install the climbing wall.

Project based learning (PBL) is being implemented across all grade levels. The Science Fair, the fourth graders' proposal to raise chickens, and the first grade farm stand are examples of PBL. Petrone added that the Buck Institute of Education gave a three day workshop for teachers in the beginning of the year to build common language and consensus among the staff. The teachers have become very interested.

In the past NECAP scores were included in the school report. This year SBAC scores are published. Petrone explained this is a new test, and data is not being counted yet at the state level.

Darrah summarized Article IV, which is the proposed FY18 operating budget. The table in the report show changes from FY16 and FY17. There are changes in how special education appears in the budget. The State now requires special education costs to be under the SU's budget, and

then billed to Thetford. There is no longer a separate line item. Secondary education is a large piece of the budget. Changes include an increase in TA tuition and fewer TES students entering TA next year. Pre-K enrollment has increased. Not enough money was budgeted for pre-K last year resulting in a \$60,000 deficit. It is difficult to track the pre-K population because families move in and out of town and the program. There are six approved programs in the Thetford area, but funding is not limited to these local programs; children may attend any qualified program in the state. There is an increase in facilities spending due to safety upgrades in the building. These include simplifying access to the gym by the public, protecting the building by adding timers for the lights and water, as well as a \$20,000 phone system replacement, which is long overdue and crucial for safety. The FY18 budget is the last year of curing the deficit that was approved by voters three years ago. There is a small transportation decrease due to new contracts. This budget was based on two bus routes. There will not be significant savings for consolidating bus routes, because there is a flat fee for the bus driver.

Article V: Raise additional funds for capital improvements, in the amount of \$50,000. The Board foresees money will be needed to avoid significant costs later. Examples include replacing the shingles on the pitched roof, security improvements for community use of the building, water heater, and insulation of the primary wing. This is being warned as a separate article for transparency. The tax worksheet illustrates tax rates with and without Article V. McMahon asked if the Board anticipates raising additional funds in future years. Buttrey responded, ideally, but it depends on other factors like the tax rate. The difference in the tax rate is a 0.7% decrease without the capital improvement fund; and a 0.6% increase in the tax rate with the capital improvement fund. There were positive factors influencing the tax rate this year: The CLA and equalized pupils went up. Darrah invited questions.

Town meeting starts at 9 on March 4, and the School District meeting will follow. McMahon stated the question of adding a third police officer may take time. Darrah added she expects Bill Bugg to speak briefly. McMahon complimented the minutes recording.

Tara Durkee asked a question regarding pre-K: Is there a point where it makes sense to offer a program in house (i.e at TES)? Darrah responded, yes, this has been considered. An in house program may have to involve a child care component because of the limited hours of funding for pre-K. Another consideration is any negative impact on local daycares and preschools. It does make sense from a curricular standpoint. Buttrey added that pending legislation may change the way pre-K is offered. He would like to talk to those districts who have pre-K in house, and he would like to form an exploratory committee. Durkee asked, how is the pre-K population different from the elementary population, referencing an earlier comment that the pre-K population moves in and out of the program. Darrah acknowledged this does happen. There are also differences between TA and TES populations. She wondered if homeschooling impacts TES enrollment, but not TA's enrollment. Acker asked Petrone: How many pre-K students have entered TES in kindergarten? Most, said Petrone. Petrone added that TES does visit local preschools to talk to the kids and teachers. TES was making these visits even before pre-K was mandated. Petrone recalled that representatives from the Agency of Education made visits with him and were very impressed with the local programs. Petrone commented that if pre-K were offered at TES, TTSD would still be responsible for tuition for the children who did not attend the TES program. Space at TES could be an issue. Rooms that are not used as classrooms are

being used for other services. TES does have staff who are trained for the pre-K age group. Discussion followed. Cobb offered to bring data from Bradford, where pre-K has been offered in house for 1 year. Durkee asked if pre-K programs are consistent between towns. Buttrey responded, programs do differ per town and especially statewide. However, a child can attend any approved program in Vermont. Ten hours are paid for by TTSD and the program has to have a certain rating. Buttrey expressed concern that there is no means test (a family's income is not a factor for receiving 10 hours of tuition). If a family can't afford the additional 30 hours per week, it may be difficult to secure a spot for that child for only 10 hours. Buttrey asked for pre-K to be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

3/7/17 OESU Meeting - Oxbow High School	6:00 p.m.
3/7/17 Thetford School District Meeting - Oxbow High School	7:30 p.m.
3/21/17 Thetford School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Julie Acker, Board Clerk