

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Wednesday, April 5, 2017**  
**Oxbow High School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:01 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey (arrived 6:05 p.m.), Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey (via facetime), Scott MacPhee, School Board

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Melanie Elliott (OESU), Jennifer Clogston

**AGENDA REVIEW:** Agenda approved.

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2017 Board meeting (unanimous approval; MacPhee abstained). MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2017 Board meeting (unanimous approval; Acker abstained).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve payroll warrant # 5893 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** Spam email was received.

**DISCUSSION WITH SPECIAL EDUCATORS:** Jennifer Clogston is one of three special educators at TES, in addition to Barbara Coulter and Kristen Hansen. Clogston is present on behalf of this group of special educators to make the Board aware of the differences between the master merged agreement and the Thetford School District agreement. As of July 1 the special educators are slated to move over to the merged agreement. There are some big differences between the contracts. Clogston wishes to highlight these differences, and is seeking Board support. Elliott compiled a document to summarize these differences with a side by side comparison of the two contracts. Clogston is hoping for a grandfather clause or an addendum. Regarding sick days, the merged contract includes 10 cumulative days up to 90 days; the Thetford contract has 15 cumulative days up to 120 days. The difference in retirement incentive is huge, especially for Clogston because she is the closest to retirement age. The merged teacher agreement has an incentive at the discretion of the Board that has never been awarded to anyone. Buttrey added benefits are paid in three installments over three years. Clogston asked for this point to be grandfathered. Discussion followed regarding details of dental plans and costs. The merged contract has not been finalized regarding dental benefits. Term life insurance is also still being discussed. Disability benefits are also different, and the special educators are expecting to go under the merged contract. Severance pay is significant and ties into the sick days issue. The retirement gift is \$1,000 less under the merged contract. Salary is a huge difference between the contracts. For Clogston it is a ~20% negative difference under the merged contract. Elliott proposed to place the special educators on the new revised grid in the merged agreement, placing them on the correct step. Future raises could then be negotiated to maintain the integrity of the grid. Clogston met with the negotiating representatives from the individual school districts in

OESU, and they brought up an interesting issue regarding adding an addendum to the Thetford school district contract in the event Thetford decides to be part of a different configuration. The three special educators would be in "no man's land" if Thetford were to leave OESU. They would no longer have a position at TTSD, yet they would still be OESU employees. Because of seniority, they would bump out the employees at the bottom in OESU. This would not be good because they have chosen to work at Thetford. Clogston suggested an addendum that would state the three TTSD special educators could be rehired onto the TTSD contract. Elliott stated there is no way to guarantee someone a job in an entity that does not currently exist. The OESU legal team would need to be consulted. Buttrey asked, when discussing grandfathering clauses, do they want a separate TTSD contract? Clogston stated no, they are asking for a side agreement in the merged agreement for these issues. If one of the current special educators left her position, a new person would have benefits under the new merged agreement. Buttrey stated TTSD is not involved in the merged negotiations. Clogston acknowledged this, but reminded the Board that a few TTSD board members sit on the OESU Board and she is asking for their support and awareness as negotiations go forward. Elliott added that in these negotiations, special educators at Thetford and Waits River have not been discussed. Elliott's impression is that the merged agreement will be settled first and then the special educators will be discussed. Discussion followed. Clogston reiterated her concern about the difference between the TTSD and merged contracts, and her goal of seeking support from the Board. Darrah suggested that any side agreement discussions could be included by the TTSD negotiating team. Clogston departed and discussion followed about the significance of this issue.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Teacher Negotiations):** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 6:26 p.m. to discuss teacher negotiations. Out of executive session at 6:39 p.m. (No action taken). Buttrey departed. The next teacher negotiation meeting is Friday, April 7.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:** Darrah reported Petrone secured a \$15,000 grant from the Byrne Foundation to use for the responsive classroom teacher training. The school musical, Alice and Wonderland, is coming up Friday and Saturday. There will be a school only performance on Thursday. The second round of interviews for the 1-2 teacher position is next week. Petrone is hoping to have that process completed by April break.

**SCHOOL DAYS DISCUSSION:** Darrah explained that because TTSD included two extra instructional days as compared with what the State requires, the Board and Petrone have decided to take those days off the calendar. In addition, the teachers agreed with Petrone's suggestion to change the April 14 conference day to a half day, making the last day of school Friday, June 16. The new calendar will have a five day snow day buffer. It was reiterated that this is an extraordinary situation this year and people should not expect this to happen every year.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Downey reported the Act 46 study group received draft numbers from their consultant for start up costs for a new SU. They are meeting on April 6. The group may have a direction and decision fairly quickly. Chelsea and Tunbridge will vote soon. Acker added that the Blue Mountain group does not meet until after April break. Darrah reported Buttrey is still considering Norwich, but there is not much to comment on now. Discussion followed.

Acker sent an email to Petrone regarding the upcoming 5th grade field trip, which is an overnight. They are going to the Path of Life Garden in Windsor, followed by an overnight at Mount Ascutney Park. Downey explained this field trip is the result of a project based learning unit. Three students presented this plan which was chosen after a vote by teachers, students and parents. Parents will be chaperoning. Acker reviewed the Board policies and noted that if a volunteer has unsupervised contact with students he/she requires a background check. In the case of an overnight, there will be unsupervised contact. While ensuring student safety, Acker does not want Board policies to hinder the field trip. The date is pending but will be at the end of May or early June. Elliott stated that time frame will allow enough time for the chaperones to have background checks and to meet with OESU staff. Acker noticed the policies have not recently been updated. She would like to compare them with current State recommendations. She has asked Petrone to check on whether CPR certified adults need to be present given the length of time away from school.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (MacPhee/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

4/18/17 Thetford Town School District Meeting

6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Julie Acker, Board Clerk