

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, November 21, 2017**  
**Thetford Elementary School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Keith Thompson, OESU Assistant Superintendent; Melanie Elliott, OESU Business Manager/HR Officer

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Tim Briglin

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

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

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable order # 6259 and payroll warrant # 6248 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**TA REPORT (Darrah):** Most of the last meeting focused on what the Board might want to do for the upcoming bicentennial in 2019. Possibilities include a year long celebration tied into traditional annual events like Woods Trail Run and Founder's Day. More information will be available once planning committees are formed. TA is aware of the State budget situation. The regular December meeting was pushed back to December 19.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone):** Last Friday was parent conference day, with over 95% attendance for families. Teachers are trying to work on that last 5% and at least have a phone conversation. This day also serves a professional day for the teachers who don't have parent conferences. These teachers completed an online course sponsored by Harvard called Data-wise, which is a system for analyzing student work and is an OESU initiative. During team meetings teachers have been using the course material, such as developing meeting agendas and leading meetings. The first trimester is coming to a close. Report cards went home today. TES has been using the report card system, VCAT (Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Tool). There are a couple of glitches that make it difficult for teachers, such as data not printing out after it has been entered. TES plans to move to a new system next year. The standards reporting on the report card would not change. Petrone attended a meeting last week about the potential for a Thetford skate park. There has been quite an explosion of skaters recently, probably due to parents Nick Reo and Maurice Crandall offering after school skate clinics, as well as a skate art workshop at Latham. Not sure about the location; school property has been mentioned as a possibility,

but Petrone is not sure about liability. MacPhee spoke highly of the after school skate workshops. To increase communication and presence in the community, TES is now on Facebook. Para-educator, Michele Hastings, has a good eye for photography and help set that up. Darrah attended yesterday's staff meeting and spoke with staff for about an hour about the upcoming budget season. She wants to be as transparent as possible. The Board welcomes all suggestions and creativity from staff.

**REVIEW OF FY18 BUDGET:** Following the last Board meeting, the Board asked OESU to figure a budget that would result in a 2% and 5% tax increase. The Board reviewed the draft budget sheets provided by Thompson and Elliott. Elliott and Thompson met with Petrone and gave him the dollar figure related to 2% and 5% increases. Petrone had to make some staffing changes, which included eliminating one full time professional staff position and reductions in two other staff positions from full to part time. This results in combining a class by moving the multi age model already in the lower grades into grades 3 and 4. Class size would be about 19 students. This configuration gives flexibility to accommodate any incoming students, who could be spread out between three classrooms. There are no retirements expected. Petrone did not make changes to support staff because there are some incoming students with special needs. The staff to student ratio that everyone is talking about is not going to change much for TES. Buttrey asked Elliott to review the health insurance recapture. The State says TTSD should be saving X amount on health insurance based on the new plans and what the State feels the district should have negotiated. The State then deducts a portion of that savings out of what TTSD receives for education spending.

There is no money left in the tuition reserve fund. There is \$50,000 in the capital reserve fund. Discussion followed. Buttrey's initial thought is that taxpayers will not be happy with 5%, but they may acknowledge that an effort has been made to cut the budget. There are numbers that are pending that will effect calculations, so this could change. Buttrey stated Thetford is a generous town that values public education, but at some point the budget is not going to pass. Since Darrah has been on the Board, she has not tried to pass a 5% or more increase. Elliott does not think the equalized pupil data will be available in time for the next meeting. The CLA is not expected until the end of December. Thompson commented it sounds like 5% is too high, and asked Darrah if they should go back to look for more ways to cut. Yes, per the Board. Elliott kept TA tuition and enrollment the same. She needs to discuss these numbers with TA. Buttrey asked Briglin for any legislative information that could impact the budget. Briglin stated no legislators are interested in the 1.08. Briglin asked Elliott, how sensitive is the local homestead tax rate to the 1.08 vs. 1.06? Briglin explained the challenge is a pay me now, or pay me later, dynamic. We've been paying later for a few years recently, with some payments pushed out to 2019. In addition, the educational financing system doesn't work. The revenue that is directed to the education fund has seen an increasing pull on that money in recent years. Briglin believes there is interest in pulling 1.08 down to 1.06. Elliott calculated, if 1.06, the expense budget she just presented drops to 3.8%. Briglin commented on the line item, "less anticipated receipts" that has decreased by about \$50,000. Elliott responded that all of it is health care related. Briglin stated that Norwich's number also declined and was listed at ~\$39,000, but he thought Thetford's was

less. Elliott agreed: Thetford's was \$31,000. The \$50,000 is the combination for two years, this and next. Discussion followed regarding calculations. Darrah suggested waiting for the pending numbers before making more cuts. Darrah also would like to hear if there are facilities needs that should not be neglected. Thompson stated there could be a separate article for building the capital fund back up. Or, if facilities needs are plugged into the budget itself, there is not much of an impact. Thompson's concern is the commissioner is not going to set the tax rate until June. When it comes to presenting a budget and a tax sheet, what number do you put in? These are questions that everyone has. Buttrey would like to see some harder numbers before deciding about the capital improvement fund. Elliott stated that \$10,000 equals a 0.2% increase. Darrah does not want to lose sight of the LEA position. It is important for Petrone and the students. Some of the costs would be reimbursable or would be savings, such as in academic testing.

**ACT 46 DISCUSSION – NORWICH** (Darrah): The meeting coming up is to discuss possible educational opportunities at both the elementary and secondary school levels. Downey will join Darrah. Darrah expects there to be members present from the Hanover and Dresden boards, a TA Board member, and Norwich school board Chair, Tom Candon and another Norwich Board member. A goal of this brainstorming meeting is to narrow down what to ask the attorney. The Dresden compact would have to be opened, even just for a partnership. The group plans to discuss ways to provide educational opportunities for kids that could possibly involve part day attendance. Financial discussions are premature. Darrah stated she is still considering contacting the Secretary of Education because TTSD is looking at the Act 46 self-study after hearing from Superintendent Stanley that TTSD may be placed in the White River SU. Buttrey asked, do we really want to stay in OESU? Discussion followed regarding the utility of a new OESU committee, given the uncertainties of TTSD remaining in OESU.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Para-educators' negotiations:** Buttrey stated that he and Downey will set up a time with staff to begin discussions.

**Pre-K:** Buttrey reported he and Acker met with OESU Early Childhood Coordinator, Marla Ianello, this evening. Buttrey would like to advance the conversation of an in-house preschool at TES and ultimately come to the Board with some ideas. This will not be in the budget this year. There would be out of pocket expenses, but these may be recouped in the long run. Buttrey plans to gather information from existing programs at Bradford Elementary and Rivendell.

**Annual Report content:** Petrone met with Ben Merrill, who will be producing the next school report. Merrill is planning to return to TES to take photos. Downey and Acker plan to meet with him to discuss what the Board wants to highlight in the annual report. Acker is looking for ideas. Buttrey suggested highlighting the relationship with the Montshire. Acker volunteers at the Montshire and she reported the Montshire staff speaks very highly of TES teachers. Petrone suggested a focus on the responsive classroom, but not sure if there is much to show the community visually. Other ideas include the gardens, the new outdoor music island, solar farm data, pre-K data, and student generated compost data - TES has been used as a model for other schools to

start their own compost programs. Acker stated she learned from the new TES Facebook page that Ms Kendall's class went to TA to spend time with the Outdoor Program. In collaboration with Chris Schmidt's design tech class, the fifth grade is using a felled TES elm that has since been milled, to make a case for their classroom pet. The Kindergartners go to TA every week. TA built the TES kindergartners a little spot off the trail with a fire pit for roasting marshmallows.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Principal Contract):** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 7:51 p.m. to discuss a the principal's contract. Out of executive session at 8:01 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

12/05/17	Thetford Town School District Meeting (Oxbow)	6:00 p.m.
12/05/17	OESU Meeting	7:15 p.m.
12/12/17	Thetford Town School District Meeting w/ TA Board	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Julie Acker, Board Clerk