

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, January 29, 2018
Thetford Elementary School

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:36 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Sandra Stanley, Interim OESU Superintendent

PUBLIC PRESENT: Robert Bartlett, Kate Hill

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2018 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 6328 and 6314, and payroll warrant # 6326 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: Robert Bartlett presented a letter to the Board summarizing his qualifications, the Spanish program, and the impact of reducing his position from 0.8 to 0.6.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone): Ski Friday and professional development will occur again this week. Math specialist, Laura Sharpless, will present her new job description, defining her role as math coach and the overall vision for math at TES. Petrone commended her for the optional math labs she offers during lunch and recess, and her work supporting the primary grades. Petrone is meeting with two companies about the phone system. Last Wednesday WRVSU administrators and teachers visited TES as part of the AOE's integrated field review. Sixth graders gave tours. The visitors met with teachers, students, Petrone and parents. The report will not be specific to TES but will be part of an OESU report. Colin McLaughlin and Petrone will visit a WRVSU school tomorrow as part of the same process. The ice rink received a small Byrne Foundation grant specifically for helmets and skates with straps. The science fair is on February 13. The number of projects increases each year. There was a staff meeting today with Ray Chin with a focus on mindfulness and Tai Chi exercises. The staff meets with him monthly.

REVIEW UPDATED TAX WORKSHEET AND BUDGET SCENARIOS: Darrah stated that since the last meeting board members planned to discuss budget scenarios with community members. A new budget review sheet was distributed, outlining four scenarios. All scenarios include reduction of one classroom teacher and one para-educator and retention of a full time

school psychologist and school nurse. A budget of \$9,024,863 results in a 4.9% tax increase. With this budget there are no additional cuts. A budget of \$9,011,675 results in a 4.7% tax increase. This is accomplished by reducing Spanish from 0.8 to 0.6. A budget of \$9,016,415 results in a 4.7% tax increase. This is accomplished by reducing the librarian/technology position to 0.8. Spanish would remain at 0.8. Lastly, a budget of \$9,003,227 results in a 4.6% tax increase. Spanish is reduced to 0.6 and librarian/technology reduced to 0.8. MacPhee stated he has put a lot of thought into this decision, which is about the impact on the students as well as the effect on the community. MacPhee favors the 4.9% tax increase.

Darrah asked for Petrone's opinion. Petrone stated that while all four scenarios are better than last month's estimated 9% tax increase, he continues to look carefully at school staffing and needs. The reduction of the librarian to 0.8 is feasible. TES has an outside contract with Systems Plus. The librarian's time would be reduced by one day, and Petrone would recommend having Systems Plus come on a day the librarian is here. Petrone looked carefully at the need for Spanish. Next year there will be one fewer classroom for a total of 11. Currently, there are 14 hours per week of direct Spanish instruction school wide. Next year with one less classroom and multiage third/fourth grade classrooms, direct instruction will drop to 11.5 hours per week, which is possible to do in three days at 0.6 time. If enrollment shifts in future years it may not be possible to do in three days. At 0.6, next year all the grades would continue receiving Spanish as they are currently, except the new multiage third/fourth grades would receive two 30 minute sessions. This means that fourth graders would receive 30 fewer minutes per week. Petrone cautioned the Board that in the upper grades, teachers have expressed concern over too little time for core academics. Perhaps a change should be made to three 30 minute classes for fifth and sixth grades, instead of three 40 minute classes. This would reduce direct instruction to 10 hours per week. Petrone supports the 4.6% tax increase. He believes TES can still offer a strong education including a solid Spanish program. Downey questioned if there would be a concrete plan for an increase in core curriculum classes in grades 5 and 6. She hopes the minutes eliminated from Spanish would be used deliberately. Petrone responded teachers adjust needs on a daily basis. Discussion followed. MacPhee suggested translating the tax increase to dollars. Downey reported that when discussing budget cuts with those in the community, she heard objections only regarding eliminating Spanish. Petrone stressed this decision is not personal. TES could lose Spanish all together by reducing to 0.6 if Spanish teacher Robert Bartlett resigns. Oxbow is searching for a full time teacher. It is the Board's decision to increase or decrease a position, not Petrone's. Strafford does not have Spanish in elementary school. Middle school students have Spanish four times per week for one term. They share a teacher with Tunbridge. Bartlett stated that benefits are a challenge when working between two schools. Acker commented that special education has been moved under one umbrella in OESU. Perhaps programs like foreign language, art, and music could do the same so that contracts and benefits are easier. Stanley stated there is interest in that. Acker suggested offering a Spanish club opportunity for students who are really interested. Acker has been leaning toward the 4.6% tax increase mostly because she is not convinced the state is finished adjusting its own figures. She is erring on the side of caution to brace against those potential changes. MacPhee stated he supports a 4.7% tax increase with reduction of library/technology to 0.8. Downey stated she

realizes reducing Spanish is in response to one fewer classroom, as well as needing more instructional time in grades 5 and 6. Petrone stated with parent input, there are some students who are not participating in Spanish because they need that time for remediation work. Downey stated it is disappointing that some kids are not getting Spanish. Downey asked if 120 minutes per week of Spanish instruction were reduced, but the position was not reduced, what would Bartlett do with that time? Discussion followed. Darrah reported she has spoken with people in the community. Darrah received feedback to keep the tax increase as far as possible under 5%. She suspects it will be a tight vote and it is important to get the message out to the public about what the Board has done to tighten the budget. She is therefore leaning toward the 4.6% tax increase.

MOTION: (Downey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adopt a proposed 4.7% tax increase, reducing the librarian position to 0.8 and retaining Spanish at 0.8. Discussion followed. Downey feels strongly against reducing foreign language. She is not familiar with the discussion regarding adding more time for core programs by reducing Spanish. She would like to know more about that, but she trusts Petrone to know what the school needs. Reducing Spanish could result in losing the teacher and difficulty finding a replacement for 0.6. MacPhee stated a 0.1% difference in taxes would retain the Spanish program as it is. Darrah questioned that with a reduced classroom, how would that extra time be spent? Petrone stated keeping Spanish at 0.8 doesn't seem like taxes well spent. He feels TES can offer a good program for 0.6. Acker stated art and music are also at 0.6. MacPhee stated he feels strongly about Spanish that based on the demographics of America, Spanish is a necessary language. Acker stated she feels a 0.6 Spanish program will meet the needs of TES students for the 18/19 school year. Darrah stated this is not easy. She loves the Spanish program and hired Bartlett.

Call for vote: MOTION: (Downey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adopt a proposed 4.7% tax increase, reducing the librarian position to 0.8 and retaining Spanish at 0.8. Motion does not pass.

MOTION: (Acker/Darrah) moved/seconded to adopt a proposed 4.6% tax increase, reducing Spanish to 0.6 and library to 0.8. Discussion followed. Downey stated dissatisfaction regarding belated information about more time needed for core classes in grades 5 and 6 factoring in to the Spanish decision. She acknowledged the budget crunch prompted Petrone to look at everything very closely. Petrone stated he supports 0.8 library and 0.6 Spanish. The school can almost offer the same Spanish program with one less day. Looking ahead, he realizes the community values the extra things TES does for kids. Only fourth grade is reduced from three times per week to twice per week.

Call for vote: MOTION: (Acker/Darrah) moved/seconded to adopt a proposed 4.6% tax increase, reducing Spanish to 0.6 and library to 0.8 (unanimous approval, with a sigh and a heavy heart).

Downey commented she would like to think more creatively when reallocating resources. She acknowledged Petrone has a hard job allocating resources. With declining enrollment, this is going to keep happening. She wonders if somehow TES could use the extra 0.2 of a certified teacher's time, such as Bartlett. Acker suggested consolidating talents between districts within OESU. Stanley stated in last few months many OESU Boards have had similar discussions with. These are new conversations.

SIGN WARNING FOR FY19 BUDGET:

MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to warn Article IV to the voters to the Town of Thetford, which states the following: Shall the voters of the Thetford Town School District approve the school board to expend nine million, three thousand, two hundred, twenty-seven dollars (\$9,003,227) which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$18,521 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.9% lower than spending for the current year (unanimous approval).

MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to warn Article V to the voters to the Town of Thetford, which states the following: Shall the voters of the Thetford Town School District authorize the Board of Directors to obtain a loan in the amount of one hundred seventy-one thousand, nine hundred sixty-one dollars (\$171,961), to be repaid in three equal installments, to retire an audited deficit from fiscal year 2017? (unanimous approval).

DISCUSS PLAN FOR EDUCATION TOWN RE: SCHOOL BUDGET (Pre-school meeting, public forums): Acker led discussion and gave updates about the annual report. Discussion followed regarding content, formatting and mailing logistics. Pre-town school meeting will be February 27 at 7pm at TES. Discussion followed regarding how to communicate with the public. Possibility of public forum before February 27. Stanley invited Secretary of Education, Rebecca Holcombe, to the February 6 OESU meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Para-educator negotiations): **MOTION:** (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:36 p.m. to discuss para-educator negotiations, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 8:49 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: **MOTION:** (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

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| 2/6/18 | Thetford Town School District Meeting (Oxbow High School) | 6:00 p.m. |
| 2/6/18 | OESU Meeting | 7:15 p.m. |
| 2/13/18 | Thetford Town School District Meeting (tentative) | 6:30 p.m. |
| 2/27/18 | Thetford Town School District Pre Town Informational Meeting | 7:00 p.m. |

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Julie Acker, Board Clerk