

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, June 20, 2017**  
**Thetford Elementary School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:32 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker (arrived 6:38 p.m.), Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Kevin Petrone, TES Principal; Keith Thompson, OESU Assistant Superintendent

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Marty Bouchard (6:50 - 7:40 p.m.); Joette Hayashigawa (6:55 - 7:40 p.m.), Mike Brown (arrived 7:07 p.m.), Jessica Eaton (arrived 7:21 p.m.), Stuart Rogers (departed 7:40 p.m.)

**AGENDA REVIEW:** Agenda approved with an amendment.

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2017 Board meeting as amended (unanimous approval; Downey abstained).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** MOTION: (Darrah/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders #6023 and 6018 and payroll warrant # 6004 (unanimous approval).

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**AUDIT REPORT – AUDITOR, Todd Wimette and Ashley Pilon of Wischart, Wimette and Associates, Certified Public Accountants**

This is the first year this auditor has worked with TTSD. They do the audit for the other districts in OESU, thus they are very familiar with the OESU systems. Wimette gave background information about what defines a financial audit statement and the process. A lot of legwork is needed for a new client, including speaking with the prior auditor. With every audit there is a risk assessment, which entails examining everything under the umbrella of the entity such as revenues, systems, the environment, and personnel. The auditor gives an opinion about whether the financials are reported in accordance with the reporting standards. All the meeting minutes are reviewed. The goal is an efficient and thorough audit. Once those preparatory steps are complete, the audit plan is developed. The auditor focuses on revenues, expenditures, pay roll (largest expense item), and there is a lot of analytical work and inquiry. It is a requirement to inquire of any fraud. The internal control structure is investigated to make sure it is being followed. The fieldwork is typically completed in October, with the goal to provide the fund balances by the end of December, and drafts ready at the end of January in time for Town meeting. It is mandatory to provide electronic copies to the Agency of Education before March 31.

Wimette did not review the audit in great detail. He encouraged the Board to contact them with any questions. Wimette pointed out that past financial reports are fair. Discussion followed. A third party can look at the report and know it is reliable. There were two audit adjustments during the review. Neither represented any deficiency or material weakness; they are standard adjustments and are seen frequently. It is a clean audit opinion, and the numbers were in good shape before they started. This indicates that the monthly reports are relatively clean and are an accurate representation of TTSD's status. Wimette pointed out the Fund Balance Sheet, as of June 30 2017. It is in agreement with the OESU business office. There is a deficit balance in the general fund, but it decreased by \$44,000 in FY16. Explanation followed. Wimette informed the Board that the audit procedures are changed every year based on where the greatest risks are from an auditing perspective. This year they plan on doing more with the TTSD Board. Buttrey asked if it is acceptable to have co-mingled funds. Wimette responded that auditors have different opinions and there is no regulatory requirement. In his opinion, it is ok as long as the funds are all accounted for. MacPhee asked, if an anomaly is uncovered during the audit process will the Board be notified at the time? Yes, per Wimette.

**TOWN PEDESTRIAN PROJECT UPDATE – Stuart Rogers:** Rogers distributed the draft of the Town Plan. Chapter 2 focuses on education and Rogers asked for the Board's review. The draft is also online. The first public hearing is August 24. Due to a couple of pending issues with the State, construction of the walkway will not happen this year. VTrans has not approved the plans. Rogers reviewed some of the walkway's details: The TES section will be ADA compliant with a hardpack gravel path. The only cement section will be the section on Rt. 113 opposite TES, and the corner of 113 and Library Rd., for access to the crosswalks. One of the trees in the island in front of the school is marked for removal and replacing. The arborist's opinion is that a tree in that location will not survive because of proximity to the walkway. The walkway will conflict with one of the existing handicapped parking spots in the drop off circle. In order to keep two handicapped spots, one non-handicapped parking spot will be given up. Rogers met with Thompson regarding the grade elevation for the walkway related to the septic. Thompson is looking for old site plans. Discussion followed. Thompson raised concern about the proximity of the walkway to the corner of the school (facing the school, the left corner closest to Latham Library). Children are often outside in this area. Petrone reiterated this concern, indicating school nurse Joette Hayashigawa, and reading specialist Marty Bouchard, also share this concern. Joette stated public presence on the walkway while children are outside, and proximity to the classroom during classroom instruction, seems contradictory to school safety. Petrone added the walkway would designate where the public should walk through school property. Joette repeated her concern regarding proximity between the public and students. Acker stated the use of that outdoor space by students has increased since this walkway was initially proposed. Thompson reminded the Board that since TTSD is granting a right of way, there may be a way of controlling the situation. Buttrey indicated he would like to look into making it a license, not an easement. The Board has already signed the easement, but Rogers stated it has not been filed yet. MacPhee stated he does not want the public so close to the students. Darrah responded the public has been walking through school property during the day. MacPhee repeated his concern. Rogers stated the configuration of the walkway, with the proximity to the building, has been the same since the beginning of the planning. Darrah clarified that she and Buttrey approved this plan in order to steer foot traffic onto a designated path. Acker walked the plans last week with

Rogers and confirmed that the walkway is close to the building. The walkway is 5 feet wide and is 8 to 10 feet off the ramp of the emergency exit. The walkway should also provide a pathway for emergency exit for students and staff. Rogers added that snow blowing the walkway during school hours could be disruptive. Discussion followed regarding plowing and changing where snow is moved. Acker would be interested to know how other area schools handle public access and safety. The existing bridge to Latham Library will be rebuilt and will have a precast concrete support structure and wooden decking. Darrah asked the Board if approval of the plan needs to be re-evaluated. Buttrey commented, there aren't a lot of people walking through TES now, but if the walkway is created, maybe there will be more people. Joette stated the walkway will invite the public to walk closer to the school. In the area where the walkway is very close to a classroom, the teacher will be distracted and wonder, is this person ok? Acker suggested looking at the language of the signed easement to see what TTSD can legally restrict, as well as any obligations to the federal money funding this project. Rogers will facilitate distributing electronic copies of the easement to the Board. Since the project is now delayed, there is time for some research. If the project is canceled, the town would have to repay what has been spent thus far. Rogers stated, any changes to the plan will cost money. Rogers added that the plans were drafted with a lot of consideration for the trees. Thompson offered to have OESU legal counsel look at the easement and recommend language. The legal firm that represents TTSD has other schools they represent and perhaps has experience with similar situations and safety at those schools. Thompson suggested a sign at the beginning of the walkway directing the public to stay on the path and not to loiter. The staff could fall back on this language.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Kevin Petrone):** June 16 was the last day of school. All 28 graduating 6<sup>th</sup> graders are headed to TA next year. SBAC scores will not be available until August. Preliminary information is not supposed to be released. Petrone is working with the six teachers who are in the formative evaluation phase to write up their evaluations by the June 30 deadline. Chris Cassel has been hired to fill Ms. Porter's K/1 maternity leave. He has most recently taught at Crossroads Academy, and prior to Crossroads he was in Saudi Arabia for several years. There are five staff members leaving: Christiana Whittington (music teacher, 1 year contract), Brittany Bemis (special para-educator), Joanna Waldman (29 years of teaching), Emily Wetmore (30 years at TES), and Moriah Fahey (math specialist). Fahey's position has been advertised. There is one para-educator position to fill. There had been two openings for paras with Emily and Brittany leaving, but Georgiana Boardman is returning. There are many projects planned this summer, including upgrading the phone system; a new iPad lease (60); improvements for the multipurpose wing such as automated water and electrical; and a grant for a bike shed that will house a bike repair area and serve as storage. Reading specialist, Marty Bouchard, has arranged a Foundations training. Twelve students will start summer school on July 5, taught by two OESU teachers. Petrone will attend a leadership team meeting next week with principals from the district and interim superintendent Sandra Stanley. Petrone is joining fifth grade teachers, Abby Harrington and Laura Sharpless, at the VT math initiative conference held at Bolton Valley. The Vermont energy education program will tour the solar array and composting program.

**TA REPORT (Shannon Darrah):** The last meeting featured a presentation by architects Smith and Vansant about the timber framing project for the outdoor classroom on the Barrett property. The outdoor education half day class has enrollment for the Fall and a teacher has been hired.

There was more discussion about the Lyme partnership agreement. Enrollment for next year will be a little lower. This was expected because TA graduated a large class and the incoming 7<sup>th</sup> grade class is small. There are no new international students. TA is retaining five current international students.

**BUS ROUTE DISCUSSION:** Thompson summarized that TA's new schedule will go from 8:10 to 2:40. The TES schedule will not change, with the start at 8:30 and dismissal at 3. The bus will drop off students at TA at 8 and then proceed to TES to drop off at 8:10. Pick up at TA will be at 2:50, and at TES at 3:00. Concerns have been raised regarding bus 3 going to Strafford to pick up 10-12 TA students and adding time to the route. With the Strafford students, there are days that ridership is projected be at the limit or over the limit. On the bus 1 route, there are some TA students who have been shifted onto a Pearson bus coming from Lyme. Jessica Eaton stated this shift was necessary to gain time to get to TES on time. However, now that the routes are combined this is unnecessary. Darrah reminded the Board that TTSD has to decide if those TA kids should continue on the Pearson bus or go on bus 1. The Board also needs to decide about the Strafford students so TA can make some decisions. With the Strafford riders, if everyone is riding, the bus is over capacity and it makes that route very long. Darrah had advised Bugg to investigate options. Thompson reported that TA has inquired with Butler regarding a new Strafford/Sharon bus. Darrah doesn't think it's right to have kids on the bus for so long. In the best of all worlds the Strafford TA students could continue to ride the bus, but TTSD's priority is to get the Thetford kids to school. Darrah asked for Board input and feedback. Buttrey repeated the consensus from the last meeting, which was TA is responsible for getting Strafford students to TA. Downey expressed concern about who is paying for whom. Darrah stated that for about 20 years, TTSD has been subsidizing Strafford students' transportation. Darrah asked the bus drivers to keep the Board informed once busing begins. Acker suggested the bus drivers attend a September Board meeting. Thompson reminded the Board that every August the Board used to review the bus routes and invited parents to express any concerns. This may be added to the August agenda. Petrone added that in the first day of school packet, TES gives families the approximate times for specific stops; this will have to be amended. The elementary route will have to start earlier. Mike Brown commented that on his route, the first student had been picked up at 7:42, but now pick up will be at around 7:10. Eaton pointed out that with the proposed timing for the end of the school day, the TA students will be sitting at TES for ~15 minutes and the bus cannot idle, which means in the winter it will be cold. Petrone suggested to decrease this waiting time, TES can release the bus children first, whereas now the parent pick up students are released first. Petrone stated TES has been offering student drop off at 7:30. There are staff shifts for before school: 7:30 - 8 and 8 to 8:30. The earlier shift gets paid extra because it is outside their contract. Petrone is considering eliminating the 7:30 - 8 shift, which would mean children can be dropped off no earlier than 8. Petrone has done research on schools in the area and realized no other towns offer an hour of coverage before school starts. At most schools students can be dropped off half an hour or less before school begins.

**DISCUSS PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR'S SCHOOL REPORT PRINTING:** Acker began discussion about retaining Ben Merrill to develop the school report brochure. Acker is not sure what the rates are, but the total cost includes the printing. The cost for printing last year's brochure was just under ~\$4,000. Since this would be separate from the warning, it would be two separate mailings. Downey asked if the publication was of value. Did it clearly communicate

to the community what is happening at the school? Darrah responded that anecdotal feedback was positive. The negative feedback was questioning if the warning legally could be in the brochure. Thompson added there are six other OESU districts that have this arrangement. TTSD needs to check with the Secretary of State's office. Thompson stated there was a lot more readership with the new brochure. Darrah suggested tentatively retaining Merrill as long as his fee is within reach. Acker stated Merrill may want to start interviewing people and collecting data and information in the Fall.

**BOARD RETREAT PLANNING – PICK A DATE:** Thursday, July 13, 4pm at UVEI (potluck).

**OTHER BUSINESS: MOTION:** (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to authorize the Chair to sign the Tax Anticipation Note (unanimous approval).

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Teacher Negotiation Strategy):** MOTION: (MacPhee/Acker) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. to discuss teacher negotiation strategy, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 9:02 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT: MOTION:** (MacPhee/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

July 13, 2017                      Thetford Town School District Retreat, UVEI                      4:00 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Acker, Board Clerk