

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, August 8, 2017
Thetford Elementary School Art Room

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:03 p.m.. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey (arrived 6:07 p.m.), Scott MacPhee, School Board; Melanie Elliott (OESU)

PUBLIC PRESENT: Amy Vance, Tim Briglin, Chris Overtree (arrived 6:07 p.m.)

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved with amendments.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2017 Board meeting (unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders # 6094, 6093, 6070, 6075, and 6074, and payroll warrant # 6105 (unanimous approval).

Darrah signed contracts for the following teachers and staff members: Christopher Cassell, Joette Hayashigawa, Abigail Harrington, Martha Bouchard, Susan Rogers, Helena Tilden, Amy Tietjen, Sara Bailey, Robert Bartlett, Amanda Gray, Laura Sharpless, Nicole Kendall, Jacquelyn Porter, Colin McLaughlin, Philip Chaput, Bette Nunez, Regina Bradley, Cynthia Dale, Elizabeth McGee

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: Darrah responded to correspondence from Amy Vance and Megan Snyder regarding the new morning drop off time.

Chris Overtree was present and stated he is commenting as a Thetford resident and parent in the context of his career as a clinical psychologist. He expressed concerns about merging the TES and TA bus routes, which will bring together elementary and high school students on the same bus. Overtree recognized the need for efficient transportation, financial realities, and common practice in rural areas. He stated it is also important to have appropriate school start times. He is concerned about the long length of the bus ride, especially for highly active young children who will be sitting for as long as an hour. His biggest concern is the lack of supervision on the bus. While working with schools as a psychologist, about 60% of the problems he handled were related to an experience on the bus. Over his last 10 years of experience, most cases of victimization of young children were initially underestimated risks and came as a surprise. He stated it comes down to a miscalculation of the risk in a situation where the supervision is lower. He specified that this concern is not about high school students, it is about the range of ages together for an unsupervised length of time, and about what a very young child may be exposed to during that period of time on the bus. He asked the Board to consider ways to mitigate the

risk, because the stakes could be very high for a younger child and an older child who makes a mistake. Buttrey asked Overtree for suggestions for preventative measures. Overtree responded such measures could include: Seating segregation, high expectations and rules around appropriate behavior, and good communication and relationship with the bus company. Video cameras may already be on the bus, but they don't serve much purpose for prevention. Usually the camera does not see what is happening. A bus monitor would be the best preventative measure. Overtree also suggested to keep data on how many younger kids decide not to use the bus anymore. The question may arise: Are all students being served if parents have real or perceived fears of their children riding the bus? The Board thanked Overtree for his comments. Overtree departed. MacPhee commented all schools face these issues of balancing the social and developmental needs of students with financial and logistical issues. MacPhee emphasized the importance of positive role modeling of the older children and acting respectfully. Downey agreed and added that relationships across ages can be beneficial. Elliott commented a couple of OESU schools have used bus monitors in the past. It is typically a para-educator. It may be difficult to staff the early hour of the busing.

MORNING DROP OFF TIME DISCUSSION: Darrah stated this was not an easy decision, but given staffing constraints between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m., there were not many options. Amy Vance shared her concerns, which included a 1 hour bus ride for her son and later drop off time. The bus stop is half a mile from their home, and she is uncomfortable leaving her son at the bus stop so that she can get to work. She agreed with Overtree's concern regarding potential negative influences of older children on her son. She noted the high activity level of her son, and the effect of sitting on the bus for such a length of time before school. She called other schools including Blue Mountain, Newbury, Bradford, and Westshire, and learned that all these schools start at 8:00 with drop off at 7:30. She asked why can't TES start at 8? Darrah responded it is a contract issue. Changing the start time would require opening up the teacher contract to change the time, although it is not impossible and could happen during the next contract negotiations. Vance asked why supervision time before school was not in the contract to begin with? Downey responded it is not common for teachers to do supervision before school. MacPhee added that it has mostly been the paras supervising. If a para is at school half an hour before school, then she would leave school half an hour earlier. If the para did not leave half an hour earlier, that half hour would be extra time. Vance stated it would have been helpful to have known earlier about the time change. Petrone's email to families notifying them that the earliest drop off time is 8 a.m. instead of 7:30, was sent on July 11. Downey summarized there are two issues about which Vance has concerns: Shorter supervision time before school and the long bus ride. Vance is also concerned about her child waiting for the bus unsupervised. She imagines there are many other parents in the same situation with work schedules and trying to get their child on the bus. Vance suggested the idea of a high school student helping with supervision before school. Discussion followed. Acker stated an adult would still need to be present. Elliott stated that per the contract, paras work 7 hours, and the principal can decide when that 7 hours takes place. Teachers' start and end time can be changed per the contract, but can't exceed 6.5 hours. Discussion followed regarding possibilities of start time and child care before school. Discussion can continue on August 22.

DISCUSSION WITH BEN MERRILL RE: SCHOOL REPORT PREPARATION FOR THIS YEAR: Merrill distributed some examples of his work for other school districts. Merrill complimented Acker on last year's school report. Merrill works with a designer. An end date for distribution is set, and the plans for the rest of the work is backed up from that distribution date. It is about a 3 month process. Merrill's fee is \$1,500. The designer's fee is based on how many changes are made to the design. The goal is to story board the book before sending it to the designer. The design fee for a 12 page book is between \$1,200 and \$1,500, and a 16 page book costs between \$1,500 and \$2,000. There is a printing cost on top of the design fee at \$1 per book for fewer than 1,500 books. Last year TTSD printed 1,050 copies. Overall, the entire cost would be between \$4,000 and \$4,500. Elliott reported that last year's total expenditure was \$4,700. Merrill also provides a pdf so the report can be downloaded by the public. The Board agreed to hire Merrill to make the school report. Merrill will provide guidelines for photos and will write out a proposal. Acker will be the point person.

PRINCIPAL REPORT: (Darrah, on behalf of Petrone): Class placement letters were sent on August 5. Eight new students are expected. Petrone has recommended Amada Gray to fill the 1/2 classroom teacher position because Ms. Kendall moved to 5th grade to replace Ms. Sharpless, who is moving into the math specialist position. Gray most recently worked in Chelsea as a 1/2 classroom teacher. It will be a non-renewable, 1 year contract. **MOTION:** (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to authorize Darrah to sign the contract for Amanda Gray (unanimous approval). Petrone is interviewing candidates for a special education para in a primary classroom. Petrone has also asked for permission to hire an additional para in the third grade. About half of the cost would be reimbursable. Currently there is a para per classroom in grades K – 2, and a shared para in grades 3 – 6, except in 4th grade which has only one classroom. The Board gave permission to advertise to fill this position. The multipurpose room has been outfitted with upgrades in bathrooms: Touchless lights and faucets, and hand dryers. A key card system will be installed for public access. The custodial crew has been exceptional in getting the school ready. Special thanks to Sheila Piper and Jean Graber for helping out because Barb Wilson broke her leg. School starts August 30 and teachers return on August 24 for professional development with training in the responsive classroom, which focuses on the social curriculum. There will be four days throughout the year for this training, paid for by the Byrne Foundation.

PEDESTRIAN PROJECT PATH UPDATE: Darrah stated that if the path is moved an apple tree will need to be removed. This is the largest apple tree and is part of many school programs. When asked, Petrone said to leave the plans as they are. Darrah asked the Board if they agree to leave the plans unchanged. Downey recalled that Petrone was the least pleased with the plan, so if he gave his approval, she is in agreement. She is weighing the potential risk of the path vs. impact on the curriculum of removing the tree, and since she does not see a large risk, she does not feel the plan should be changed. MacPhee expressed concern with safety and prefers safety over the tree, but will defer to the Board's decision. Acker stated she is confident that Petrone and the staff will come up with creative solutions. Darrah will tell Stuart Rogers that the path

does not need to be redesigned. It is not an option to eliminate the entire plan because it would mean the town would have to reimburse the money already spent on the project.

BUS ROUTE UPDATE: There are some preliminary bus routes. There will be 8 days when TA begins at 9:40. On those days there will be two bus runs and TA will pay for it. There are also some early release days for TA. The final bus routes will be discussed on August 22.

OTHER BUSINESS: Buttrey has been wanting to look into bringing preschool in house, and wanted to make sure the Board is still supportive of this investigation. Buttrey recently heard there are funds that would allow children who qualify for reduced/free lunch to be fed at school during the summer, at no cost to TTSD. If the current kitchen staff wanted to work, they would be paid. The Board supported getting more information.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (STUDENT MATTER): MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 7:03 p.m. to discuss a student matter. Out of executive session at 7:16 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (MacPhee/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

8/22/17 Thetford Town School District Meeting

6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
Julie Acker, Board Clerk
