

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, January 8, 2019
Thetford Elementary School

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Colin McLaughlin. Interim TES Principal; Bruce Williams, OESU Assistant Superintendent

PUBLIC PRESENT: Megan Snider, Stuart Rogers

TA Trustees: Lindsey Klecan, Ann Bumpus, Bob Christensen

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved as amended.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2018 Board meeting (unanimous approval). MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2018 Board meeting (MacPhee, Downey abstained; unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to approve accounts payable orders #6854, 6840, and 6800, and payroll report # 21791 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: None

OESU REPORT: Keith Merrick distributed the latest version of the FY20 draft budget which results in an estimated 4% increase in the local homestead tax rate. The CLA figure was included. The state may not release equalized pupil data until after the Board warns the budget. TA sent their financials to OESU, but the data was entered into a program phased out by OESU. This was not TA's fault. The state is using a new program, which has delayed the process. Buttrey asked if a town wide appraisal is expected this year. Rogers responded, no. Merrick commented that the CLA can be contested during January. Rogers stated the CLA does not warrant contesting. Buttrey asked Merrick if the excess spending threshold is fixed or is it possible the state will make adjustments. Merrick responded he doubts it will be adjusted. Buttrey asked if there will be a warned article to retire the budget deficit. Darrah responded, no, the deficit has been folded into the budget. However, the capital improvement fund has been drawn down significantly. A separate article could be warned for replenishing the capital improvement fund. Downey asked about budgeting for professional education. Merrick stated professional development is included in the library/tech line item. Merrick needs to investigate further to know how much of this line item is specifically for professional development. Merrick stated he has developed the draft budget under the assumption that TA tuition is flat. TA Board of Trustees Chair, Ann Bumpus, stated tuition will be discussed at the next TA board meeting. There

will be an increase in students from Thetford due to a large incoming 7th grade and a smaller graduating senior class. Merrick added he has figured an increase of 18 Thetford students, and planned for 10 of them to be vocational, which have a reduced tuition rate. Merrick stated that about 200 Thetford students have been budgeted to attend TA. TA Board of Trustees treasurer, Bob Christensen, stated that a 1% increase in tuition has been proposed but has not been discussed yet as a full board. Last year's tuition rate increase was 3% and the prior year was 3.5%. Declining enrollment has been the largest challenge for TA in recent years. This is a statewide issue. There is an approximate \$200,000 deficit this current fiscal year mostly due to declining enrollment. There were faculty reductions last year, student recruitments efforts have been stepped up, and the Board strived to have reasonable contract negotiations with the faculty. Christiansen added it is unfortunate that recruitment efforts have not paid off yet. TA was fortunate to enroll several students from Chelsea this year. The TA board will vote on tuition Thursday, January 10. Darrah stated the TTSD board will have to vote on their warning on January 22. Merrick stated \$145,000 would have to be reduced from the TTSD budget to reduce the excess spending to zero. Acker stated TTSD is pushing the \$20,000 spending per equalized pupil mark. That is a lot and difficult to justify. \$18,311 is the excess spending threshold. Darrah would like to know if there are any urgent facilities issues that need to be included in the budget. Buttrey stated that TTSD is fifth in the state for per pupil spending and 54th for income. Buttrey noted he is very supportive of public education, but this spending needs to change and is not sustainable. Christensen commented the TA Board is having the same conversation. Darrah stated she is not sure where else to cut staff. Downey stated cutting \$145,000 means cutting staff. Downey stated she is curious about the financials of special educators and paras going to the SU. McLaughlin stated the big goal is to have more flexibility to address student needs more fluidly. Buttrey stated the Board ought to meet next week for a budget only meeting once TA has their numbers. Merrick needs to follow up with the SU to discuss service plan costs to TTSD. Acker noted double digit increases in many departments and asked about the library/tech line, which has a 21.7% (\$30,000) increase. This does not jibe with the reduction in staff made this year. Merrick needs to list the line items in more detail. Discussion followed regarding reductions in facilities because the new facilities contract with TA will likely reduce the costs of outside contracts. Darrah stated it is too soon to know what savings may develop. It is best to budget conservatively. For the next meeting Merrick was asked to bring the balance for the capital improvement fund, and figures for a possible \$50,000 warned article for capital improvements. Merrick agreed with Buttrey's statement that the state homestead tax rate has been unchanged the last two years. Changes to the state rate would have an impact for the local tax rate.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Colin McLaughlin): The holiday concert before winter break was well attended with positive feedback from parents. McLaughlin has had recent positive discussions with current TES custodial employees regarding the upcoming facilities partnership with TA. TA's director of buildings and grounds, John Brown, will come to TES to do a visual assessment of the building to get a sense of the responsibilities TA is assuming. After Thursday Brown will talk to TES custodians, Barb and Scott, about the merger. Ski Fridays began last week. This half day of school allows for teacher collaboration time while students ski or stay at school with Montshire programming and the paras. Cross country skiing is also offered.

Approximately 120 of the 207 students go to the Skiway. The children who don't ski have a rich program at school. Dr. Doolittle has been chosen as the school play. Parent organizers had their first meeting with the newly hired director this afternoon. Next week will be a more focused work time regarding scripts and auditions. The rebuild of boiler #2 is 95% complete. All other facilities are working smoothly. The long awaited school credit card should arrive soon.

UPDATE ON FACILITIES: Rogers stated the boiler rebuild was faster than expected. Power went out over the break. Everything had to be reset. Parts have been ordered for the generator.

UPDATE RE: TA/TES FACILITIES CONTRACT FOR FY20: TTSD accepted TA's bid for managing TES facilities, effective the start of the next school year. McLaughlin and Darrah met with TA staff, Linda Lanteigne Magoon, Bill Bugg and John Brown, to discuss the plan for the remainder of the school year. It was decided that TES custodians, would not become TA employees during this school year. TA will do per diem work for the rest of the school year for assessments and acting as a resource for McLaughlin, allowing John Brown to ease into his new role as facilities manager. TTSD will be responsible for half the cost of a full time TA facilities manager. This needs to be added to the next budget. The change in facilities was announced to the staffs of both schools. The two schools will continue to look for additional efficiencies that can be shared.

SCHOOL REPORT PLANNING: Acker has been in communication with school report consultant, Ben Merrill, who has been working with TA to get information for the annual report. January 20 is the deadline for reports and photos. Discussion followed regarding printing and mailing logistics.

TA/TES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT RENEWAL DISCUSSION: The partnership agreement with TA is due Spring, 2019. TA Trustee, Lindsey Klecan, has worked on agreements with other towns. Klecan explained that in the past the agreement has been worked on by a small TA committee, and brought to the other town, followed by some back and forth editing. Then the respective boards ratify it. TA Board chair, Ann Bumpus, stated that for the Lyme agreement, the Lyme TA Board representative participated on the small committee. The TTSD counterpart would be Darrah. Klecan stated the Lyme and Stafford partnership agreements are standardized. Both agreements start with defining partnership. The admissions policy is specified. A fair amount of work has been put into the template. If it is anticipated that changes need to be made for TTSD, it is best for TTSD to look at it soon. Darrah stated TTSD's agreement is the most unique since TTSD does the most amount of business with TA. Darrah expects it to be more personal because TA and TTSD have been partners for so long. The same agreement used for other towns is not appropriate for TTSD. Klecan suggested looking at the existing agreement and comparing it to the new template. It may be a matter of adding existing language into the template. Some points have been omitted because the admissions policy is different for Thetford. Klecan stated the new agreement was written so that if a TA policy changes during the term of the agreement, the agreement would not become suddenly outdated and need re-adopting. Christensen added that related to student recruiting and budgeting, the

Lyme agreement has new language to increase interaction between TA and the Lyme School. Bumpus stated that sending towns such as Chelsea and Waits River are aware TA is open to a partnership agreement. The deadline is June 30, 2019. Both boards should review a draft by March. Discussion is on TA's February agenda. In the past there has been a community forum to get feedback. It could be a regular school board meeting in May with time dedicated to the partnership agreement.

UPDATE ON OBTAINING FEEDBACK ON PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE: Downey reported that on the Tuesday before break the TES staff had an opportunity to ask McLaughlin questions. Teachers were open about their support of McLaughlin during that meeting. Following the meeting, teachers completed a survey about McLaughlin with agree / disagree questions as well as free text. Common themes of the free text were positive regarding McLaughlin's personal attributes, listening skills, respectfulness, and effective communication style. The responses indicated overwhelming support for McLaughlin to continue as principal. Downey read an anecdote from teacher Bren Bennett that was very supportive of McLaughlin. Discussion followed regarding the possibility of a community forum. McLaughlin stated he appreciates any opportunity for input and feedback.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Teacher Negotiations): MOTION: (Buttrey/Downey) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:06 p.m. to discuss teacher negotiations, the premature dissemination of which may place the Board at a substantial disadvantage. Out of executive session at 8:23 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

01/15/19	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.
01/16/19	OESU MEETING	6:00 p.m.
01/22/19	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
Julie Acker, Board Clerk