

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday March 22, 2011
Thetford Elementary School

Elise Tillinghast convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. in the cafeteria. The following were present: Howard Sussman, Shannon Darrah, Lisa Swett, Charlie Buttrey, School Board; Keith Thompson, TES Principal; Don Johnson, OESU Superintendent

Teachers present: Joette Hayashigawa and Marty Bouchard
Parents present: Marla Wolstenholme and Laurel Mackin
Community member present: Cat Buxton of Cedar Circle Farm

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from Tuesday, March 8, 2011 board meeting reviewed MOTION: Buttrey/Tillinghast moved/seconded to approve amended minutes from the 3/8/11 board meeting (unanimous approval)

APPROVAL OF ORDERS:

MOTION: (Swett/Tillinghast) moved/seconded to approve payable and payroll orders #2216, 2218, 2222 (unanimous approval)

PUBLIC COMMENT & CORRESPONDENCE:

Interest in McCormick bill saying if schools are receiving tax money, must take in all students.

PRESENTATION by Outdoor Space Committee

Laurel Mackin, Joette Hayashigawa, and Marla Wolstenholme gave a power point presentation regarding their survey and subsequent work and progress on outdoor spaces at TES. Cat Buxton, farm educator from Cedar Circle Farms also participated in the presentation.

Survey Report Summary: Surveys was conducted at town meeting, and also with students, parents and focus groups. The main themes were care, share and fresh air. The top ten activities found: water play, multi-seasonal sledding hill, skating, bike path, trampoline; zip line; bike path, outdoor classroom, trail system, and treehouse/playhouse.

Priorities: What are the ways to use our school's footprint that enhances learning? This is not just about a better play structure but it reflects the mission of TES.

Subcommittees for skating rink/sliding hill: this project included work with multiple stakeholders and ingenuity, volunteer work and in-kind gifts, as well as support from town institutions including the recreation committee and fire department. January 8th was the grand

opening. The rink was open during recess (with helmets), nights and weekend community use and for the skating club, which was created by one of the TES teachers.

Outdoor Classroom and Garden: This is a theme and curriculum garden; school lunch bed; outdoor classroom; composting area; Cat Buxton from Cedar Circle Farm is volunteering for the school 5 hours per week to better enhance the relationship with CCF; all things with the garden have a relation back to the school thanks to Cat.

Cat Buxton reports: CCF loves to work with TES and TA; she is the educator for CCF, 1000s of kids are coming to the farm; the goal is to educate the public about organic agriculture and food, nutrition in our life; how farm and school can work together; CCF as an outdoor classroom; a lot of TA kids come to work on the farm and from HHS; great food service staff here; school lunch beds are designed (what is grown in them is decided by Sheila Piper); goal is to produce more food this year; kids deliver the food; irrigation system to cut down on labor; sustainable garden; community help; in the courtyard will start implementing with blueberry bushes and strawberry beds; cafeteria staff will come in the summer to harvest and freeze; farm tours matched to curriculum.

Grants procurement: the board discussed with OSC the possibility of more work on grant applications. There has already been significant work on grants; this will continue.

OESU Report: Don Johnson

Personnel update:

Sandra Stanley, special education director has been hired for July 1st

OESU has approved a business administrator, Sharon Stearns. She has not yet accepted the position. Peter Roche's last day is Friday and Don will be contracting help as projects come on board; hoping not many gaps; consultants will also be available to help, including one recommended by Thetford board.

Don is creating a Human Resources Search Committee: There are good applications coming in for this committee.

Administrative assistant Amy Longmoore has given her notice. OESU is advertising for this position. Chuck Brown has stated that he had two individuals who can help keep going with her projects

Board members expressed concern regarding whether sufficient human resources would be available to support the business manager. Tillinghast repeated a concern that she had brought up at the OESU meeting, whether it would be advisable to reconfigure the OESU budget to put more money in business management, less against other services. Don Johnson assured the board that needs in business administration would be met.

The Oxbow High School principal search is going very well and at an accelerated rate. Bob Stevens is facilitating this search. There are 20 candidates and the search is moving forward each week. The first round of interviews is April first and mid April for final interviews. There are some excellent resumes.

TES PRINCIPAL REPORT: Keith Thompson

Bus bid status: The bids for OESU were opened yesterday and Butler came in at the lowest bid. Keith Thompson is following up on some details, and will make a final determination as to which company to hire for Thetford.

TES recently received a free energy audit paid through Efficiency VT. There appear to be some minor savings possible.

Keith Thompson initiated a discussion re teacher/faculty professional development, so that the board will have a better understanding of the ongoing time requirements that teachers face in order to maintain licensure. He will provide further information (to be discussed with the board).

Fun at TES: TES may be participating in the Junior Iron Chef program through State of VT Dept of Education. In this program, school garden products are used for developing dishes.

THETFORD ACADEMY REPORT: Shannon Darrah

International students have been applying to TA and interviews have begun using SKYPE. It looks like TA will be able to achieve its goal of 5 international students in the first year of the program.

Lyme has reported that more of their graduating students will be attending Hanover than originally anticipated. This could mean a lower than budgeted amount coming to TA from Lyme for the next school year. There has been interest from a few students in the Hartland area. It looks like there may be two students coming next year. TA will continue to look at ways to recruit additional students from the surrounding towns.

Mowing RFP: The selectboard will be seeking bids for mowing work, and has invited TES to participate. Keith Thompson will follow up as appropriate. Elise will notify TA in case they are interested in participating as well.

POLICIES

Weapons Policy:

Added new language on the VSBA web site and then utilized existing definitions language.

MOTION: Howard Sussman/Lisa Swett moved/seconded to approve (unanimous approval).

Prevention of Harassment of Students:

This language for this policy was lifted from the VSBA website, which includes language from the Vermont Dept of Education. It differs from bullying policies as it is geared at preventing the

harassment of “protected classes.” On page 9 of the policy, TES will need to include designated employees for reporting cases. This assignment is done annually by TES. TA is in the process of updating its own Prevention of Harassment of Students policy, which should mirror or work with the School District’s policy. MOTION: Lisa Swett/Howard Sussman move/second to approve (unanimous approval).

Bullying Prevention Policy:

Concern was expressed regarding the school board governing conduct outside of the school. Elise Tillinghast requested to hold off on a vote. Charlie Buttrey will review other schools’ policies and report back to the board. Howard Sussman will forward some written materials to board members. There will be subsequent discussion regarding this issue.

There are only 3 more mandatory policies left to review this year. The board complimented Shannon Darrah and Lisa Swett for a job well done.

BLUE SKY DISCUSSION: The School Board, Keith Thompson and Don Johnson participated in a discussion of priorities and objectives for the year. Elise introduced the discussion by saying that it would help to inform the new work plan that she will be drafting for the board’s review.

The board discussed:

- (1) Governance issue – how we will set it up – who will lead it – we need to create a time line
- (2) Marketing TES to out of town students – web site and brochure, marketing strategy; Charlie and Elise will meet with marketing professional who is interested in doing pro bono work for the school
- 3) Principal evaluation and other support for Keith, professional development; in discussion, the board recognized that much PD work and resources for Keith already in place, so this item may be more about awareness generally about principal, staff support
- 4) School Board sponsored educational films and discussion, panel discussions other opportunities for the community & surrounding towns
- 5) Serious concerns about NECAP scores and how to promote better scores at TA especially
- 6) Enrichment (music, other) at TES and TA; make the educational experience more broad based; discussion that enrichment dollars for TES were cut \$2000 this past year out of budget concerns, and because they were not spent, they need to be used more deliberately
- 7) Friends of Thetford Education and the annual wrapping paper sale at TES net about \$10,000 annually, which is used for enrichment programs. Discussion of what funds for enrichment programs need to be added back into the budget and should not need to depend on grants. FTE money should be used as a stepping stone to bring in new ideas, not to sustain a program that has become part of the curriculum at TES.
- 8) Coordination of volunteer efforts: TES, TA, Town, TASP have an updated list of resources for the teachers in the office so teachers will know what skills are available in the community. Discussion of how board can be better informed of what already being achieved at TES, what ideas being considered for future improvements by staff.
- (9) Bullying policy community wide discussion/presentation. Hold a public forum, i.e. pre-emptive effort & invite community, TA, TES, perhaps surrounding communities to be better aware of what issues are, how to prevent bullying
- 10) Policy regarding tuition waivers: seek community input on this issue.

- 11) Kindergarten entrance age: should this be reconsidered or nonissue?
- 12) School lunch credit policy: needs reviewing and updating, sooner than later, as it continues to be a problem.
- 13) Ski Friday option for kids that don't ski: explore an on campus option for this time, enrichment possibility.
- 14) Grants and procurement: continue to explore opportunities to work with TA and the town, identify where board/other volunteers can help at TES
- 15) Question of setting up an outside endowment to support all the schools in Thetford, including TA, Open Fields and TES. How have Lyme, other communities done this?
- 16) Budget
- 17) Teacher contracts: outreach to staff to understand what it is they want to do re negotiations up front, to avoid repeat of pulling out of joint negotiations; Charlie and Howard would like to do this work; discussion that working directly with the staff is helpful.

VSBA SURVEY:

Board members are to fill out this survey. Elise will send a web site link for board members to fill out and return

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mud Season Madness: Kendra Waterbury will be invited to the next board meeting to present and discuss.

Adopt Butler as bid: for school bus contract. Sussman/Tillinghast move/second to authorize Keith Thompson to adopt (unanimous approval).

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Tillinghast/Darraha moved/seconded to adjourn (unanimous approval).

NEXT MEETING: April 12, 7:00 p.m. Thetford Elementary School

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Lorrie Wilkes,
Minutes Clerk

These minutes were approved by the Board on April 12, 2011