

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Thetford Town School District Board of Directors

board@thetfordeschool.org

DATE: Tuesday, April 26, 2011
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Thetford Elementary School Art Room

APPROVED MINUTES

Elise Tillinghast convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. in the art room. The following were present: Elise Tillinghast, Howard Sussman, Shannon Darrah, Lisa Swett, Charlie Buttrey, School board; Keith Thompson, TES Principal

Others Present: P. Smith and Linea Spellman, parents; Wanda Vaughan, parent and TES staff; Faith Alexandre, TA Board of Trustees Chairwoman; David McGinn, TA Head of School; Torrelee Fisher-Sass, TA Dean of Students; Josselyn Swett, and Paul Moses, TA students

Discussion & Approval of 4/12/11 Minutes: Minutes from Tuesday, April 12, 2011 board meeting reviewed and amended. MOTION: Tillinghast /Buttrey moved/seconded to approve edited minutes as amended from the 4/12//11 board meeting (unanimous approval).

Approval of Orders: MOTION: Swett /Darrah moved/seconded to approve payable payroll orders #s 2264, 2266, 2267 (unanimous approval).

Public Comment & Correspondence:

Comment(s) surfaced regarding the language program. Georgia Buckner, the TES French teacher has resigned to move to Chicago with her fiancé. She has been an excellent teacher. Five years ago the strategic planning committee discussed specifically requesting a Spanish program, but decided to give more latitude to the decision on what language, to ensure a qualified candidate. TES has already commenced advertising to replace the French teacher position. Those present discussed the prevalence of Spanish (the fourth most spoken language in the world) vs. French, and concerns that the decision to appoint a new language teacher should have community input. David McGinn noted that students at TA choose Spanish v. French on a roughly 2-1 ratio. Tillinghast commented that on the short term there are budget issues to be considered as we already have materials etc for French in the approximate amount of \$ 2,500 but agreed that the board should give long term consideration to our language program. The group discussed concerns implementing a change for this coming year, should a new language be chosen. They discussed the possibility of adding a second language, and the possibility of teaching another common, non-romance language such as Chinese, Korean, or Japanese. Some expressed the view that there was little practical use for French, and that Spanish has more present day relevance. The board discussed making a one year French teacher appointment and then after careful consideration transition in the coming year to a different language. However, more discussion is needed.

This subject will be placed on the next Board meeting agenda and the community will be notified via the listserv of this agenda item.

Leadership Transition Plan for the Thetford Academy 2011-2012 School year:

The Chairwoman of the TA Trustees, Faith Alexandre, provided the board with an update on TA's leadership transition plans, given David McGinn's recent appointment as athletic director at St. Johnsbury Academy. David McGinn will complete his tenure the end of June 2011. Torrelee Fisher-Sass will be the interim head of school for 2011/12, but stated that she does not intend to apply for the permanent head position. A different member of the administrative team will take over for Torrelee as Dean of Students. McGinn noted that TA's administrative team is a strong team that has experience working collaboratively and is able to accommodate these changes. The last two months the TA administrative team has been doing an extensive amount of work as they are on a very tight timeframe.

The administrative team is hopeful someone else in the Special Education Department will take on the ½ time Director of Special Education position. Torrelee will step out of the SE Director position and also out of Dean of Students role. Last quarter she started movement in this direction. She will be mentoring others to help transition them into these roles.

Swett asked what qualifications were needed to step up into Dean of students and SE Director roles? The Director of SE needs certification in SE, however, because TA is a private school, the Dean of Students does not need an administrative certificate/degree. TA needs a ½ time dean only but someone who holds a wide variety of skills. There are no specific qualifications. The Special Ed Dept has two masters prepared teachers who can step into ½ time SE Director.

Tillinghast praised the great communication between David and Keith Thompson, which has been very productive in helping the schools to work together. She encouraged Torrelee to continue and formalize communications between TA and Keith, perhaps through some sort of periodic (quarterly?) meeting schedule.

TA's representatives clarified that the TA teacher evaluation process will remain Martha Rich's responsibility. She plans to complete all evaluations by the end of next year.

Coordination with Other Elementary Schools:

Tillinghast updated the Board on her recent conversation with Mark Schiffman, Chairman of the Lyme School Board. She noted that they have recently hired a great new superintendent, Michael Harris. The Board briefly discussed the potential for shared resources and other coordination with Lyme, and discussed next steps including arranging a meeting with the Lyme Board and its administrators..

OESU Report: No OESU report.

TES Principal Report: Keith Thompson

Letter of resignation from Georgia Buckner. Tillinghast/ Darrah MOTION: The Board accepts this resignation with regret (unanimous approval). Board members expressed their appreciation for the wonderful work by Buckner implementing a language program at TES.

Thompson noted that TES will have an art show at the Marriott in Lebanon. The opening is on May 2nd. It is hoped that Board members can attend.

Thompson presented the slate of para-professionals contracts for the '11-'12 school year: MOTION: Buttrey/Darrah moved/seconded to authorize the contracts (unanimous approval)

Science NECAPS for 4th grade are in house and all are ready to move forward.

A new student started today in 5th grade. There is a potential new student for 2nd grade. A school tour was given for this student today.

Guys and Dolls musical was terrific. There was much praise for this play.

TA Report: Shannon Darrah

Recruitment efforts in surrounding communities have been successful. TA has accepted its first international student who is from China.

Swett requested information on TA's status with implementing a bullying policy, noting that the policy is referred to in the school handbook, but not readily available. Darrah is following up on this matter.

Governance Decision Planning (timeline, responsibilities):

The Board considered the alternatives for potential restructuring that were discussed in the Proulx report, and some other alternatives, and which of these alternatives looked most promising, with various tasks assigned to Board members to explore what appeared to be the most promising alternatives. Charlie and Howard will prepare an executive summary of options.

The board discussed a number of criteria to be considered as it weighs future governance options, and presents these to the community for consideration. These included opportunities for meaningful sharing of resources, compatibility of curricula and academic goals, peer relationship opportunities for the TES principal, comparable capacity to move forward with goals (including considerations such as interests, resources, community size & demographics), geographically adjacent location to promote sharing resources and community overlap, fiscal responsibility/vision; collegial culture with staff compatible school cultures, compatibility of TES' relationship with TA, population size of partner schools.

The board also discussed critical objectives including stability/sustainability of the governance structure and curriculum management/collaboration; sustainability. It

identified key concerns including preserving the autonomy of the school in terms of the local community's opportunity to have input; a locally elected board, a principal able to make decisions regarding staff and curriculum. Board members expressed a lack of enthusiasm for the RED concept as currently envisioned, and the current trend to consolidate as applied to schools like TES that are functioning well as-is.

The board also discussed what extent of services was desired: key issues included quality financial management; special education services managed locally (perhaps with TA); evaluation and mentoring opportunities for TES administrators and principal, and empowerment of the TES board and staff to continue to collaborate respectfully and constructively on future contracts.

Policy – Bullying: Swett/Buttrey had added anti-retaliation language to the previous draft MOTION: Sussman/Tillinghast moved/seconded to approve Bullying Policy (unanimous approval).

Other business:

The board discussed TA staff vacancies, budget cuts in the curriculum and block scheduling, and the work done to address these concerns through recruitment.

Summer schedule: After discussion it was decided Board meetings for the summer 2011 will be as follows: June 14, July 12 and August 16.

Adjournment: MOTION: Buttrey/Darrah moved/seconded to adjourn (unanimous approval) at 9:45

Next Meeting May 10, 2011 at Thetford Elementary School 7:30 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

Lorrie Wilkes,
Minutes Clerk

These minutes were approved by the School Board on May 10, 2011