

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday, September 11, 2018
Thetford Elementary School

APPROVED MINUTES

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker (arrived 6:49), Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Kristen Downey, Scott MacPhee, School Board; Colin McLaughlin, Interim TES Principal; Emily Knisley, OESU Superintendent

PUBLIC PRESENT: Cynthia O'Dell, Chip O'Dell, Giovanni Bosco, Stuart Rogers

AGENDA REVIEW: Agenda approved with amendments.

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION: (Buttrey/Downey) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the July 11 and August 14, 2018, Board meetings (unanimous approval).

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS: MOTION: (Darrah/Buttrey) moved/seconded to approve payroll warrants # 6657, 6631, and 6648 (unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE: The Board received a letter of resignation from special educator/para-educator, Jean Graber, effective August 29. A letter of resignation was received from administrative assistant, Darla Sterett, effective September 14.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Colin McLaughlin): School opened as scheduled and it has been great start. Seventeen new students enrolled over the summer to bring total enrollment to 209. Before school opened teachers completed professional development with a trainer in the new K-5 math curriculum, "Bridges." Both vacant para-educator positions have been filled (one to replace Jean Graber and another to replace Michele Hastings who moved into Darla Sterett's administrative position). One has already started and the other is waiting on paperwork. McLaughlin received questions and concerns regarding the master schedule from the teachers. At the last minute, the staff and McLaughlin reworked the master schedule. McLaughlin commented it ended up being a positive process and was a nice showing of cooperation, resulting in a better schedule for all. There are a variety of professional learning communities that are reconvening to discuss kids and issues in the school. New committees are forming due to new concerns brought forward by the staff. McLaughlin's focus continues to be facilities and grounds. He has had several meetings with contractors to get facilities up to par and safe. He met with Mark Moody from VSBIT to review safety procedures and recommendations made in 2016. The staff took part in a school safety training called A.L.I.C.E. Buttrey noted there is grant money for school safety. McLaughlin stated \$7,500 is available for safety upgrades and there is an additional \$2,500 if the upgrade was recommended on the school's inspection report. New walkie-talkies that link with police and fire are on the list, as well as upgrading safety glass at the main entrance and installation of security cameras.

FACILITIES REPORT AND PLANNING (Stuart Rogers): Darrah thanked Rogers for his help during the beginning of the school year. McLaughlin echoed this thanks, stating Rogers was very generous with his knowledge and time. Darrah had asked Rogers for help assessing what repairs were necessary within the next 90 days. TTSD plans to have someone more permanent. Darrah stated that TA facilities manager, John Brown, said he is available to assess an urgent situation. OESU assistant superintendent, Bruce Williams, has also been stopping in. McLaughlin explained there have been chlorination pump and water issues. Water testing indicated the chlorination pump was malfunctioning. This could have jeopardized the start date of school. McLaughlin discovered that contrary to prior information, TES is not required to chlorinate its water, but there must be a chlorination pump available on site. McLaughlin has taken a lot of time to learn about water testing, pumps, and current regulations. Mysterious lights were also appearing in the boiler room. There were also issues with the boiler, which had fuel lines replaced this summer. The fuel pump seized up, and needed replacement. D&M Petroleum visited yesterday to assess an alarm that sounds periodically from the boiler panel. It is probably a wiring issue. There is work to be done but there are no real concerns. TES received a notice of violation from the Agency of Natural Resources regarding changes made to the septic system without state approval or a certified engineer overseeing the work. Bruce Williams responded by outlining plans to address this. This septic work needs to be done promptly. The sand filter and the leach field are next to the solar array. Logging was necessary to install the array. Rogers guessed that logging trucks crushed pipes at that time. A few years ago a pipe did need replacement because it was crushed. Rogers stated the septic system serves a “public facility” and therefore any repairs require State approval and must be overseen by a certified engineer. Chip O’Dell is a former school board member and chaired the septic committee when the system was installed. Rogers stated the system needs to be inspected by a licensed engineer twice a year. The last inspection was at the end of 2017 by Advanced On Sight Septic. Rogers stated the current recommendations are the result of repair work that altered outputs and orifices in the sand filter. The pumps should be replaced because they are 20 years old. There is a new phone line nearby because of the solar array. The pump readout could be tied to the phone system to send the school and the engineer electronic data to avoid a surprise problem. Cost is unknown. TTSD received a notice from the State about storm water runoff. High levels of detergent and ammonia were detected in the storm drains. In order to find the source of this pollution more testing needs to be done, but this is weather dependent related to water levels and may include dye testing. This may lead to nothing or recommendations for repair. Ideally, this would be resolved before the parking lot work begins. Rogers has passed this information onto the appropriate contractor. Exiting storm water goes toward the wetlands. Philip O’Donnell brush hogged the septic field around the solar array. He and McLaughlin discussed mowing unattended growth around the array and a schedule to maintain the growth. McLaughlin noted Norwich Technologies made recommendations regarding keeping growth down. HVAC technicians, Controlled Technologies, will come Friday to teach McLaughlin about the computerized system. He has no knowledge about how to turn on the boilers. A recommendation was made September, 2017 to upgrade the supervisor’s software related to the fire alarm panels. Parts are no longer available because the system is outdated. Quote for \$3,700 for upgrade to the control panel.

Darrah stated this update is necessary. The Board has been aware of this over the years. By making this upgrade now there will be potential for benefits such as remote information about alarms for the fire department. With this system, the building would not have to be searched for the fire location. \$3,700 is well worth preventing a future emergency. Board members agreed to do this. TTSD needs to have a five year facilities plan. Rogers stated the sump pump flanges do not meet code. He got prices for a new tank, chlorination pump and spill containers. \$2,000 not installed. The pump alone costs just over \$1,000. Installation will be less than \$1,000. The pump is required, but the system is so outdated that the pump cannot be replaced in isolation. The Board agreed to this repair. Rogers reported the water heater is operable, but it is aged. The tank is old. The burner is newer. A hybrid electric heater could be installed to eliminate the oil lines. An electric system would take advantage of the solar array in the summer. Operating cost would be zero. The cost is \$2,000 but there is \$500 energy star discount. The current system will make it through the winter. It can wait. \$40,000 is the balance of the capital fund. Darrah stated a new water heater should added to the budget. One bond will be paid off soon. If a large expense could be bonded if it becomes a necessity. Discussion followed regarding the benefits of an energy audit for facilities planning. Two men surveyed the future bike track. This will return to the Board before any construction begins. McLaughlin reported there was a mistake in the custodial contract for Scott Waterfield. His contract was for 8 hours instead of 7. Waterfield has been using the extra time to pick up facilities work, which has been timely. The contract will be remain 8 hours.

Of the 17 new students, many have IEPs and 504 plans. Between the one 5th grade and two 6th grades there are 19 students with documented service needs and there is one para-educator between the three classrooms. There is a need for additional para educators. Overall staffing should also be looked at with 17 new students. Teachers are talking about this. Once the IEPs of the new students have been received from their sending schools and services are scheduled, the service time will most likely not be manageable with current staffing. This may be a compliance issue. Eighty percent of paras' time is special education. Knisley stated that generally in Vermont, the highest need students tend to be served with staff who are not adequately trained. A special educator may be more appropriate than a para-educator. McLaughlin stated the current staff is going to have a difficult time being stretched and feels the concerns voiced by the teaching staff are valid. Michele Hastings began developing the school website and social media last year. McLaughlin would like her to continue that work which would need to be compensated. Hastings is in a new role as the office administrative assistant, which is the ideal position for communications. Rogers added he learned from experience with the town webpage, that the website must be ADA compliant. The Select Board hired someone to redo the town webpage. TA used Nomad Communications for their website. Buttrey stated websites need to be mobile ready. Discussion followed.

TA HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE (Gio Bosco): Bosco is the chair of the Head of School search committee and welcomes TTSD input. The job ad will be posted nationally by consultant, Bob Stevens, and will be posted on the TA website. There are 11 members of the search committee: TA Trustees Jim Wilson and Donna Steinberg; TA teachers

Stacy Barton and Joe Deffner; TA administrators, Linda Lanteigne Magoon and Gloria Thurston Konicki; TA alumna Krystal McGovern; and community members, Dana Grossman and Katie Saunders. The student representative is Jacob Slaughter. The first meeting with the consultant is on September 18. All subsequent meeting dates will be set then. The committee is hoping to read applications in September/October. References will be checked in November along with phone interviews. In January at the latest, a list of finalists will be submitted to the Board. Finalists will be invited to interview in person in January. Bosco invited one or more TTSD members to participate in the January interviews. Bosco asked McLaughlin if he would meet the candidate(s) and form an opinion in the context of TA and TES working together. Buttrey was on the search committee during the last search. He recalled that in November the applicant pool was not strong and another wave of recruiting was needed. Buttrey cautioned that applicants apply later than Bosco's timeline. Bosco responded the committee has discussed this. Every year it seems applicants are applying earlier, and jobs are advertised earlier. On September 27, 7-8 pm and October 11, 6-7 pm there will be open community meetings at TA with the search committee. Bosco will meet with each academic department and some non-academic departments to understand their needs and what their ideas and priorities are for a strong head of school. Bosco is available for private meetings with staff members if there are sensitive topics to discuss. He also invited confidential contact from TTSD Board members. Downey stated her preference is a strong academic leader and a great partner for Thetford kids. MacPhee prioritizes a strong mentor for the teachers who enter TA. Downey added she would like a good facilitator of teacher learning and growth. Buttrey prefers someone who can recruit students and raise money for the school. MacPhee agreed that outreach to recruit students is important. Downey commented if there is a strong academic program, the students will come. Darrah added that continuing to build collaboration with TES is a priority. The two schools have come a long way, but there is still progress to be made. There are opportunities to collaborate with other districts. The new Head of School needs to foster the partnership with TES, for example the transition into 7th grade, the math programs, writing, and Spanish so the transition from grade 6 to 7 is smooth. Relationships with the other sending schools also needs attention. Darrah stated TA still needs to recruit Thetford students despite the fact that Thetford designates. Further discussion followed. There are efficiencies that can be realized outside of academics that can be good for the schools and the taxpayers. McLaughlin added that the reality is student population will continue to decline. A good head of school can recognize this changing landscape and is adaptable to these changes over time with programs and creativity. Acker initiated discussion about TTSD representation on the search committee while noting the composition of the committee is robust. Bosco responded there will be a TTSD representative who will review the final candidates. Ideally, there will be four or five excellent candidates, but TA cannot afford to host them. The committee intends to do as much remote work as possible. There will probably be three finalists invited to Thetford. Bosco suggested TTSD Board members could be involved at that time. MacPhee is interested in being involved in the finalists' interviews. Bosco reiterated he would like McLaughlin to talk with candidates. It is the Board's decision if they want the candidates to meet with the full Board. Bosco would like to return in October to give another update.

WORK PLAN FOR THE YEAR: Teacher negotiations, budget planning starting in late October/early November. Policies need to be reviewed. VSBA will do policy audits and work with policy committees. It is less expensive for an SU to adopt the VSBA recommended policies and then tailor them to the district. The cost is \$1,000 per district or \$1,000 for all the districts within an OESU. The Board agreed to review policies collectively with the other districts in the SU at a reduced cost. There may be grants available for an energy audit. Knisley will follow up with Bruce Williams. Knisley mentioned a program called SEMP (School Energy Management Program), but this may only be available for the next year. Downey will Chair the Principal search. A committee leader is needed for the strategic plan.

PLAN FOR TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS: Buttrey stated the teachers' two year contract is up at the end of this year. It makes sense to be the first district to complete negotiations. This may be a hard year because the tax rate is out of line with per capita income. Buttrey and Downey will negotiate again.

LONG TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING: Postponed until the next meeting. It makes sense to have a strategic plan in place before the principal search. Darrah could call the VSBA to ask for a strategic planner, or could pay a stipend to a community member. Downey will explore her contacts, too. Discussion followed.

OTHER BUSINESS: Acker has been talking with Ben Merrill regarding the annual report. Merrill's services will cost ~\$2,000. Acker is meeting him September 19 at TES to brainstorm ideas for content and a possible theme. There were many questions at Town meeting regarding the special education budget. It would be helpful to include information about how TTSD delivers special education services. A profile of the facilities may also be included. Acker added she contacted the VSBA to inquire how boards handle signing of orders. There is an upcoming VSBA webinar about the procedure.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Personnel): MOTION: (Buttrey/MacPhee) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:26 p.m. to discuss personnel. Out of executive session at 8:42pm p.m. No action taken.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Student Matter): MOTION: (Acker/Downey) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:43 p.m. to discuss a student matter. Out of executive session at 8:46 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Acker/MacPhee) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m. (unanimous approval).

FUTURE MEETINGS:

09/25/18	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.
10/02/18	OESU Meeting	6:00 p.m.
10/09/18	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.
10/23/18	Thetford Town School District Meeting	6:30 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Julie Acker, Board Clerk