

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Tuesday, July 2, 2019**  
**Thetford Elementary School**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. The following were present: Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Shannon Darrah, Donna Pluta, Megan Snider, School Board; Chance Lindsley, TES Principal; Bruce Williams, OESU Assistant Superintendent

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Kate Hill, Stuart Rogers, Phil Chaput (arrived 7:16 p.m.)

**AGENDA REVIEW:** Agenda approved with an amendment.

**MINUTES REVIEW:** MOTION: (Buttrey/Pluta) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2019 Board meeting as amended (unanimous approval).

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORDERS:** Completed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CORRESPONDENCE:** Kate Hill stated the TES staff is striving to have more teacher representation at the TTSD meetings. Darrah was copied on a letter to Superintendent Emilie Knisley from Shannon Arigides regarding Beth McGee's grievance matter. The Board also received letters from Melissa Thaxton and Ben LaRoche. Buttrey asked if this correspondence becomes public record of this meeting. Rogers was asked for his opinion based on select board practice. Rogers stated correspondence is automatically public record and should be attached to the minutes. Listserv and facebook posts, and phone calls to the OESU superintendent's office have been received, but those are not public record. Rogers suggested adding a footnote to the TTSD Board email address that all correspondence becomes public record. Borst manages the Board email. Acker suggested she reach out to those who corresponded to confirm making the correspondence public record was the intention of the author. Williams responded this is a nice intention but the correspondence is public record. Hill continued by asking, even if the letters are related to personnel and therefore confidential, are they still part of public record? Acker stated she plans to investigate this point further with the VSBA. Discussion followed.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (Chance Lindsley):** Lindsley attended the BEST/MTSS Summer Institute Conference in Killington with several staff members. They put together a MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) process flow chart from regular classroom all the way to special education. Everyone was excited about the product. He gained clarity about SST and created a new Thetford Intensive Needs Team (TINT). He has met with a couple of people after giving an open invitation to the staff to meet over the summer. He met with John Brown for a facilities tour. Regarding Butler Bus and cost sharing with TA – he reviewed bills with Odell and noticed dates TES did not have school but TES was charged. Does TA handle the bills for athletics and TES handles the bills for the routine bus routes? Darrah explained TTSD buses all the Thetford kids

who attend TES or TA. TA athletics is separate from TES expenses. Sometimes TA has a half day, or there is a difference in school day cancelations. TA starts and ends their school year earlier. Lindsley asked what the Board would like from the Principal report. Discussion followed. The Board would like to hear about facilities, academics/education, events, SBAC data, MTSS, budget and keeping on top of spending throughout the year. Lindsley should also be meeting with TA Head of School, Carrie Brennan. Lindsley met TA teacher and TES parent, Casey Huling, who is excited about raising chickens. TA had meat birds but weasels got in.

**TA REPORT (Shannon Darrah):** In preparation for the joint meeting with TA on July 11, Darrah met with TA Board President and Vice President, Ann Bumpus and Giovanni Bosco, respectively, to discuss agenda topics such as test score data for Thetford students, and treating incoming TES students like students coming from out of town. Lindsley was invited to the meeting. The Board wants the TES principal and TA Head of School to collaborate. In the Fall, when both boards meet together again during budget season there will be a more in depth conversation about how TTSD puts the budget together so the TA board can understand this proactively before crunch time during budget season. There are a lot of new TA Board members who naturally need education. A large part of the TTSD budget is Thetford students attending TA. Discussion followed. Hill stated she is interested in hearing about class sizes and ensuring the student/teacher ratio remains equitable between the schools. The incoming 7<sup>th</sup> grade was split into two classrooms at TES and will be split into three rotations at TA. Williams added this is a complex issue. Small high schools have challenges related to course offerings that can drive the teacher/student ratio down. Darrah recalled the TA Board discussing the large incoming 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Williams stated he believes the student: teacher ratio at TES is the highest in the SU. TES has been creative with balancing classroom size. Hill stated the upper wing classes were larger last year due to 18 incoming students over the summer. She has noticed increasing class sizes over the last 4 years. Discussion followed. Darrah stated the Board is open to adding a teacher if needed when numbers change over the summer. This has been done in the past. Pluta asked, what is an optimum class size before being too large? Darrah replied that the Board hesitates to set a firm class size cap because it depends on the individuals in the classroom and their needs. One year there was a year with 26 6<sup>th</sup> graders but they were high achieving allowing that class size to work. Hill stated that as a teacher she notices changes in children – they are more needy. Hill had 19 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders last year. Last year the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade had 23 students. Sometimes there are large portions of the class on plans which can make it challenging to have larger classes. Williams offered a national perspective, which probably takes into account any licensed teacher such as a special educator. Vermont has the lowest class size at 10 students to 1 teacher; NH and Nebraska are next at 13:1. Darrah stated the Board continues to watch this, which is one reason a school psychologist was hired. It is a balance to meet the needs of students, teachers, and taxpayers.

**SCHOOL LUNCH LUNCH PRICES 2019/20:** Darrah stated the price of school lunch will increase to \$3.00. Williams added this is a state guideline. The state says the price is a Board decision, but if a Board strays from the state's recommendation the district will be audited and may have to raise the price anyway. Lunch is \$2.95 at Bradford and \$3.00 at Newbury, with the price

decided upon by those boards. Williams explained the price is impacted by the state and the federal government, who agree that students who pay for lunch should not be subsidized by students who receive free or reduced priced lunch. The state and federal governments have determined that at \$3.00 per lunch, that subsidy would not happen. Breakfast pricing is different with price variation between schools. TTSD subsidizes the lunch program and runs a small, stable deficit. At \$3.00 per lunch and \$2.00 per breakfast TTSD would be in good shape even though a small deficit results. The Board could consider raising the breakfast price to lessen the deficit. Parents send money in for meals and each student has a barcode on their ID. The Board is not interested in raising the breakfast price. Waits River has a high number of students who receive free and reduced priced lunch. They have had a universal meal program that all students eat free for the last three years. This year they did not meet that criteria but they are committed to free lunch for all even though they have to subsidize it. Buttrey stated the Town of Thetford has a trust fund with a balance of ~ one million dollars. The fund's purpose is to care for residents in need and was started in 1957 with ~\$5,000. In addition to earning interest, many townsfolk have donated to the fund. Buttrey spoke to Joe Tofel about using some of that money to fund a free summer lunch program for students. Discussion followed. Buttrey will follow up with the trustees of the fund. Williams stated that Oxbow Union School District is considering subsidizing the difference in order to have universal lunch. **MOTION:** (Pluta/Snider) moved/seconded to raise the price of school lunch to \$3.00 for school year 2019/2020 (unanimous approval)

**TRAILHEAD CONSTRUCTION UPDATE:** Rogers gave an update on the walkway and pedestrian walkway projects. Different crews but the same contractor. All are aware that the deadline is before school starts. The crews are allowed to work Saturdays if they fall behind due to rain. Discussion followed. A new ADA compliant bridge will connect TES to the library. The old bridge should be salvaged for use on the bike path. Rogers responded salvage depends if the bridge can be removed in one piece. One tree will be trimmed so it does not rub on the roof, and a supporting cable will be replaced. No trees need to be removed. Discussion followed regarding details of the route of the sidewalk.

**DISCUSS POTENTIAL WATER ISSUE AT SCHOOL:** Rogers stated that TES nearly ran out of water on the last day of school. The current cistern has a 4,000 gallon capacity. Since the pipes that feed into the school pull off the bottom of the cistern and the water level was very low, the sensor shut off the in-feed pipes to prevent the system from burning out. However, Rogers rigged it so that the water would not be shut off and the water has remained on. There are two artesian wells that feed the cistern: one is on the playground, 1,000 feet deep and installed in 1988 with a one horse power pump maximum to 600'; the other well is out in the soccer field drilled in 1974 and is 925 feet with a 1.5 horse power motor. Sonar was used to assess the water depth and was followed up with a probe. The static level is where the water level is. The static level in well #1 was 333 feet (the drop is 333 feet before hitting water). Pump #2's static level was 408 feet, 6 inches. Those static levels were measured with both schools out of session. When both schools are in session the water level goes down (TA is probably pulling from the same aquifer). Rain water takes two years to get to the aquifer. Pump #2 has been replaced and is working fine. Pump #1 is likely original and is failing. Rogers stated pump #1 will fail this year.

Cost and specs of a new pump: 1.5 horse power pump set at 800' with new controls, new wiring, and new piping will cost \$14,500. Discussion followed regarding replacement and scheduling logistics around summer school. This has been an intermittent issue during recent years. One maple tree on the playground would need to be cut down. There is money in the capital fund. It will take two weeks to schedule the work. It can be done this summer. The back walkway and the playground will have to be closed during the work. **MOTION:** (Buttrey/Acker) moved/seconded to authorize the Board Chair to sign a contract with Wragg Brothers in an amount not to exceed \$14,539.20 for the work outlined in their estimate (unanimous approval).

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (Personnel):** MOTION: (Buttrey/Snider) moved/seconded to go into Executive Session at 8:18 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. Out of executive session at 8:27 p.m. No action taken.

**ADJOURNMENT:** MOTION: (Buttrey/Snider) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. (unanimous approval).

**FUTURE MEETINGS:**

08/13/19 Thetford Town School District Meeting (Board retreat, Norwich Inn 5:00 p.m.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Amy Bosco, Minutes Clerk

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,  
Julie Acker, Board Clerk