

OUUSD BOARD MEETING

Via Zoom

July 15, 2020

Present:

Board Members: Angela Colbeth, Danielle Corti, Carol Cottrell, Melissa Gordon, Timm Judas, Chelsea Perry

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Bruce Williams, Alison Kidder, Jean Wheeler, Brian Emerson, Morgan Moore, Kate Paxton

Members of the Public: Reporter from the JO, Bud Haas, Marvin Harrison, Ted Pogacar, Carol Owen

- I. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Supt. Emilie Knisley.
 - A. Board Reorganization
 1. Nominations were invited for School Board Chair. Nomination by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth for Danielle Corti to serve as Board Chair. Nomination voted on, and Danielle Corti was unanimously elected.
 2. Those present were welcomed, and the expectations for a Zoom meeting were reviewed. New members Chelsea Perry from Bradford and Carol Cottrell from Newbury were welcomed. Angela Colbeth and Timm Judas were congratulated on their reelection. Thoughts, prayers, and well wishes were sent to Oxbow student Sierra Longmoore and her family following her serious automobile accident. Jean Wheeler shared information and invited donations to help the family.
 3. Melissa Gordon was nominated by Carol Cottrell, seconded by Angela Colbeth to serve as Board Vice Chair. She was unanimously elected.
 4. Angela Colbeth was nominated by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Timm Judas to serve as Board Clerk. She was unanimously elected.
 5. Danielle Corti was nominated by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to serve as Back-up for Payables. She was unanimously elected.
 6. Timm Judas was nominated by Carol Cottrell, seconded by Melissa Gordon to serve as Board Secretary. He was unanimously elected.
 7. Since negotiations are ongoing, the Negotiations committee was left intact with members Angela Colbeth and Timm Judas continuing to serve.
 8. SU Board Representative: Will act on this in September
 9. Sick Bank Representative: Chelsea Perry was nominated by Timm Judas, seconded by Melissa Gordon. She was unanimously elected
 10. Other committees: it was suggested that a sheet be prepared for the next meeting with the committees that will be filled, along with a short descriptor.
- II. The agenda was reviewed.
- III. Board Business

A. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Timm Judas to approve the Board minutes of June 10, 2020. Motion carried with two abstentions (Chelsea Perry and Carol Cottrell)

B. Correspondence

1. Letters of resignation were read from Susie Tann, school nurse at BES, and from Phyllis Shea, school nurse at Oxbow. Motion by Melissa

Gordon, seconded by Timm Judas to accept both resignations with deep regret. Motion voted on and approved unanimously. The Board thanked these two employees for all their years of work in the district.

2. Letter from Alison Bruce, a parent, asking the Board to consider alternatives to all remote learning.

3. Letter from a number of Newbury voters asking the Board to consider including an article on the next budget revote for dissolution of OUUSD and to return to two School Boards. The letter offered guidance as to what they felt would be helpful in the next budget. They asked for a 1% reduction, and that those reductions come from administrators' salaries. They requested that Provision II not immediately be taken out, citing the importance of food security in the district.

IV. Public Comment

A. Marvin Harrison: When can we expect an answer as to whether the Board will put the dissolution question on the Warning? When will there be a Warning to go out to the voters? Danielle Corti: We will set a date tonight and will set the Warning next week. The goal is to have the revote the last week in August or first week in September. Emilie Knisley has reached out to the Secretary of State. Historically, it's an individual town that votes to withdraw from the district, and then the district needs to vote as to whether to accept the withdrawal. We need to let everyone know it's on the agenda. The Board needs to properly warn this. Marvin Harrison: if the Board doesn't accept the article at next week's Board meeting, it puts the voters who sent the communication in a time crunch. Danielle Corti: It was never the Board's intention to make it more difficult.

B. Bud Haas: both letters were not from the same people. We had two days' notice for this meeting tonight. The intention is to have a Board meeting next week? Danielle Corti: yes, there will be a meeting next week, with the date to be determined. Bud Haas: if we have to gather signatures, will you accept digital signatures? Danielle Corti: the Town Clerks would have a better handle on that. It will be done in conjunction with the Town Clerks and the Secretary of State. Bud Haas: the burden to the Town Clerks is immense. Please consider having a Town meeting in the Oxbow parking lot. If the budget is voted down again, a Town Meeting would allow us to come out with a budget.

C. Ted Pogacar: Reviewed challenges of opening our schools. Humbly asked the Board to stay focused on educating our students instead of on political issues.

V. Principal and Supt. Report

A. Jean Wheeler: Oxbow is using AOE guidelines, which change on a regular basis. Received information today from the AOE on a hybrid model. A staff meeting is planned for June 21st. From there, they will hold a public forum sometime in August. They will be modifying schedules and responsibilities of staff. They anticipate they will come

back in the fall with a Step 2 or Step 3 model. Expect a hybrid of in-person learning and remote learning and have a couple different plans they are considering. There are lots of different models out there. The goal is to get as many students in school for as many days as possible.

B. Brian Emerson: RBCTC is doing a lot of looking at Phase 2 models. They are planning to meet with all 5 high schools on July 28th. The AOE has sent out strong language reminding high schools that tech centers should be in the forefront in setting schedules. Some of the Business community will be invited to the July 28th meeting. Information from NH is slightly different from VT. We are asking our teachers to do a very difficult job, and administrators need to do anything possible to support their teachers. The cyber security course is still moving forward, but there are questions to be worked out.

C. Morgan Moore: Newbury Elementary School is preparing for students to come back and how to do that safely, while supporting social emotional learning. They are hoping to have a forum to inform parents. The Staff is doing a lot of professional development.

D. Kate Paxton: Bradford Elementary School nurse Susie Tann and the S/L Pathologist have both retired. They are in the middle of the hiring process. Several new staff members have been hired. A lot of professional development is going on this summer. She is collaborating with Jean Wheeler and Morgan Moore around re-opening. BES will be planning on opening with students in-person, but will be exploring options if remote learning is needed. She asked the Board and the public to appreciate the extremity of these unusual circumstances and the extraordinary ways the staff members are stepping up. Timm Judas: asked each principal about space needs, which differ in each building.

VI. Superintendent's Report

A. COVID prep takes up the majority of their day. Students will be kept in pods. They are rethinking the infrastructure of the building, and major communal spaces be closed. Adults move around, not students. The SU will be leaning on the expertise of Little Rivers. There will be a brainstorming session next week. Susie Tann will be employed to coordinate the District COVID prep, with her position funded by the Dept of Health. There is a District COVID team, and each school has its own COVID team. Buses schedules will need to change. They are continuing the work of food distribution. Supt. Knisley noted that in her 20 years of education, she has never seen teachers working so hard nor Principals working so hard. Timm Judas: What is the drop-dead date on how schools will open? Emilie Knisley: much communication will come from their schools. More information will be coming the first week of August. The goal is to have as much in-person instruction as can safely be done.

VII. Financial Review (Lori Blood)

- A. There are 5 documents on the website dealing with finances
- B. Expenses: There are still encumbrances.
- C. Revenue: a little more than anticipated, due to some collection of delinquent taxes
- D. Second current expense note. On June 25th the bank issued a current expense note of \$400,000. A second current expense note of \$2,800,000 has been requested to get the District through October 1st. No interest would be charged on any money not used.

E. Each Principal shared a number of expenses from their budget that they felt could be deferred to reduce the total figure. Their savings resulted in about 1% savings from the overall budget. There was discussion about some of the cuts.

VIII. Building and Grounds

A. Boltonville Property: The District has a solid offer of \$30,000 on the table for the property, as is, including the conundrum of asbestos and mold. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth, to approve the offer on the Boltonville property and to authorize the Board chair to sign any legal paperwork as needed. Motion voted on and approved unanimously. The Board thanked Bruce Williams for all his work in helping this to happen.

B. Newbury Drainage project: Waiting for the Town to move on this project. The District cannot act independently, but must wait for the town. Bruce Williams will ask a company from Barre to come and look at this. There was flooding in the NES school basement yesterday.

C. NES nurse's office: getting estimates to increase space needs. Working with a plumber and contractor to get it done before school starts.

IX. Informational Meeting

A. Would be best practice to have one. Will set the date at the next meeting.

X. Action Items

A. Motion by Carol Cottrell, seconded by Timm Judas to allow Tom Kidder to sign on the T. Rowe Price Scholarship at Oxbow. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

B. Directive to take to OESU as the OUUSD representatives. The SU has looked at places to reduce budget. Whatever the result is of that will impact the OUUSD budget. It's on the agenda for tomorrow night's meeting. Timm Judas: when does OESU do short and long-term goals? Emilie Knisley: September. Timm Judas: suggested asking for a 1% reduction in the OESU budget. Bruce Williams: reminded Board members that the SU also covers transportation and special education, which cannot effectively be cut because of contracts.

XI. Public Comment

A. Bud Haas: Does not agree with the cut for Art. Regarding the Petition: The Board is going to force us to bring a petition next week with several hundred signatures. We went to the Secretary of State for advice. The law doesn't mandate that digital signatures be accepted, but hope they will be. Mr. Haas and others sought legal advice, and the lawyer approved the article. The voters who signed the letter don't want NES to be shut. They don't want students to be shuttled around on buses.

B. Carol Owen: If the board isn't willing to meet in person in the buildings, what does that say about bringing children into the building? Danielle Corti: This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

XII. Danielle Corti gave the Board's appreciation to all the Administrators, Principals, Teachers, and Staff for all the extra work they are doing.

XIII. The next meeting will be at 5:00 PM on Wednesday, July 22nd via Zoom.

XIV. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Carol Cottrell to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM. Motion voted on and approve unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Nancy Perkins, Minutes Clerk

The minutes are in draft format and are unofficial until formally adopted by the Board at a subsequent meeting.