

# THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

Via Zoom

## Approved Minutes

Shannon Darrah convened the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

### PRESENT:

**School Board:** Shannon Darrah, Charlie Buttrey, Donna Pluta, Megan Snider, Julie Acker

**Principal:** Chance Lindsley      **OESU:** Emilie Knisley, Bruce Williams

**Community:** Mary Wunderlich (staff) Nick Clark (Selectboard), Michael Kiess, Tom Ward, Erica Coe (Energy committee)

**Agenda Review** add Darrah will report from the Selectboard meeting last night.

**Review and Approve minutes of 5/26/2020 and 6/3/2020.** Corrections made to the minutes of 5/26/2020. **Motion** to approve the minutes as amended (Buttrey/Snider) unanimous.

### Review of Orders

Cynthia Odell and Bridget Veracka have been working really hard to make sure there are no interruptions in payroll and other payables while the OESU offices are moving.

### Public Comment /Correspondence

Darrah was contacted by Stuart Rogers about which water pump had failed. He also wanted to know why the selectboard had wanted to do a study of the school lands. Darrah addressed it directly with him.

### Reports:

#### Principal Report

- So pleased with how graduation went today. Dan Grossman was there taking photos. Tim Mikovitz did the sound. After the ceremony at the school, the Fire and Police cars led the procession of cars to TA where Carrie Brennen greeted them.
- Then staff lined up on the school yard and across to the green, socially distancing, and waved, and made a lot of noise as a farewell for the rest of the students as they rode by in cars.
- Sheila Piper (kitchen) received many great items from Barry Clark, and she is very excited. Reaching out to Casey Huling about the summer food program.
- Staff emails are changing to @oesu.org. Thetford is the first school to transition.
- TES has microscopic levels of lead in its water at certain points of use. John Brown is working with the state to change out the fixtures. There's a public notification process that happens. All schools in the state are tested.
- All the professional and support staff are doing professional development this Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- The staff and community are very interested in a just world. The protests have awakened people to this. The paraeducators are working to establish a scoping sequence curriculum, for aligning experts, texts, book studies, etc. to teach

ourselves about the difficult conversations about white privilege, racial injustice, and the system that is causing this. One concern is not having the time to talk about this, so the paras have taken this on.

- Equity is a concern. Our system is not equitable. We're going to be having these conversations tomorrow, looking at how we may make our system better. How do we improve our remote learning? How do we get back to school (and it will not be regular school). Greenhouses for classrooms? Looking at ways to space out classrooms at the same time keeping a focus down the road for social justice, racial injustice and making the world a better place. Looking for thoughts.
- Williams: the school buses are really one of the major issues that have not really been looked at. Asking parents to do drop off and pick up may help, but transportation is going to be an issue if it is not carefully planned.
- Buttrey: we have summer camps, old school houses and other buildings in town that are empty - maybe we could avail ourselves to these places.
- Lindsley doesn't want to scatter and survive meaninglessly. Schools and farms, and rethinking school, helping children with the academics, sustainable systems for communities and environmental protests. One room school houses don't really help us move forward.
- Darrah: the area behind the basketball court has been designated for overflow parking, and has a special sub-base from when the parking lot renovation was done, thus need to plan carefully about building outdoor spaces there.
- Williams: we are operating with some guidance, it is running counter to TES staff. There is tension around timing, Dept. of Ed is saying there is more coming out on Friday. Bruce has been participating in three webinars from VSBIT on "Planning on Re-Opening in the Fall." They have had the best synthesized information that he has been privy to.
  - Building level readiness,
  - Personal protective piece the nurses have been working on
  - What will education look like?
- Lindsley: Should there be a meeting with the school board, schools and community to decide how we use this situation to not just get kids in the schools to learn state standards, but to use this situation deliberately to make the world a better place, and teach social and environmental justice and how that looks in education and sustainable food systems?
- Darrah: we may need to come up with three options for the fall- 1) remote learning, 2) in school learning, and 3) a combination of the both.

### **TA Report:**

Darrah: The big part of the June meeting is to confer diplomas, and that was done. Talked a lot about policy. Two hundred and ninety one students for next year, one returning from China and one from Korea.

### **Report of Selectboard meeting last night with Jim Masland and Tim Briglan (Darrah)**

- The upcoming year's state money is going to stay as budgeted.
- They can't guarantee the locally raised revenue amount as people may not be able to pay their taxes.
- They are not planning on raising the tax rate. That is just for this year.
- Where we may run into issues is after this year, depending on the impact of COVID and what they are able to raise for revenue and what stimulus money they get and they may have to borrow money and it may impact us for up to 5 years after. They would do small increases each year.

## **Joint Resolution on Establishing a Joint Thetford Energy Committee Discussion**

- Mike Kiess, Energy Committee: Mechanism for how we restructure the committee is how we approach the social, environmental and economic future of our community. Adaptation, resilience, climate change are a few needs of the students. Food and shelter and transportation and some of the things the energy committee has been doing, but feel very disconnected to the community and the school. What can we do together? Education can happen in lots of different ways.
- Buttrey: what is the charge of the energy committee? Kiess, to improve the energy future of our town, especially the town properties, and to reduce the footprint of the town and residents.
- Darrah: duties of the school board are to help the schools be more energy efficient, e.g. solar array, composting,
- Acker: makes sense to form this joint committee as the schools real estate is big, and the resources are huge. Rethinking the way the energy committee has run would be big and it makes sense.
- Clark: the regional energy coordinator should be starting hopefully around July 1st. It is basically a staff position that we're sharing with six other towns. Their job is Energy Efficiency for towns, and then also for the schools and if they have time, and then nonprofits with a public service mission like the library and the fire department. They could then do public outreach which the energy committee does: winter weatherization programs etc. It's a staff position that the town is buying into and paying for that could benefit the school, and the school doesn't have to buy into it because the town's already covering it. It's more cost-effective to bundle projects together so if we're trying to weatherize the school it might be most effective trying to weatherize seven schools from seven towns and bundle that into one project, or to bundle in seven schools and seven town halls and seven town garages and get the best rate and have the energy coordinator work it out.
- Darrah: the school board could designate the people to sit on the committee, members do not necessarily all have to be on the board. Further discussion ensued.

## **Summer Lunch Program**

Buttrey: Very briefly it looks like all systems are a go. The school lunch program is in effect until June 30. It may go on further than that, but that only covers kids 1 through 18 in age. This program covers anyone who is a resident of the town. One of the concerns, that Buttrey will share with the trustees, is to make sure it is publicized because he doesn't know very many people who are aware that this is about to happen. Williams: the only thing I would contribute is the health protocols we could share, because the folks at the Bradford Center have been just incredibly diligent about how they do business in that kitchen and around the kitchen.

## **Other business:**

- People's Bank Bond Payment. There is a bond payment of \$13,500 due this year. Due to COVID, we were told that we can wait to pay it and incur no interest expense. Ordinarily if someone tells you "you can pay me \$13,500 now or you can pay me \$13,500 a year from now", that's a no-brainer. The reason this is being raised is because we are going into a scary time, and as we talked earlier this evening about how we are going to take care of things; will we need to send kids to other places, are transportation costs going to change... it makes sense

to hold off a year. The more thought put into it, the answer is no, it doesn't make sense to hold off. What will next year look like, and because we don't know, and if we have the money now, let's pay it now. Our budget will be funded as it passed at town meeting, which included this bond payment. They can't guarantee the local revenue (if people can't pay their property taxes), but the bulk of our budget comes from the state. By paying it now, we will do so before getting into the 2020-21 budget. The board agreed to have Odell pay it.

- Darrah: One last thing before the executive session regarding scheduling. A special meeting needs to be scheduled, strictly executive session, regarding a hearing for tuition waiver regarding a high school student. Shannon asked Emilie to preside over it so that the board can all listen. June 18th at 6:30 in the cafeteria, where social distancing can happen. TA representatives will be invited as well.

### **Motion to go into executive session to discuss request to tuition child to TES**

#### **Executive Session:**

**Motion:** Buttrey: to find that premature general public knowledge regarding a tuition request would place the Board at a substantial disadvantage because discussion of the matter would reveal confidential information that the Board is not at liberty to disclose. (second Pluta) (Unanimous approval).

**Motion:** Buttrey: to move we enter into executive session to discuss the tuition request. Williams and Lindsley invited to participate, (second Pluta) (Unanimous approval). Into executive session at 7:59 pm. Out of executive session at 8:07 pm. No action taken.

**Motion to Adjourn** at 8:08 by Snyder/Pluta. Unanimous.

Minutes Prepared By:  
Ginni Balch, Minutes Clerk  
RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,  
Julie Acker, Board Clerk

#### **FUTURE MEETINGS:**

**June 18, 2020 Thetford Elementary School (Executive Session only)**  
**June 23, 2020 Zoom**