

OUUSD BOARD MEETING

Via Zoom

October 5, 2020

Present:

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

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Bruce Williams, Marla Ianello

Others: Lillian Gahagan, Bud Haas, Marvin Harrison, Amy Hayward, Donna Kidder, Donna Lee, Ted Pogacar, Carol Royce, Thomas Watkin, and other members of the public

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM by Danielle Corti, Chair. Those present were welcomed, and the protocols of Zoom meetings were reviewed. Each Board member and administrator present introduced him/herself.
- II. Board Business
 - A. The agenda was reviewed and approved.
 - B. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Carol Cottrell to approve the Board minutes from September 16, 2020. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.
 - C. Correspondence
 1. Communication from Susan Monica asking several questions about the finances, with topics including Special Education, the Treasurer for the Board, Provision 2, the new SU building, preschool, and others. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to direct the Chair to respond to Ms. Monica in a more formal way, after consulting with the Supt. and Asst. Supt. to gather the information. Motion voted on and approved unanimously
 2. Communication from Tom Kidder with some suggestions following his attendance at the public information meeting on the Newbury Common.
 3. Communication from VSBIT/VEHI asking the OUUSD Board to elect representation to each of these Boards
 4. Communication from Jean Charland offering to help to reach out to the voters, and asking for guidance in getting the word out about the budget
 5. Communication from Candace Allen, who had asked to have her child transferred from Newbury to Bradford, and is now asking to have her child transferred back to Newbury. This will be discussed in Executive Session under Academic Records.
- III. Public Comment
 - A. Thomas Watkin: Asked about a petition being circulated in Newbury to withdraw from the District.
 1. Danielle Corti: The Town on Newbury would have to vote to approve the withdrawal.

2. Emilie Knisley: Then Bradford would have to approve Newbury's withdrawal. If that is in the affirmative, it would go to the State Board of Education for their approval. If that is approved, it would revert to two town-based school districts. One of the questions is what happens to Oxbow High School, and Oxbow would cease to exist. We expect that the Legislature would have to weigh in on this issue because of the debt at Oxbow. If Oxbow were to continue to exist, it would have to go through the re-formation process again.

B. Marvin Harrison: Bradford's petition and vote would be for the Elementary School to withdraw. Districts around the state that have dissolved did not have a high school.

1. M. Harrison: Is the decision by the Board to go forward with a paper ballot for every household? Mr. Harrison believes that the best way for the budget to pass would be to have the voting process the same as on the last budget vote.

IV. Information

A. Financial (Emilie Knisley)

1. Update on tax rate sheet. This is on the OUUSD website under the last meeting's tab.

2. Update on where we are with cash flow. Because we don't have an operational budget, we are only receiving 25% from the state. Lori Blood has prepared an update on what is needed for cash to get through December. She prepared it for the bank, and it is shared on the website. She is asking the Board to ask the bank to borrow an amount up to the needed amount. The \$9 million number would be what is needed to get through the whole year. Ms. Blood is recommending submitting the full year's need to the bank in case the budget is not approved.

a. D. Corti: We are not getting any taxes from the towns, because without an approved budget, we are not eligible for any tax money.

b. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to approve applying for a Current Expense Note up to the amount of \$9,464,154.00. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

3. Linda Metcalf, the new Business Manager, will be starting in her new job. L. Blood and E. Knisley will be helping with the transition into early December.

a. Danielle Corti expressed the appreciation of the Board for all Lori Blood has done, including taking over the budget preparation after the person who had been handling this had some health issues.

V. Discussion

A. Committees to Discuss:

1. Policy: Timm Judas and Carol Cottrell are on this committee. They will be bringing policies from the SU, which are templates. OESU is almost finished with required and recommended policies.

a. Bruce Williams: The goal is to systematically review policies on an annual basis.

b. D. Corti would like to create a document, spelling out the role of the various committees and a charge from the Board.

2. Budget/Finance: Look at the expenses vs. budget. Marvin Harrison: hopes that reports will be available for the committee to review. Currently Danielle Corti and Angela Colbeth are on that committee. There is interest from some community members to serve, as well.

a. D. Corti: Is trying to get the strategic plan and vision in place and review the current financials on a regular basis.

b. A responsibility of the committee would be audit review and to look at long-term budgeting.

c. M. Gordon: Feels like a lot of power is given to elected people.

d. D. Corti: The committee members would bring back information to the Board.

e. T. Judas: Feels that the Board should be using transparency and communication and should take advantage of the institutional history knowledge of people in the community.

f. D. Corti: Do you think there should be representation from the community?

i. T. Judas: Yes. It is important that the Board think about the community members having a voice.

g. D. Corti polled the Board members.

i. M. Gordon: Suggested that the Board come up with a draft and then meet with the community members. She feels the Board should create the initial budget.

ii. C. Cottrell: Feels there should be a strategic plan committee with what we want to accomplish in the next 5 years so the Budget Committee has something on which to base the budget. She feels the strategic plan committee should be different from the budget committee.

iii. D. Corti: suggested that she and A. Colbeth work with Supt. Knisley and consult with other Boards in the State as to how they conduct their committee, draft something and bring it back to the Board. She commented that they had spoken with Monique Priestly earlier about working on a strategic plan.

iv. T. Judas: The Strategic plan needs to be written by stakeholders.

v. D. Corti: The whole Board should be in the first conversation, then reach out to community.

vi. C. Cottrell: If one or two Board members could meet with M. Priestly before the next Board meeting, that would start a dialogue and start on a path.

vii. E. Knisley: The SU does have a continuous improvement plan. The Board should play a key role in writing the strategic plan. There are school level continuous improvement plans in place.

viii. M. Gordon: Used to be on the Bradford Elementary Board. They polled the community to ask what they felt was important to the school.

ix. E. Knisley: Suggested having a community conversation on a Saturday. The School Board needs to be the guiding force.

x. T. Judas: Who are the stake holders for the OESU strategic plan?

xi. E. Knisley: These are strategic goals. They need to tie into the strategic goals for the SU.

xii. D. Corti: Are there Board members who would be willing to reach out? C. Cottrell, T. Judas, volunteered to be the strategic plan committee for right now. Asst. Supt. Bruce Williams volunteered to work with them.

xiii. Motion by M. Gordon, seconded by T. Judas to create a Strategic Plan committee. Motion voted on and approved unanimously. Carol Cottrell and Timm Judas were elected as Board representatives.

3. Articles of Agreement Committee: Charge is to review the Articles and make potential amendments to them, research the changes, vet the changes with the District attorney, and bring to the communities or the annual school meeting for a vote.

1. Bruce Williams: Since the Articles were adopted, we switched attorneys in mid-stream. M. Gordon and D. Corti both agreed to stay on the committee, and community members who were involved before will be contacted to determine their interest.

2. D. Corti: Article 4 was developed in Nov./Dec. of last year. It needs to be voted on by each individual town. The new attorney can look at it later this week. Hopefully it can be warned if the budget vote is in late November.

3. Bud Haas: Commented that he was happy to see the Articles on the agenda tonight.

B. Advertising/Public Announcements/Information Sessions

1. D. Corti has reached out to the *Bridge Weekly* and *Journal Opinion*, as well as WYKR to get information out about the budget. She will try to put in on Facebook. She hopes to clear up misconceptions. She suggested taking out an ad.

2. E. Knisley suggested a press release.

3. Face to Face information sessions, hopefully at Elizabeth's Park and the Newbury Common will be organized. D. Corti, M. Gordon, A. Colbeth, and Bruce Williams are willing to take part in those.

4. D. Corti asked for other suggestions as to how to get information out.

a. Carol Royce: suggested utilizing robo-calls. Maybe teachers would be willing to help, putting a face behind the call.

b. Ted Pogacar: There is an updated voter call list.

- c. Amy Hayward: Suggested robo-calls by teachers, which would be a familiar voice to parents.
- d. E. Knisley: if anything goes out through robo-call from the school system, it needs to be neutral, just encouraging people to vote.

VI. Action Items

A. Warning Budget Vote

1. By consensus, it was agreed to hold off scheduling the date of the budget vote tonight.
2. D. Corti thanked the Town Clerks for all their hard work. They are requesting scheduling a budget vote later in November and have suggested November 24th. That would require sending ballots home about November 10th to avoid crossover with the general election.
3. D. Corti gave a public thank you to Ted Pogacar and his students for reaching out and offering to help stuff envelopes at the Town Clerk's offices

B. VEHI/VISBIT representatives. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Carol Cottrell to nominate Angela Colbeth. If a second person is needed, Danielle Corti is willing. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

C. Authorize Signature on Spooner Outdoor Classroom Contract

1. Before COVID, some money was approved from the Low Forest Trust Fund. Motion by M. Gordon, seconded by C. Perry that the Board Chair be authorized to sign the Spooner Outdoor Classroom Contract in the amount of \$13,673.50 after she verifies that the money comes from the Low Forest Fund and not from the general budget.

a. Donna Lee: Asked if any money is still coming from the Walter Lee Fund, which has to be used by January 1st, or we'll lose it.

D. Approve Migration Network at Oxbow High School

1. Upgrades to the wifi were needed at Oxbow High School to enable it to function satisfactorily in hybrid mode or totally remote. People are now in place who understand what is needed for data transmission.
2. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Carol Cottrell to use capital funds to cover the \$22,345.00 to cover the upgrades to the internet infrastructure at Oxbow. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

VII. Public Comment

- A. Bud Haas: Who are the OESU reps? (It was noted they are Danielle Corti, Melissa Gordon, and Angela Colbeth). When will OESU have a budget for next year? E. Knisley: Typically they start talking about the budget in December, and it is warned in January.
- B. Donna Kidder: Asked about the permitting process at Low Forest. B. Williams: Emily Shipman has been very much on top of this. D. Corti will get more information for the next meeting.

VIII. Executive Session

- A. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Carol Cottrell to enter Executive Session at 7:42 PM, pursuant to VSA 313. (a). (7) to discuss Academic Records after making a specific finding that premature general knowledge would clearly place the public

body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. Motion voted on and approved unanimously. Accompanying the Board was Supt. Emilie Knisley.

B. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:19 PM

IX. Action

A. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to direct the Superintendent to render a decision. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

X. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Melissa Gordon to adjourn at 8:12 PM. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Nancy Perkins, Minutes Clerk

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