

OUUSD BOARD MEETING

Via Zoom

December 9, 2020

Present:

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

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Bruce Williams, Cate Beaton, Nicole Bell

Others: Kaitlin Sampson, Marcey Carver, Marvin Harrison, Ted Pogacar, Polly Bonanno, and other members of the public

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:31 PM by Danielle Corti, Chair. Those present were welcomed, and the protocols of Zoom meetings were reviewed.
- II. Board Business
 - A. There was an agenda review, and the agenda was approved
 - B. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to approve the Board minutes of December 3, 2020. Motion voted on and approved with one abstention (Timm Judas)
 - C. Correspondence
 1. Email from Thomas K., who asked some specific questions about past budget votes and possible ways to reduce tax burden. The Chair had responded to his email, providing answers to questions, and directing him to some links on the website.
 - a. Timm Judas: Bradford and Newbury Board minutes from the past are still on the website. He asked about archived information prior to OUUSD. Emilie Knisley: Archiving all those is on the current “to do” list.
 - b. Danielle Corti: suggested putting vote tallies on the website and on Facebook.
 - D. Committee Reports—none received yet. Will look forward to having a report at the next Board meeting from the Strategic Planning Committee
- III. Public Comment—none
- IV. Information
 - A. Superintendent’s Reports
 1. Asst. Supt. Bruce Williams: In November, Corinna Magalhaes, food service director in Bradford, had applied for a grant to purchase a cargo van to allow her to deliver meals to homeless and disabled community members. She received the grant. The criteria for the van purchase went out to bid. They have taken the best price available and will now make the purchase of the van. The grant goes through OESU, but the van will be titled to OUUSD. This is a great opportunity! In the last two weeks, there have been seven grants approved from Efficiency VT for projects and equipment that needed to be purchased for schools across the SU.

2. Supt. Emilie Knisley—Upbeat Survey

a. We have finished the fall administration of the Upbeat Survey. This is the third time it has been administered. The goal is to work on staff retention and turnover. There is a plan to look at that data with the Board in January. The Fall administration has a set of questions around equity and diversity in the school system. Now we have 3 sets of data. T. Judas: The purpose is to get an understanding of climate. The hope is to be able to retain staff. The survey is a leadership support tool.

3. E. Knisley went to a faculty meeting at Newbury yesterday and is slated to meet with faculty in Bradford next week. She answered a lot of questions.

a. Danielle Corti: What types of questions? E. Knisley: What happens if the vote for dissolving OUUSD is yes? No? There were questions around contracts and negotiations. What would that mean to teachers in Newbury in regard to their jobs and positions? Questions from folks wanting to understand why? Wanting a rationale for why the vote is happening? Wanting to understand interaction between the district and the SU? Centralization of Special education costs and then that cost being billed back out to districts.

b. Bruce Williams: Questions around how do we engage? Will there be hearings? Where is this coming from? Do we have input into the process? Where will this leave us if this vote goes forward? This will yet again be a period of uncertainty.

c. T. Judas: asked Ted Pogacar if the student group has reached out to Town Clerks as to ways they can help? T. Pogacar: Didn't think it would be an issue this time. He will check. T. Judas: whatever we can do to support our Town Clerks is important.

4. Surveillance Testing: one positive case was identified in the SU as a result of that. Another round of surveillance testing is scheduled for this coming Wednesday. This will be happening monthly. There are around 15 cases right now across the 8 entities in the SU. People must preregister, the test is self-administered, and results are back in a couple days.

5. Subs: Raising the sub pay rate at \$11.75 to \$13.50 would mean an estimated difference of \$12,600. That is Melanie Elliott's recommendation.

6. E. Knisley shared Lori Blood's financial report. The budget is 87% of 2020. \$1.16 million budget dollars are still available. There has been \$50,000 savings from the OESU budget. E. Knisley: We just did another bridge loan, which will get us through January. If we pass a budget, we will have to take another loan to see us through March. We are anticipating that we might have to spend up to \$100K in interest. Tax money sits with the towns until there is an approved budget.

7. Supt. Knisley gave a big shout out to Nicole Bell, who has done a ton of work working with Principals to make sure OUUSD can get as much money as we can, as quickly as we can, from the Federal government

A. Committee Members. Hope to get some more community involvement. Hoping to get some more candidates

1. Budget Committee: Tim Ross and Marvin Harrison from Newbury have volunteered to serve. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Angela Colbeth to approve Marvin Harrison and Tim Ross from Newbury for the Budget/Finance Committee.

a. D. Corti noted that M. Harrison is involved in the work to dissolve the OUUSD. M. Harrison: Made it clear that he had expectations to see timely financial information before the committee meets.

b. D. Corti: thinks the committee should meet in early January and decide what documents are needed, giving the Business Office adequate time to get those ready. D. Corti and A. Colbeth have already been approved to serve on the committee.

c. B. Williams: cautioned that monthly may be too often to get financial reports together. The Finance Committee is to guide the budgeting process. Wants to focus on what is the purpose of the committee. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

d. Three candidates from Bradford are Marcey Carver, Kaitlin Sampson, and Erin Odell. Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Timm Judas to accept Erin Odell, Kaitlin Sampson, and Marcey Carver as candidates on the Budget/Finance Committee from Bradford. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

B. Budget Communication. Carol Cottrell had suggested reaching out to WYKR to see if a conversation/informational piece on the upcoming budget could be aired. Suggestion of a mailing to each household with the important bullet points. Other suggestions included List serve, Facebook, Front Porch Forum, live events.

1. T. Judas: suggested that in the future, perhaps put together a podcast sort of presentation on each part of the budget. M Gordon: feels that we should do the whole story together, not a piece a time.

2. B. Williams: the principals asked about percentage increase in equalized pupil cost, actual increase in the budget, and why it is what it is.

3. M. Gordon: suggested a couple Board members bundling up and standing outside the Newbury Village store for a couple hours and then doing the same thing outside the Bliss Village Store or the Village Buzz.

4. C. Cottrell: suggested that whatever is sent home is on a post card. Keep it simple and don't shower them with lots of verbiage.

5. M. Gordon: need to focus on the parents of the students in our schools. Suggestion of putting up signs urging folks to vote "yes" on the budget.

VI. Action Items

A. Motion by Timm Judas, seconded by Angela Colbeth to approve a sub rate of \$13.50. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

B. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to ratify the OEAA merged Teacher Agreement and authorize the Chair to sign the agreement. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

- VII. Public Comment: Polly Bonanno: Encouraged putting out just a quick public service announcement urging voters to come out and vote.
- VIII. A. Marvin Harrison on behalf of Bud Haas: is there a possibility of the OESU budget going down next year? BMU is proposing a budget down 2% for next year. Everyone is concerned about the economy.
- IX. 1. E. Knisley: clarified that the BMU budget is only the expense side, a preliminary first draft. The goal is that the OESU budget will decrease. Just remember that a large amount of the OESU budget is Special Education, and with the pandemic, higher student needs are evident.
- X. Executive Session—Personnel
- XI. A. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Timm Judas to enter Executive Session at 7:08 PM, pursuant to VSA 313. (a) (1) to discuss a Personnel Issue, 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. Emilie Knisley and Bruce Williams were invited to join them.
- XII. B. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:17 PM.
- XIII. Action—None taken
- XIV. Motion by Melissa Gordon, seconded by Angela Colbeth to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 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.