

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 13, 2021 via Zoom

Approved Minutes

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

PRESENT:

School Board: Shannon Darrah, Julie Acker, Charlie Buttrey, Donna Pluta, Megan Snider (joined at 7:11)

Principal: Chance Lindsley

OESU: Bruce Williams

Community: Pam Piper (left at 6:46), Lucas Stepno, Angela McKenna, Laura Covalla, Kara Cushman, Bob Walker, Nick Clark, Mike Kiess, Geoff Martin

Staff: Ashley Mousley, Sara Atherton, Kate Hill

Agenda Review: Adding Piper to the agenda to discuss Elmer Brown's memorial bench

Review and Approve Minutes:

MOTION (Acker/Pluta) to approve the minutes of 3/25/21. Unanimous, Buttrey abstained.

MOTION (Acker/Pluta) to approve the minutes of 3/31/21. Unanimous.

Postponed review of minutes from 3/23/21 as they just went out yesterday.

Review of Orders: Payables sent out for review, no questions

Public Comment:

- Angela McKenna - concern about the lead in the water in her sons classroom, and wants to be sure water bottles are not being filled from the faucet.
- Lucas Stepno also commented about the lead in the water, and would like to know the action plan for fixing the issue permanently.

Correspondence: none

Elmer Brown Memorial Bench

Pam Piper, representing the "North Country Chordsman" would like to put a bench under the apple tree outside the office in Elmer Brown's memory. Brown was a big supporter of Thetford Elementary so they thought that placing the bench in front of the school would be a great way to honor his contribution to the community. The board and principal fully support the project and thanked Piper and the North Country Chordsman.

Reports:

Principal Report:

- The new Spanish teacher hire is hopefully going to be completed by the end of the week.
- Literacy Committee
- The scheduling committee will be closer to being able to continue the process with open positions being filled.

- The Warren Principal and a staff member came and toured the school after hearing about the outdoor spaces at TES.
- The Student council came and talked to Chance regarding a profanity written on a bridge. They are going to paint it. Concerned about it being there, and taking action.
- Everyone Eats - Kate Dalpra and Sara Bailey have been working with the Everyone Eats program and have been getting food out to families (180).
 - Wondering if it should continue through the summer? Discussion followed.
 - The dinners that Casey Huling did last summer is going to change some as it may provide a couple meals per week, but pick up would be all at one time.
 - Williams discussed the lunch program last summer (for kids 18 and under). A survey was conducted and not as many families are likely to use the service, so having the buses run doesn't seem to make sense. They may do a grab and go instead.
 - Williams will follow up with the coordinators of all the programs to connect everyone.

TA Report:

Darrah reported that the TA board is starting to look at the land they have and talking about selling some of it, or coming up with ideas of what to do with it.

Next year's projected enrollment is just under 300 kids.

They are also talking about scholarships, to try to bring in some more students, including more middle schoolers.

Window Treatments Discussion – Bob Walker:

- Planning to go through with the Window Dressers. The project still needs \$2150. The other money was raised from fundraising. Walker feels the remaining cost will be made up within the year in savings.
- Lindsley is sure we can absorb this cost. Williams thinks a motion is needed to take it out of the budget.
- MOTION (Buttrey/Pluta) to authorize an expenditure of \$2200 to finance the Window Dressers project. Unanimous.
- Window Dressers were no longer doing community builds last year, but this year they are. They have a new project manager and some changes in production, and think that TES would be a good trial run. They should be available by the end July-August for a community build. Walker thinks they could be installed closer to when the colder weather comes. Efficiency VT was interested in doing a study of the project to check efficiency of before and after. Possibly making an incentive in the future for schools or businesses.
- Try to involve students/families to help put together? Will not make the building easier having kids involved. Parents would need to be present to provide assistance. Maybe talk about the process at an assembly? Kiess, who is more of an experiential learner, said he would understand it better by having a part in the making of it. Walker said there are parts the kids could help with. Liability insurance? Hill reminded people that kids will not be vaccinated, so how to make this be a project that could still be done with social distancing would be key too. Further discussion ensued.
- Darrah suggested revisiting this to make sure everyone is on the same page. Acker would like to have John Brown, facilities manager, involved in the discussion. Williams suggested a refresher with Brown, Walker, Lindsley, and a staff member of what the plan looks like.

Further Discussion re: Adding on to Solar Array

- Martin gave an overview of the information he gave at the last meeting. Adding a 380 KW array is bigger than what the town and school needs, so community members could buy in. Currently the school has a 150 KW array.
 - Buttery questioned the leach field.
 - Would it be structured as an easement, lease or how would that work out? Norwich Technologies would have more details on that.
 - At this point is the school interested in pursuing this? Acker brought up that we are a public municipality, we need to know how the residents are going to benefit from this? On the other hand, what else could this land going to be used for? Pursuing more solar makes sense.
 - Pluta - what happens if something goes wrong? Martin says there would be something in the lease that Norwich Tech would be responsible for any damages.
 - Buttrey asked Clark if a public entity is allowed to lease to a private company. Yes, this is done at the AT&T cell tower and also the gun club.
 - Walker asked if there are other electrical needs at the school? Heat pumps, electric buses could be a possibility with this array.
 - Martin - there could be an opportunity to purchase the array back in approximately 6 years, so the school could then own it again.
 - Williams - EEI doing energy audits for all the OESU district schools. They could give us a good look at how we use energy. TES should be high up on the cue for that when it starts.
 - Darrah - is the TTSD interested in moving forward to explore more? Yes. Martin will contact Norwich Tech to see a lease agreement.

Public Water Quality Monitoring:

- Willams discussed the letter that went to the TES community about water testing. The biggest failing is the lack of communication before and after the testing. All of the testing has been done on time.
- The test results have come back with lead concerns in areas of the building. Brown has mitigated areas as suggested, putting in lead free faucets where recommended.
- Buttery is concerned about any students drinking water that contained lead. The standard was 4 parts per billion in 2019, and has since changed to none detected.
- Williams questions whether those affected faucets are blocked off? There seems to be confusion as to the use of faucets in classrooms - drinking faucets vs. hand washing?
- Stepno brought up the fact that his son is filling his water bottle in the classroom, which is listed on the website (shown below) as containing lead.
- Covalla asked if the pipes were made of lead, or the soldering? Williams said the answer is not certain. Brown replaced faucets that were thought to cause the contamination, and there was still a tiny bit of lead so it is thought the soldering may be lead.
- Darrah - should Patricia (who does all our water testing and we have a relationship with) be invited to a meeting to answer some further questions?
- Stepno - are all 8 faucets shut off for drinking? Looking for a way to correct the problem permanently.
- Clark questioned why if tests came back a year ago with lead, why were they put back in use. The fixtures were not the only source of the issue, and it was not known.
- Covalla - has the well ever been tested, knowing that a lead mine operated not far from here 200 of years ago? Williams - Patricia could answer that.

- Letter to TES Community: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/16MSnvxFocvzreTOo8Ohh-14kWtrgYETMI/view?usp=sharing>
- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/school/lead-testing-drinking-water-what-schools-need-do>
- <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>

Update re: Bathroom Project:

Williams asked if the board is okay with the price being higher than previously discussed? Bids were sent out, only one came back, the state gave us a waiver to accept the bid, and it is not going to get cheaper. The board wants to go forward with the project. Acker - wondering about impact of summer programming in the lower wing? Any programming should be able to work around the renovation.

First Reading of Required Policies:

Unified set of policies for the OESU district have been approved, and OUUSD has adopted them as well. Williams sent out an email a few weeks ago. TTSD had their own policies that followed the VSBA, but the language was different. So the TTSD policies change is very limited. Link to all the policies under consideration:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QIk5lpMh_ckG2iACk9i91ySdYJd9Z0Nu?usp=sharing

Acker thought that the process of the policy committee led to a good outcome and that TTSD should consider using that as a model to update the policy manual. They worked on the required policies first, and broke them down into sections. Some of the policies need to be reviewed annually. Williams will send out a matrix that was created. Darrah thanked Acker for working on this.

Other Business:

Acker would like to discuss at the next meeting planning for the board to resume in person meetings.

Executive Session – Student Matter – 2 Tuition Requests

MOTION (Buttrey/Snider) to find that the following discussion be held in executive session as it may identify a student. Unanimous.

MOTION (Buttrey/Snider) to enter into executive session at 8:38 pm to discuss a student matter. Unanimous. Williams was invited to participate. Out of executive session at 8:44 pm. No action taken.

Adjournment:

MOTION (Buttrey/Pluta) to adjourn at 8:44 pm. Unanimous.

Minutes Prepared By: Ginni Balch, Minutes Clerk

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Acker, Board Clerk

FUTURE MEETINGS:

04/27/21 Thetford Town School District Meeting 6:30pm