

## OUUSD BOARD MEETING

Via Zoom

May 12, 2021

Present:

Board Members: Maegan Ballou, Angela Colbeth, Danielle Corti, Carol Cottrell

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Linda Metcalf, Robin Wozny

Others: Monique Priestley, Sarah Rinehimer, Emily Ross, Andrea Dennis, Geraint Jones, Lottie Page, Alex Nuti-de Biasi, Marvin Harrison, and other members of the public

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Danielle Corti, Chair. Those present were welcomed, and the protocols of Zoom meeting were reviewed.
- II. Board Business
  - A. The agenda was reviewed. An Executive Session will be added at the beginning of the Information Section of the agenda. The report from School and Community Engagement Committee will be deferred for tonight. The Newbury Outdoor Classroom property discussion will be moved to right after the Principal discussion.
  - B. Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Carol Cottrell to approve the Board minutes of April 28<sup>th</sup>. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.
  - C. Correspondence: Letters of resignation were read from Walter Fischer, Pauline Leadbetter, Cynthia Leete (who has worked at NES for 33 years), and Lisa Jones (who has worked at Oxbow for 27 years). Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Maegan Ballou to accept the four resignations with regrets. Motion voted on and approved unanimously
  - D. Committee Reports
    1. Strategic Plan (Carol Cottrell): They are in the process of sharing the data with certain stakeholders before it becomes public knowledge. The results of the survey are profound and will give the opportunity to address the needs and wishes of the community.
    2. Finance Committee (Danielle Corti): They will be meeting next week to discuss Trust Funds and financials.
- III. Public Comment
  - A. Marvin Harrison: Several people, who were on the Principals' forum last night, shared their feeling that the Zoom format was difficult. Would the Board consider another forum that would be in-person? It is such an important position.
- IV. Information
  - A. Principal Candidates for Newbury.
    1. Executive Session—Appointment or employment of a public employee
      - a. Motion by Maegan Ballou, seconded by Angela Colbeth to move into Executive Session at 5:52 PM pursuant to VSA 313. (3) to discuss the appointment or employment of a public employee, 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 6:10 PM.

2. Action

a. Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Maegan Ballou to authorize the Superintendent to negotiate a contract with the candidate selected as Newbury Elementary Principal. Motion voted on and approved unanimously

B. Newbury Property for Outdoor Classroom.

1. Danielle Corti shared information concerning property on Checkerberry Lane. It is a 10-acre lot, listed at \$79,900. NES has used this property for several years, but was unable to use it while it was on the market. A small brook runs on one side of the property.

2. Geraint Jones: shared some slides. The students have been using the property for about 6 years, and every classroom has used it. The Vision of NES: World Peace through Harmony with Self, Harmony with Others, and Harmony with Nature. This property gives children opportunity to be outside. It is conducive to Child-centered learning. Everything we do in the forest has a long-term effect on the child. It increases self-esteem. Outdoor classrooms have been able to support the academics, daily writing, math, and science support,

3. Andrea Dennis: She attended a training for using a Forest School. It allows for study of the forest floor, the understory, the canopy, what shaped the land, and how does the land shape up? What is our place in the world?

4. Classes have been able to make community projects, bat houses, mapping and land planning. The idea of risk and play is huge. Future ideas include: poetry in the Forest, Tracking in the Snow, Primitive Cooking, Ornithology Study with a guest speaker, Stream Study, Curriculum & pedagogical development, Natural Land art.

5. Sarah Rinehimer: Benefits include cognitive learning, emotional benefits, and community building. The forest provides a different opportunity when you are in an unmanicured space. A lot of research has been done about the benefits of outdoor education.

6. Emily Ross: A couple years ago there was a student, who struggled in the classroom. He had a wealth of knowledge about nature. When the class went to the forest, he helped teach the class how to track animals, and he felt so successful.

7. Morgan Moore: NES has done some work on risk management. VSBIT took the Newbury Risk Assessment that NES had designed and used it in their training. NES had an NVU intern, who worked with them. Sarah Rinehimer wrote a Wellborn grant and is developing a curriculum.

a. Carol Cottrell: Is there a plan for collaboration between BES and NES?

M. Moore: We are working with BES with shared PD time. S. Rinehimer: We are meeting about monthly, and there are others contributing ideas

for the curriculum. She took a training last year, along with a BES teacher. Some relationships have already started, and there are lots of possible opportunities for more collaboration.

8. Emily Ross: as a parent, the Forest School is part of what drew her family to Newbury, and she feels that the space is invaluable.

9. Danielle Corti: Is there a plan to reach out to community members who have expertise? A. Dennis: We invited John Fogarty, who came twice last year and worked with the students. S. Rinehimer: While writing the Wellborn Grant, the community piece was very important. This would be a great bridge with the community. D. Corti: We would probably need a committee to oversee this property to keep it vibrant, healthy, and well-used. We would need to think about how to structure that. C. Cottrell: In what year from now do you see the available time to make the outdoor classroom curriculum part of the formalized curriculum. M. Moore: doesn't see the curriculum as separate. It would be integrated into other curricula. C. Cottrell: believes there is a need for a formalized curriculum.

10. Danielle Corti: The real estate agent would be flexible to an OUUSD timeline for a community vote. E. Knisley: Some of what was shared this evening could be shared at a community meeting. D. Corti: suggested having a separate article as to whether to use surplus funds toward the property purchase or whether it would be taken out of the budget. D. Corti: there will be a large tent up at Oxbow for a few weeks that might be able to be used for a public meeting.

11. Alex Nuti-de Biasi: With past use of the Forest Property, has the property been used in the winter? G. Jones: yes. A. Biasi: Do students have access to winter clothing? G. Jones: Some days we have not been able to use the property in the winter because of access. When the weather turns cold, we make sure families and children understand what is needed for winter clothes. We have received many generous donations.

12: A. Biasi: Would the property's acquisition diminish the use of Tucker Mountain? D. Corti: It is important for students to be able to walk to a property. A. Dennis: This is her 21<sup>st</sup> year at NES. Tucker Mtn. has been a whole school field trip, a bigger field trip which needs bussing. You can walk to the Forest School. Both are very key to the education of children at NES. Curriculum coordination is being developed in math and literacy between BES and NES. She believes in the future there will be a curriculum for science that will be followed, along with the Forest practices. S. Rinehimer: The aim is to meet monthly as a Forest School committee to develop best practice and curriculum. Maegan Ballou: What schedule would be in place for using the Forest School? A. Dennis: last year there was a schedule for each class to be out in the Forest each week for a chunk of time. S. Rinehimer: We used the Common this year and visited the gazebo. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades have used Montebello and have partnered with Carson Farms in the past. Lottie Page: This year we have used garden beds. A. Dennis: We have gone to Pulaski and up to the old school house to the other entrance to Pulaski. G. Jones: We have been using forest practices on the

Common this year, trying to give the students practices and norms, and looking and listening to nature around us.

13. Marvin Harrison: Thinks this is a big enough decision that there should be a public discussion. D. Corti: A public forum? E. Knisley: it has to be a public vote.

14. D. Corti thanked the teachers for being here and for their presentation.

#### B. Superintendent Report

1. Linda Metcalf: shared a financial update on the third quarter. She highlighted and explained anything under or over \$10,000. E. Knisley: We are hoping to get back into the rhythm of quarterly financial reports.

2. Emilie Knisley: Substitutes: She shared current sub rates across the SU. Melanie Rhoads is trying to get parity and has recommended changes to go into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. The recommended hourly rate is \$13.50 for teacher and para subs and \$13.25 for custodial and food service subs. The recommended daily rate for School Nurses is \$140. Going into effect January 1, 2022, the recommended rates are \$14.29 for teacher and para subs, \$13.50 for custodial and food service subs, and \$160 for nurse subs. There is a sub shortage now, but it is hoped that it will improve next year.

1. End of year dates have been shared for the information of the Board. They will be posted on the website. D. Corti: It is very meaningful to have Board representation at the end-of-year events. She encouraged Board members to attend as many end-of-year events as possible.

2. Principal Search: The Chair thanked faculty and community for participating in the Principal Search. They hope to have a new hire by the end of the week. Carol Cottrell: There was a field of 12 candidates, the committee chose 6 to interview, then chose 3 for the forums. From the survey data, the committee recommended a person to the Board and will offer the candidate a contract ASAP.

3. Emilie Knisley: ESSER plan (giant allotment of money coming to VT). We have created a broad plan to send to the State. In June, we want to expand areas of extended learning: after school and summer programs. We are also looking at instructional coaches for teachers, who can move between schools in the SU. At their June meeting, OESU will be sharing goals for the SU. Supt. Knisley gave a shout out to Susie Tann, SU COVID coordinator. Ms. Tann has been working with the State and LRHC to set up a clinic on May 18<sup>th</sup> to offer vaccine to students age 12 and up. There is still opportunity for adults to get vaccine at BMU and Oxbow. The third quarter financial report for OESU looks good and is under budget. The next OESU meeting will be June 15<sup>th</sup>.

C. OESU Board Meeting report: change in meeting date to the third Tuesday.

D. School/Community Engagement Committee. Timm Judas feels he is unable to continue on that committee. Angela Colbeth offered to reach out to Jean Wheeler to get the information.

#### V. Action Items

A. Executive Session: Real Estate

1. Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Maegan Ballou to enter Executive Session at 7:30 PM, pursuant to VSA 313. (a) (2) to discuss Real Estate, 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 the Superintendent.
2. The Board exited Executive Session at 7:40 PM

VI. Action

- A. Motion by Angela Colbeth, seconded by Maegan Ballou to authorize the Board Chair and the Superintendent to move forward on the Newbury property. Motion voted on and approved unanimously.

VII. The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 PM

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.**