

## OUUSD INFORMATIONAL MEETING

### Oxbow High School

August 17, 2021

Present:

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

Administration: Emilie Knisley, Randall Gawel, Alison Kidder

Others: Geraint Jones, Bill Deuel, Sukie Knight, Marilyn Colbeth, Dylan Kidder, Jane Booth, Tim Woodward, and other members of the public

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:36 PM by Danielle Corti, Board Chair. There was an opportunity for folks to log on for the Informational Meeting, but there will be no Zoom after 6:00 PM.
  - A. Surplus: The Warning is asking to use funds from the surplus for purchase of the property on Checkerberry. \$68,000 would be used for purchase of the Checkerberry property. The total of the entire surplus is \$282,358. D. Corti stated that the Board is trying to be fiscally responsible. They are hoping to get into a cycle so each year a portion of the surplus will be allocated to a particular fund.
- II. Presentation from the Teachers: Geraint Jones, Kindergarten teacher at NES.
  - A. The land had already been used for children. He noted the importance of children connecting with their natural surroundings. This is very important for their social and emotional development. The program started with two teachers heading out into the woods with their students. The children were excited to do this. Reading and writing instruction was strengthened by what was happening in the forest. State Standards were addressed. Reluctant readers and writers respond when they are in the forest. This is an opportunity for them to feel successful and happy. Now all teachers take their students into the forest. Children are engaging with their learning. They are connecting with the science standards and have been able to use the new math program by taking it outside into the forest. If we can purchase this land, we know we can use it. Up until now, we have been borrowing the land. If we own the land, we would be able to create a space that is lasting, something the children are comfortable in creating themselves. We would like to connect with River Bend students. Staff members have been able to go on site visits to many different schools in VT. These schools have happy engaged children. They see the benefit of it. We are looking at what's working elsewhere.
- III. Questions:
  - A. Bill Deuel: does the town of Newbury have a town forest? Danielle Corti: Tucker Forest, which is available to the school via bus. Right now, the school makes a significant number of visits to the forest each week. We thought purchasing the property might be a better use of money than paying for busing.
  - B. Geraint Jones: we also use Tucker Mountain. Tucker Mountain is used by a lot of people.

C. Danielle Corti: Concerns with Liability: With the forest school protocol, a staff member or student goes out first and checks the property for any safety concerns (trees fallen across the trail, etc.)

D. Sukie Knight: She owns the property that the school kids have to cross. She prefers that money is better spent to bus the students to Tucker Mountain. She owns two rental properties on that road. No one has ever asked permission to use that property as a right of way.

E. Marilyn Colbeth: If we go through with this property, she has heard that there will need to be bathrooms and facilities. G. Jones: possibly there would be a bucket with a seat on it that could be carried in and carried out.

F. D. Corti: may someday build a lean-to, possibly with the help of River Bend students. Perhaps a gate would be put up at the end of the property so ATV's cannot go through.

G. Dylan Kidder: Takes issue with the property being described as "not diverse", "a sterile stand". He has identified 13 different species on the property. Most of the trees are about the same age. There is so much forestry to be learned there.

H. Jane Booth: The property was offered to the district previously. Why was it not purchased then? D. Corti: Mr. Renfrew wasn't quite ready to go through with it then.

I. Tim Woodward: Right now, John Renfrew has the right of way for part of it. It will be a legal issue as to who has the right of way. A couple of years ago, kids were forbidden from going up there because of trash. D. Corti: The real estate attorney reports that there is a clear right of way. She asked Mr. Renfrew about stopping access at one point. He had prevented kids from going up because he was logging.

IV. The informational meeting was adjourned at 6:00 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.**