

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Monthly Board Meeting — February 11, 2021

Via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Gio Bosco (Board President) called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. In attendance (all virtually) were the following:

Trustees: Gio Bosco, Dana Grossman, Donna Steinberg, Marisa Donovan, John Ziegler, Melody Burkins, Karl Furstenberg, Ann Bumpus, Harry Kinne, Shannon Darrah, Lindsey Klecan, Mary Dan Pomeroy, Katie Saunders

Absent: Robin Junker

Employees: Carrie Brennan (Head of School), Linda Lanteigne Magoon (CFO)

Members of the public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Guest Speaker: Kyle Potter (Tyler, Simms, and St. Sauveur, CPAs)

1. Welcome & President's Report (Gio Bosco)

Gio Bosco opened with some words in memory of Thetford Academy nurse Sue Farrell, who recently passed away. Dana thanked Gio for his comments and also Carrie Brennan for her thoughtful message to the school about Sue.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Consent Agenda

a. Meeting Minutes from Jan 7 BoT regular meeting

Gio asked if there were any suggested edits to the draft minutes. None given.

Motion: To approve the Consent Agenda.

Moved: Dana Grossman

Seconded: John Zeigler

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Appointment of Dana Grossman as Clerk of the TA Board.

Donna thanked Lindsey Klecan for an outstanding five years as Clerk.

Motion: To elect Dana Grossman to the position of Clerk.

Moved: Lindsey Klecan

Seconded: Katie Saunders

The motion passed unanimously.

5. New Business:

- a. Financial Audit Report: Gio introduced Kyle Potter of Tyler, Simms, and St. Sauveur, CPAs. Kyle shared his screen and gave a PowerPoint presentation (archived separately). There are two minor adjustments to make before the audit is finalized. Neither adjustment will affect substance, only the presentation. Kyle and Linda noted that there is some

information from a trust that needs to be added before the statement can be finalized. If those details are further delayed, the current plan is to simply finalize the report without them.

- b. Action Item: A vote had originally been scheduled to accept the audit report as presented by Kyle Potter. However, as the audit is not yet finalized, this vote is postponed until next month.

6. Anti-Racism Task Force Update (Donna Steinberg, Chair ARTF)

Donna noted that the ARTF is in “Phase 1 - Assessment.” The Task Force is talking about scheduling town hall meetings as a way to get additional student input and thinking about how to best design and send out surveys. Carrie suggested that Donna talk about student involvement. Donna related that Siobhan and Angela have been meeting with seven students weekly who are working with other students on issues of anti-racism. This group of students may become a student group that will work with the ARTF and/or may be able to stay connected to ARTF in different ways in future. Karl asked if it be possible for Donna to share drafts of ARTF survey with the Board for their input before it was sent. Karl noted that many on the Board have done this sort of survey work before and may have helpful input. Donna said that she would be happy to have individual discussions but is wary of involving the whole Board in survey design. Karl clarified that he was just making an offer for ARTF consideration and Donna thanked him for it.

7. Head of School Report (Carrie Brennan)

Carrie gave her HOS slide presentation (archived separately). After the presentation, Board members asked about what seemed to be a year-to-year increase in the number of February applicants. Carrie responded that she hopes this is due to her work to intentionally push to get applications to happen earlier and to record the data. (*N.B.: Ann Bumpus left the meeting at this point for another commitment, at approximately 8:00PM*). Donna added that TA has received good earned press in local media throughout the year, which may also be helping recruitment. John noted that the increased recruiting effort is very well-timed and is glad TA is doing so much on this front. Marissa asked whether we track how people come to us (e.g., from the web, word of mouth, personal outreach, media, etc.). Carrie said she’s not sure if we have that data but would find out and report back.

8. Town Reports

- a. Thetford, VT (Shannon Darrah)

Shannon reported that TES Principal Chance Lindsey is leaving TES at the end of the school year and the TES Board is starting the replacement process. OESU will coordinate the search. Bradford is also looking for a principal right now, so the searches will be coordinated and will draw from the same pool of candidates. TES is moving quickly, hoping to have search completed by April. Shannon reported that the Thetford education budget is looking good and that TES is looking to renovate school bathrooms this summer as it also tries to plan for next fall’s school experience. Carrie let Shannon know she would be willing to be part of the TES principal search if needed/appropriate. She also expressed some concern about how quickly TES is hoping to hire a new principal.

- b. Lyme, NH (Karl Furstenberg)

Carrie had already reported that discussion on the Lyme partnership is well underway. Karl reported they are hoping to meet again this month to continue those discussions and that a key discussion item is special education costs. All hope to have a new agreement finalized in near future. Karl reported that Lyme is in the process of developing a new school budget, which will need to be passed soon even though the formal Lyme Town Meeting will be delayed until May.

c. Strafford, VT (Gio Bosco)

Gio and Carrie noted that they met about five or six weeks ago with Sarah Root of the Strafford Board and Jamie Kinnarney, the Superintendent of WRVSU, to discuss TA's non-renewal of Strafford's designation of the Academy. The discussion went well, and at the meeting there was agreement to create a joint public statement about discontinuing the current designation agreement. In subsequent communications, however, the Strafford Board felt it was not appropriate for them to be part of a joint statement, since the Town, not the Board, decides on designation. In the absence of a joint agreement, the TA board will need to deliberate and make a decision. Gio proposed that the Board take up that discussion at the next meeting and asked that it be added to the agenda. In the meantime, there was some discussion about whether/how we should engage/inform Strafford families about this ongoing process. Melody said she would like to see TA do outreach to the townspeople and families of Strafford, to be sure they know we welcome their students. Shannon noted that even if designation does not continue, TA and Strafford could keep a strong partnership agreement and she wondered if the Strafford parents and families understand that designation is separate from a partnership agreement. Board members expressed some concern that perhaps the Strafford Board had not communicated all options to the families in Strafford—and might just be saying TA is discontinuing designation without context—and so TA needs to ensure these communications are made more directly. Dana wondered whether a letter Patty drafted after the Board's December meeting was sent to Strafford families. Carrie responded that she wrote to all Strafford families and received no questions in response. She also wrote to a list of "VIPs"—donors, alumni, etc.—with additional context about the discussions. She said she's received a few responses from that mailing, most all of them quite positive. Karl wanted to make sure Board understood that while communication with all Strafford families is important, he feels it's particularly important to be in contact with families of current 7th- and 8th-graders at the Newton School. He noted it's also important for TA to do a good job of outreach to Strafford families and students who are about to choose their children's middle school. He suggested a very focused recruitment effort as a first phase. Marisa suggested posts on the Strafford listserv and posters on the community bulletin board at Coburn's.

9. Committee Reports

a. Resources (John Ziegler)

Linda forwarded an Excel sheet of reports, describing highlights to the board.

b. Board Management (Donna Steinberg)

Donna reported that Lindsey had created a beautiful spreadsheet of TA policies. There is a required policy to attend "Electronic Communications between Faculty and Students" that is still needed. The Board Management Committee is also recruiting members to the Board and hopes to seek out BIPOC representation for the Board. Of five ongoing

discussions with potential candidates of color for the Board, two have expressed potential interest and three have declined.

c. Personnel (Harry Kinne)

Harry reported that the Master Agreement with staff has been completed and that Carrie has restarted a formal faculty evaluation system. Karl inquired about a figure from the CPA's report—the fact that benefits total 38% of salaries, which Kyle had mentioned was on the high side for independent schools (which are usually between 20% and 30%). It was noted that public schools (which TA essentially is) tend to be higher than independent schools, because their faculties are unionized. Melody noted that we might make sure we are making correct comparisons to peers and look at TA benefits and salaries in terms of their combined competitiveness in the area. Linda mentioned that we are currently near the top of the salary range among surrounding schools. Gio noted that Dartmouth benefits are currently 36%.

d. Advancement (Karl Furstenberg)

Karl remarked that the meeting this evening included many conversations about admissions, serving as a reminder of admissions' importance to the future of TA. He noted that the TA admissions situation is looking solid, and he hopes that will continue. For fundraising, he noted, we still need to focus on major gifts. On this note, Carrie asked Board members to sign up to make phone calls or send cards of thanks to TA donors who have given \$100 or more. She shared a sign-up list, and there was discussion about the optimal format and substance for these thank-yous from Board members.

10. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

- a. Final financial report and vote at next meeting.
- b. Discussion about Strafford designation status.

11. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: John

Seconded: Katie

The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk).

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk).