

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting — November 18, 2021
Via Google Meet
MINUTES

Donna Steinberg (Board President) called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m. In attendance (all virtually) were the following:

Trustees: Donna Steinberg, Gio Bosco, Paul Mutone, Sam Perry, Harry Kinney, Sheilagh Smith (left at 8:25 p.m.), Lindsey Klecan, Cara Ray, Karl Furstenberg, Dana Grossman, Sarah Adams, Marisa Donovan, John Ziegler, Robin Junker Boyce (left at 8:15 p.m.), Katie Saunders

Absent: Mary Dan Pomeroy, Shannon Darrah

Employees: Carrie Brennan (Head of School)

Members of the Public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President's Report (Donna)

Donna called the meeting to order.

She summarized an email she received from Liz Ryan Cole, expressing concern about the upcoming closure of the Lyme-East Thetford bridge for repairs. Harry suggested writing a letter from the Board to request a change in the plans so that travel across the bridge by Lyme students who attend TA can continue during the construction period. He agreed to write a letter; Karl, Dana, Robin, and Carrie will collaborate with him.

2. Public Comment

Gio read an email from David McGinn about the TA cross-country program and the school's hosting of the New England Championships last weekend. High praise for the event was expressed all around.

3. Consent Agenda

Policies:

- C2 (Student Drugs and Alcohol)
- C9 (Student Wellness)
- C10 (Prevention of Hazing, Harassment and Bullying)
- D6 (Class Size)
- C12 (Title IX)

Meeting Minutes – October 14, 2021, regular board meeting

Appointment of Sam Perry and Sarah Adams to the Riverbend Advisory Board

Dana suggested replacing “his/her” and “he/she” with the singular “they/their” throughout. There was general agreement that this would be a good idea.

Motion: To approve the consent agenda.

Moved: Gio

Seconded: Lindsey

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Head of School Report

Carrie presented a slideshow (which is archived separately). The topics she covered included:

- Classroom visits by the Head of School
- Successes and challenges of the return to in-person learning
- Current enrollment in the Riverbend Career & Technical Center programs
- Recruitment events (in-person and virtual) for the 2022-23 school year
- The “Getting to Y” program (training youth to be advocates for public health)

Katie highlighted a point Carrie had made — that students who are unvaccinated are having the hardest time; for example, they must quarantine more often and thus miss school. Katie wondered if more can be done to support them. Carrie responded that they already do lots of one-to-one work with such students, and that all students have a school-issued laptop so they can keep up with work from home. Katie offered to help if there is any way she can do so.

5. Town Reports

a. Lyme (Karl)

The school board has begun its budgeting process. They are also rethinking their administrative structure; in the past, they have had one person who serves as principal and superintendent but they may make a change. Karl also mentioned that some COVID cases caused the closure of the Lyme library, and since the library is used by the schoolchildren, that led to a need to test all the first- and second-graders, which was disruptive to the program.

b. Strafford (Sarah)

The town is happy to have the middle school issue settled. The school board can now move forward with budgeting for the seventh and eighth grades at the Newton School. Sarah also said the supervisory union’s anti-racism policy is hopefully ready to be approved, after going through five or six drafts. Carrie asked if Sarah knows why attendance from Newton families at the TA recruitment open houses was so low this year. Sarah said it’s likely because there are only three eighth-graders this year — but she added that there are much bigger classes coming along behind them.

c. Thetford (report from Shannon read by Donna)

They are beginning the budget process for next year. The staff is hoping that most of the students, who are newly eligible to get the COVID vaccine, will get vaccinated.

Carrie mentioned that TA has been asked, per the usual rotation between TES and TA, to host the 2022 town and school district meeting; the administration has been discussing whether that fits with TA’s COVID plan. Carrie said they are feeling some concern, but also feel it would be hard to say no. Dana pointed out that TA is not hosting the event but is just being asked to provide the venue; the responsibility for running it is the town’s. Marissa noted, however, that it wouldn’t be good PR to have an outbreak begin at TA. Karl wondered if the attendees could be

spread between the gym and the theater, with a simulcast, but Carrie responded that the gym is large enough for sufficient distancing.

6. Committee & Task Force Reports

a. Resources (John)

John presented a slideshow on the school's finances (which is archived separately).

Karl asked where the PPP funds from the federal government will ultimately flow. Carrie explained that we are so far taking a conservative approach with those funds and that a third of them have been put in the endowment and the rest are in an operating account. Karl urged that the rest of the funds, beyond what might be needed for emergencies, go into the endowment. Marissa, Katie, and Dana agreed. Resources will prepare a proposal for a vote at the December meeting.

The Godfrey lots were appraised by two realtors. They're not especially valuable or salable right now, and they might have more strategic value to TA in the future, so the committee's recommendation is to not sell the lots at this time.

Gio asked which aspects of the budget are most sensitive to inflation. John replied that while salaries are set for this year and next year, if inflation continues at the current rate, he is concerned about the potential impact of salaries in future years.

b. Barrett Property (Karl)

The task force is first focusing on understanding the school's needs; there are three primary ones: student dining and activity space, the arts, and the outdoor program. The real value of the property, he noted, is the property itself, not the building; after considerable research, the task force has concluded that it would be far more expensive to renovate the building than to demolish it and start anew. That then would make the property a blank canvas that can be optimally configured to meet future needs, without being tied to the existing building. Several people noted that it would be worthwhile to record the history of the existing house in some way, and Karl said that is on the task force's list of goals.

The task force has also reviewed the original phase two part of the Anderson Hall renovation — to add a dining facility to the west of Anderson. The group feels that would be the best way to address dining, as it would keep it close to the center of campus.

Marisa asked for a reminder of the membership of the task force, and Donna posted the list to the meeting chat: Karl Furstenberg (chair), Blythe Keane, Alison Baker, Cathee Clement, Chris Schmidt, Ethan Marshia, Harry Kinne, John Brown, John Ziegler, Leah Boch, Lindsey Klecan, Patty McIlvaine, and Therese Linehan.

7. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

Marissa said she has been reading two good books relevant to board work, and she recommended them to the rest of the board: *Good to Great and the Social Sector* by Jim Collins and *Social Startup Success* by Kathleen Kelly Janus.

Karl asked if Thetford will be taking in any Afghan refugees; Lyme is taking in a few families, he said. As of now, no one has heard of any coming to Thetford. It was noted that refugee families often have school-aged children.

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: John

Seconded: Gio

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)