

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Monthly Board Meeting — March 10, 2022

Via Zoom

MINUTES

Donna Steinberg (Board President) called the meeting to order at 6:54 p.m. In attendance (all virtually) were the following:

Trustees: Donna Steinberg, Cara Ray, Katie Saunders, Sarah Adams, John Ziegler, Karl Furstenberg, Dana Grossman, Paul Mutone, Harry Kinne, Lindsey Klecan (joined at 6:59 p.m. and left at 7:22 p.m.), Robin Junker-Boyce (joined at 7:41 p.m.)

Absent: Sam Perry, Gio Bosco, Marisa Donovan, Sheilagh Smith (she tried to log into the meeting but was unable to do so due to connection problems)

Employees: Carrie Brennan (Head of School)

Members of the public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President's Report (Donna)

With the past month having brought the U.S. to the threshold of one million deaths from COVID and the world to the threshold of war, Donna expressed appreciation for the work of the board and the school as a ballast in a time of turmoil.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Consent Agenda

- Meeting Minutes — February 10, 2022

Motion: To approve the Consent Agenda.

Moved: Karl

Seconded: Paul

The motion passed unanimously.

Lindsey joined the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

4. Head of School Report and COVID Spring Update (Carrie)

Carrie gave a slideshow (archived separately). The topics she covered included:

- Preparations for Founder's Day (for which Sarah Adams was a volunteer judge)
- The Thetford Outdoor Program, which is serving as a model for other schools
- The TA Robotics Club, which is sending 13 students to the World VEX Tournament in Dallas, Texas
- The school's success in applying for grants from regional foundations, with more than three-quarters of a million dollars raised over the past seven years

- The presentation made at the Thetford School District Meeting about TA, and the passage of the town's 2022-23 school budget by a 71.6% margin
- The significant drop in the school's COVID case count, after a bump in January during the omicron surge
- The fact that TA ended its weekly PCR surveillance testing on March 1; participation remained high throughout the program, peaking at 234 students and employees on January 4, 2022
- The fact that TA is shifting from a masks-required protocol to masks-optional as of Monday, March 14

In follow-up discussion, Karl suggested renaming the Thetford Outdoor Program the Environmental Studies Program, to make it clear that it's a structured and focused academic program and not just a cocurricular program focused on outdoor recreation.

And Katie said she has been impressed with the school's navigation of COVID protocols, in a fast-evolving situation, and asked what response Carrie has heard from parents, employees, and the community. Carrie responded that she hasn't received much input about the latest communications but that the vast majority of what she has heard was quite positive — adding, however, that she did hear from one family that has been consistently unhappy about TA's COVID protocols.

Lindsey left the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

5. Task Force & Town Reports

a. Barrett Property Task Force (Karl)

The group has been continuing to meet and gather information and is about to begin the hard part of its charge — looking at all the options and deciding what the priorities are and what is financially possible. The needs they have focused on are dining space, environmental education space, classroom space, and student gathering space. Their next task is to prioritize these needs with input from community. They plan to hold listening sessions and conduct surveys to seek this input. After that, they plan to thoroughly investigate all the financing options, including debt, loans, endowment funds, fund-raising, and government grants.

b. Lyme (Karl)

Lyme also approved its 2022-23 school budget for next year; Karl said the vote was nearly unanimous (in Lyme the budget vote was conducted in person at the school district meeting). Lyme is currently seeking both a full-time principal and a part-time superintendent; after considering combining the two positions, the school board decided to keep them separate. Karl also mentioned that Lyme had two school board vacancies; an uncontested candidate was elected to one seat and, with no names on the ballot for the second seat, a write-in candidate was elected to that position. He added that the Lyme School is also shifting to a mask-optional protocol on March 14.

c. Thetford (Donna)

Donna reported that Shannon Darrah's term on the Thetford School Board has ended, so she has also stepped down as the Thetford representative to the TA Board. School Board member Julie

Acker was elected as the new Thetford representative to the TA Board and as chair of the School Board. The next step is for Julie to be voted onto the TA Board at the next TA Board meeting. Donna read an email from Julie with a few updates, including the fact that there were also two vacancies on the Thetford School Board — the seats filled for many years by Shannon Darrah and Charlie Buttrey — and they were filled by Greta Marchesi and Nicholas Cook.

d. Strafford (Sarah)

The Strafford 2022-23 school budget also passed handily, by a margin of 372-134. They, too, had two vacancies on their school board, but only one was filled, by Maggie Hooker; the board and the superintendent plan to call another election soon to fill the open seat. Strafford's Newton School is also shifting to a mask-optional protocol on March 14.

Karl observed that fewer people seem to be running for public office, including on school boards, these days — partly because people are busy but partly because public service has become a more and more thankless task. He said it's a worrisome trend that doesn't bode well for our communities, and he urged everyone to consider ways that participation on boards can be made less onerous.

6. Committee Reports

a. Board Management Committee (Katie)

Katie noted that Mary Dan Pomeroy has stepped down from the TA Board because of a conflict in her schedule; discussions are underway about the appointment of a new representative from the TA Alumni Association. Katie also presented a slideshow (archived separately) with the results of a survey taken of board members regarding talents and skills currently present on the board and desirable in new board members; it was suggested that facilities expertise and academic expertise be added to the list of skills in the survey. A discussion ensued about what skills the board should prioritize in the next round of nominations and how the recruiting process should be conducted.

Robin joined the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

b. Resources Committee (John)

The committee had another long and productive meeting on February 23 about cash flow and made considerable further progress on understanding the process; they are not quite ready yet, however, to share their conclusions with the full board. John added that the committee expects to have the 2022-23 TA budget ready for a vote by the board at its May meeting.

7. Action Item: Approval of Audit Report (John)

John said that in his careful reading of the audit report from Tyler Simms and St. Sauveur, CPAs, he found only two minor points that he feels should be clarified, one concerning the mix of investments in the TA endowment portfolio and one concerning the maturation of a line of credit. But since both have to do only with timing issues — situations that had changed between the time the audit was concluded and the time the report was issued — rather than with anything substantive, he recommended that the board approve the report, subject to a clarification of those two points.

In addition, Paul pointed out one typographical error: In Note #5 on page 15 of the report, he noted that the figure “\$150,0000” should be “\$150,000.”

Motion: To accept the audit report from Tyler Simms and St. Sauveur, subject to the three adjustments noted above.

Moved: Dana

Seconded: Katie

The motion passed unanimously.

8. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

Donna initiated a discussion about when and under what conditions the board might either resume meeting in person or hold hybrid meetings (with some people present in person and some participating remotely). There was no immediate resolution on the matter; the board will continue to meet fully remotely for the time being and to consider the other two options.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: John

Seconded: Katie

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)