

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting — September 8, 2022
Hybrid (some attendees in person at TA, some remote via Zoom)
MINUTES

Donna Steinberg (Board President) called the meeting to order at 6:48 p.m. In attendance were the following:

Trustees: Dana Grossman, Donna Steinberg, Sheilagh Smith, Paul Mutone, Katie Saunders, Harry Kinne, Marisa Donovan, Lucy Wagner, Rebecca Hanissian. Ashley Woo, Julie Acker, Sam Perry, Sarah Adams

Absent: Cara Ray, Blythe Keane, Erin Boyd

Employees : Carrie Brennan (Head of School), Patty McIlvaine (Director of Advancement)

Members of the public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President's Report

After a few minutes of adjusting the tech set-up, Donna welcomed everyone to the board's first hybrid meeting since the onset of the pandemic.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Head of School Report

Carrie said the school year had begun well, with a largely normal return to in-person schooling. She presented a slide show (archived separately); the topics she covered included:

- A successful 9th-grade retreat for 30 students moving up from middle school at TA and 34 students new to TA; 12 seniors were peer leaders, and the activities included a DEI (diversity, inclusion, and equity) workshop. Carrie added that the school has been running a similar program for 9th-graders for at least 100 years!
- A service-learning project by the Design Tech class, to make energy-saving window inserts for Thetford's Latham Library—involving Window Dressers, a nonprofit that facilitated the effort; the Thetford Energy Committee; and the Latham.
- Current enrollment—314 students in grades 7-12, including 178 from Thetford and 12 private-pay (both local and international).
- The upcoming Woods Trail Run (on October 1) and Vermont State XC Championship (on October 29) on the Dan Grossman Woods Trail 5K course.
- The effort to incorporate explicit DEI and anti-racism elements into the school's strategic plan.

A discussion followed about the proposed changes to the strategic plan. Carrie said the goal is to honor the plan as it exists but recognize that it's a dynamic document, and that it's important to

keep goals in the plan after they've been met, as a marker of what's been accomplished. Donna proposed deferring further discussion until the strategic plan item later in the agenda.

TA students Charlotte Reimanis and Annie Hesser joined the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

4. Operation Days Work Presentation and Discussion

Charlotte and Annie introduced themselves and explained that they are co-leading an effort to revive Operation Days Work (ODW) at TA. ODW raises funds by having all students work in the community for a day, with the resulting funds raised going to an international organization that supports children. TA was one of the first U.S. ODW schools 25 years ago. Charlotte and Annie presented a slide show (archived separately) explaining this history and proposing that TA become the headquarters for ODW-USA. They described their efforts to recruit younger students to carry on the effort once they graduate.

Board members commended Charlotte and Annie for their initiative and noted that ODW is an “incredible initiative” and a great leadership opportunity for students. There were also a few expressions of concern about potential legal and fiscal liability for TA. Charlotte and Annie noted that ODW-USA is not currently a 501(c)3 nonprofit but that they would hope to arrange for its tax-exempt status if TA decides it can host the organization.

The board thanked Charlotte and Annie for sharing their thoughts, and by consensus agreed to investigate the possibility.

Charlotte and Annie left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

5. Consent Agenda

- Meeting Minutes — August 11, 2022, Board of Trustees monthly meeting
 - Julie suggested adding on page 3 that “No action was taken during the executive session.”

Motion: To approve the minutes with the suggested revision.

Moved: Katie

Seconded: Dana

The motion passed unanimously.

6. Action Item: Revisions Proposed by the DEI Council and Informed by the Anti-Racism Task Force to the TA Strategic Plan

Katie suggested postponing action on the changes to allow more time for review and input regarding the wording of the revisions. Julie suggested revisiting the revisions at the board retreat later this month, and Sheilagh suggested perhaps also involving committees. Katie offered to gather input under the umbrella of the Board Management Committee; board members and committees were advised to submit thoughts on the proposed changes to her by October 6 (one week before the next board meeting).

7. Town Reports and Select Committee Reports

a. Strafford (Sarah)

Sarah said the school year at Newton is off to a great start and that the school is fully staffed, except for its full-time substitute position. She said there is a new middle-school teacher, given the greater number of middle-school pupils this year, and that the kindergarten count is the highest it's been in several years. The Strafford board is studying the possibility of offering public pre-K and hopes to put the prospect to a town vote later this year. Sarah also mentioned that middle school parents are very grateful to TA for allowing Newton middle-schoolers to once again participate in TA sports.

b. Thetford (Julie)

The year is also off to a good start at Thetford Elementary School (TES). Principal Bernice Mills is spearheading a TES strategic plan, with the hope of having it done by the end of the year, and a facilities group is looking at what may need to be done to the school buildings.

c. Lyme (Rebecca)

The Lyme School has a new principal on board—John D'Entremont, previously principal of Lebanon Middle School. Rebecca said she didn't have much else to share, as the first Lyme school board meeting since the summer won't be until next week.

d. Board Management Committee (Katie)

Katie said the BMC has been busy, conducting an orientation for the new board members, including a tour of the school, and planning the schedule for the board retreat on September 16.

e. Resources Committee (Paul)

Paul said the committee met this week with the school's insurance broker to review our current policies for liability, property, auto, etc. coverage (everything except employee insurance coverage). TA spends \$74,000 a year for these policies. Paul said the broker feels our current coverage is appropriate for the school's size, except in the area of cybersecurity; our current policy in case of a cyber-attack is for \$100,000, and Paul said the committee plans to ask for quotes to increase it to \$250,000 and \$500,000 of coverage.

8. After the Barrett Property Task Force: Campus Master Planning

Donna, Paul, and Carrie shared some updates and reflections on the next stages in campus master planning and suggested that the board convene a group this year—including board members, TA staff, and individuals with expertise in facilities and planning—to build on the work of the Barrett Property Task Force and develop a campus master plan for the next decade. One of the updates shared was that a Massachusetts-based developer recently expressed interest in constructing workforce housing on the school's Godfrey Road lots. Paul noted that the Resources Committee recommends holding off on engaging in further discussion with the developer to allow TA to first determine the optimal use of the lots, within the framework of the overall campus master planning process.

Donna asked board members interested in being involved in the group to let her know and said she would take the next steps to organize such a group.

9. Other Business / Future Meeting Agenda Items

Katie said she has some thoughts about how to make the hybrid meeting format work better. Donna said anyone with ideas for improving the format is welcome to let her and/or Katie know.

Donna also extended apologies for neglecting at the beginning of the meeting to welcome Rebecca Hanissian to her first gathering as an official member of the board.

10. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Katie

Seconded: Sheilagh

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)