

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting — October 13, 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, Paul Mutone, Katie Saunders, Marisa Donovan, Rebecca Hanissian, Ashley Woo, Julie Acker, Sam Perry, Sarah Adams, Lucy Wagner, Cara Ray, Erin Boyd

Absent: Blythe Keane, Sheilagh Smith, Harry Kinne

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

Members of the public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President's Report

Donna mentioned her recent communications with Liz Ryan Cole about impending closure of the East Thetford-Lyme Bridge and thanked Rebecca Hanissian for serving as the board's point person on the issue. There's momentum gathering to try to prevent a complete shutdown of the bridge while it is being repaired.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Consent Agenda

- Meeting Minutes — September 8, 2022, Board of Trustees monthly meeting

Motion: To approve the consent agenda.

Moved: Marisa

Seconded: Katie

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Head of School Report

Carrie presented a slide show (archived separately); the topics she covered included:

- "In the field" learning opportunities that have taken place recently, including 7th graders composting, 8th graders keeping science journals, a middle school STEM elective to design efficient fireplaces, and a biology class foliage walk (which was able to accommodate a student in a wheelchair).
- Various community partnership activities with Upper Valley Pediatrics, including a flu shot clinic and a COVID booster clinic.
- The fall admissions open houses planned for October 16.
- Campus visits by college reps.

Brief discussion followed about the various outreach methods that are used to promote the admissions open houses, and about ways that board members might help with the college selection and application process by tapping contacts at their alma maters; Carrie said ideas and support in both areas are always welcome.

5. Action Item: Revisions proposed by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, and informed by the Anti-Racism Task Force, to the Thetford Academy Strategic Plan

Donna briefly recapped the process that led to the suggested revisions in the Strategic Plan, referring to the changes as “Strategic Plan 2.0.” Katie then shared her screen to display the suggested new language. Dana suggested moving one phrase slightly to improve the flow (moving the clause “to our society,” in one of the bullet points under Goal 1, a bit earlier in the sentence).

Motion: To adopt the language changes Katie shared, with the adjustment Dana suggested.

Moved: Dana

Seconded: Rebecca

The motion passed unanimously.

6. River Bend Career and Technical Center Regional Advisory Board Report (Sam and Sarah)

Sam was the TA board representative to this advisory board during 2021-22, and Sarah was the back-up. Sam briefly described the advisory board meetings and the programs they support. He said they were hit hard by the pandemic, as the programs emphasize hands-on (and thus in-person) learning, but they are now recovering. He also pointed out that graduates of the tech-center programs are often able to find very good-paying jobs right out of high school.

Carrie asked any members of the TA board willing to serve in the advisory board role for 2022-23 to let her know. Julie asked if TA students are able to access tech-center programs other than Riverbend’s. Carrie said if a student is interested in a program offered by the Hartford tech center but not by Riverbend, that is an option — though the additional bus runs would be a challenge given ongoing transportation challenges.

7. Select Committee Reports

a. Resources (Paul)

Paul shared his screen to show a very preliminary budget proposal for 2023-24. He also gave an FY22 year-end financial report and a report on the current status of the endowment.

Discussion followed about the complexities of balancing tuition increases at TA against other costs for sending towns, to keep tax increases within a reasonable range.

b. Personnel (Dana)

Dana said that the committee is close to having a salary counterproposal for the faculty portion of the negotiations process, and that they have begun to communicate with the staff negotiators but have not actually started in on that negotiations process yet. She also mentioned that there have been some changes in the leadership of the Thetford Academy Education Association (TAEA — the union for the faculty and staff) and listed the new lineup:

Betsy Pond (social studies teacher) — president

Melissa Perry (math teacher) — vice president

Sadie Mayfield (special education teacher) — secretary

Gary Engler (science teacher) — treasurer

Kate Owen (librarian) — grievance committee chair

Faculty negotiators:

Stacy Barton (social studies teacher)

Rebecca Walter (counselor and teaching and learning coordinator, but currently on leave)

Betsy Pond (social studies teacher; filling in for Rebecca for the time being)

Staff negotiators:

Marisa Cotilletta (IT and help desk coordinator)

Laura Harrington (special education paraprofessional)

c. Advancement (Marisa)

Marisa noted that Amy Amell has joined in advancement team; that the school's marketing firm, Pluck, was recently on-site to refresh the photo library; and that Carrie and Patty recently rewrote the course catalog — a big undertaking. They are also working on a three-year enrollment forecast and on fine-tuning the process by which prospective students visit and experience the school. Also, the program plans to reinstitute periodic community coffees for the first time since the pandemic.

Marisa also called for 100% board participation in the annual fund, and Erin Boyd chimed in to underline how important that support is when foundations are making grant decisions.

Ashley asked if there are events planned to bring alumni and donors back to the campus. Patty noted that among other efforts to bring those constituencies to campus, there was a very successful speaker series during the bicentennial year.

8. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

None.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Marisa

Seconded: Erin

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)