

**THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Monthly Board Meeting — November 10, 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: Donna Steinberg, Katie Saunders, Rebecca Hanissian, Paul Mutone, Sam Perry, Cara Ray, Ashley Woo, Lucy Wagner, Harry Kinne, Julie Acker, Dana Grossman, Erin Boyd

Absent: Sheilagh Smith, Blythe Keane, Sarah Adams, Marisa Donovan

Employees: Carrie Brennan (Head of School)

Members of the Public: Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk), Curtis Richardson

### **1. Welcome & President's Report**

Donna called the meeting to order at 6:48 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. She remarked that she had been moved by news reports of high turnout among young voters in the midterm elections two days before—and by the thought that current TA juniors and seniors would be able to vote in 2024 and the knowledge that they are being well prepared by the school to perform their civic duty.

Donna also asked attendees not to use Zoom's chat feature to communicate anything substantive during board meetings, because those present in person at TA aren't able to see such comments.

### **2. Public Comment**

None.

### **3. Consent Agenda**

- Meeting Minutes — October 13, 2022, Board of Trustees monthly meeting
- Gift Acceptance and Stewardship Policy (F43)
- Non-Discriminatory Mascots and School Branding Policy (F2)

Donna recommended pulling Policy F2 from the Consent Agenda, based on substantive feedback she'd received from Sheilagh Smith.

Motion: To approve the Consent Agenda, minus Policy F2.

Moved: Paul

Seconded: Rebecca

The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Head of School Report**

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

- The school’s successful hosting of the Vermont State Cross-Country Championship on October 29 (thanks to many community volunteers), and the TA girls’ team’s repeat as Division III State Champions.
- Off-campus learning opportunities, including a field trip to Whitman Book Orchard in Quechee and the statewide “Getting to Y” conference in Montpelier, which several middle school and high schools students from TA attended and made presentations at.
- A snapshot comparing students’ academic performance pre-, mid-, and post-pandemic.
- Enrollment and recruitment projections.
- Insight into the effect on TA recruitment of the merger of the Chelsea and Tunbridge schools.
- Several recent alumni profiles published by the school’s advancement office.

A brief discussion followed about sending school patterns, including challenges TA faces in the current hiring climate in offering bus transportation to students from sending districts.

## **5. Budget Proposal Update and Discussion (Paul)**

Paul updated the board on two financial matters:

- Recent performance of the endowment: He said our returns were holding their own against benchmarks through the first and second quarters of 2022 but have fallen off in the third quarter—dropping (with the whole stock market) from a high of almost \$6.1 million in December of 2021 to a September 2022 level of \$4.5 million.
- Several potential tuition scenarios for FY24: He shared a range of tuition rate increase possibilities—from 3% to 7%—and explored the budgetary consequences of each one, reminding the board that the FY24 tuition needs to be set at our January meeting in order to meet state reporting requirements.

Lucy asked if the budget includes a line item for contingencies. Paul replied that it does not, but that with a budget of \$8 million, a contingency of between 5% and 10% would be not inappropriate. Several additional questions were asked, including about the funding for any major campus improvements (Paul said they are not in the budget and would need to be funded by some other mechanism) and whether the enrollment projections factored in the potential impact of the closure of the Lyme-Thetford Bridge (Carrie said they did not and she will look into that). Julie noted that it will be very valuable for the Thetford School Board to have the tuition rate scenarios as they work on setting their own budget to present to voters at Town Meeting.

## **6. Campus Master Planning Process Update (Donna)**

Donna noted that she, Carrie, Paul Mutone, Director of Advancement Patty McIlvane, and Director of Facilities John Brown will meet as a committee and assemble an outline of potential capital improvement projects, including development of the school’s Godfrey Road lots, construction of a cafeteria, uses of the Barrett Property, etc. They will draw on the Barrett Property Task Force Report and other research on current and future capital needs and opportunities, to create a comprehensive resource for a projected campus master planning effort.

## **7. Town and Select Committee Reports**

### **a. Thetford**

Julie reported that Thetford Elementary held its annual Hike for Hunger, supporting the Thetford Food Shelf, on Mimi’s Trail; that the old playground will be replaced in June 2023; that TES recently held a

bus driver appreciation day; that work on the new strategic plan is ongoing and the committee has completed mission and vision statements; that the school nurse and principal went to a school safety conference; that the board is hoping to expand the solar array near TES, and the Thetford Energy Committee is currently in discussion about the project with the Public Utilities Commission; and that TES is currently negotiating new contracts with both their teachers and their paraprofessionals.

Carrie asked whether TES has its own union, and Julie replied that Orange East Supervisory Union now handles a merged contract for all the OESU schools, but that each school typically has its own addendum.

b. Strafford

Donna delivered the Strafford report in Sarah's absence, noting that not much is new at the Newton School, but that Sarah reported she and her son had come to the recent TA open house and they had both been very impressed by all the presentations.

c. Lyme

Rebecca reported that the Lyme School is in process of finding a new superintendent and that the school board is reorganizing to do more of its work in committees, for efficiency. She also gave a brief overview of the current status of the Lyme-Thetford Bridge replacement project, and the effort to get a temporary bridge built to avoid an 18-month closure. Rebecca said she suspects the appeals won't be successful. She added that she will need to recuse herself from being a liaison from the TA board on the bridge issue, as members of her family own property that abuts the bridge; Donna asked for another volunteer from the board to take on that role.

d. Board Management Committee

Katie reported that this will be her last meeting before she has her baby at the end of the month, and that she'll take a few months' leave after that—and that Erin is all set to step in to lead the committee in her absence.

## **8. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items**

None.

## **9. Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Julie

Seconded: Dana

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)