

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting – April 13, 2023
Hybrid (some attendees in person at TA, some via Zoom)

MINUTES

Donna called the meeting to order at 6:49 p.m. Attendance was as follows:

Trustees present: Donna Steinberg, Erin Boyd, Cara Ray, Harry Kinne, Sarah Adams, Katie Saunders, Paul Mutone, Sheilagh Smith, Sam Perry, Ashley Woo, Lucy Wagner

Trustees absent: Dana Grossman, Rebecca Hanissian, Marisa Donovan

Others present: Carrie Brennan (Head of School), Deb Sanders-Dame (Director of Special Education Services), Marty Jacobs (Thetford resident), Mary Chin (Thetford resident and Thetford School Board member), Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President's Report

Donna welcomed everyone in attendance and shared the word that the Student Alliance for Racial Justice (SARJ) is hosting a film screening of *Mossville; When Great Trees Fall* on April 19 in TA's Martha Jane Rich Theater and encouraged all to attend.

2. Public Comment

Donna introduced Marty Jacobs, a TA trustee candidate, and Thetford School Board member Mary Chin, a candidate for the Thetford board's representative to the TA board. Marty and Mary introduced themselves and then the trustees did a round of introductions.

3. Consent Agenda

- Meeting Minutes — March 9, 2023, Board of Trustees monthly meeting.
- Students Experiencing Homelessness Policy (C13)
- Role and Adoption of Board Policies (A30)

Motion: To accept the Consent Agenda.

Moved: Paul Mutone

Seconded: Cara Ray

The motion passed unanimously with two abstentions – Katie Saunders and Harry Kinne.

4. Head of School Report

Head of School Carrie Brennan presented a slideshow (archived separately); the topics she covered included:

- The 2024 TA school year calendar. She pointed out that it diverges in a couple of ways from the Thetford Elementary School (TES) calendar, as they made a few unexpected changes to their normal routines this year. Carrie polled the TA staff, which overwhelmingly approved of the 2024 TA school year calendar as presented.

- The fact that Orange East Supervisory Union (OESU) has a new superintendent as of July 2022, Randall Gawel. OESU serves as the Local Education Agency (LEA) for the TA sending towns of Thetford, Corinth, and Topsham, where the majority of TA students reside.
- The fact that enrollment projections for the 2023-34 are on track. For the upcoming school year, the target is 322 students, and as of April 1, the updated projection was 308, 95% of the target.
- Senior Roundtables, which are occurring in April and May. Seniors are presenting their transferable skills portfolios to peers, faculty, and family members. Carrie noted that the portfolio presentation is a graduation requirement as of the class of 2023.
- The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) 5-Year Progress Report. The report was submitted on April 1. TA is halfway through its 2018-2028 10-year NEASC accreditation time period. There was a request to review the 2018 NEASC major recommendations at a future meeting.

5. Special Education Department Presentation

Dr. Deb Sanders-Dame, TA's Director of Special Education Services, introduced herself and shared a presentation about the services that the Special Education team provides. She outlined the support provided by TA staff and what services are contracted out. TA staff provide learning center support, direct instruction on goals, in-classroom academic/behavior support, pull-out modified instruction, and reading instruction. Contracted services are based on students' needs but can include working with a speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, counselor, the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and or the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. For the FY23 school year, 40% of the student body has a 504 Plan or IEP. Deb also outlined the differences between a 504 Plan and an IEP. The primary differences are at what age individuals qualify, the measurement requirements, and who governs and funds the plans. The Special Education Services team works really hard to make sure students feel supported, can advocate for themselves and become self-sufficient. Deb expressed appreciation for her team as well as the classroom teachers who play a big role in supporting students' success. The key points Deb wanted leave with the board included the complexity of working with many Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and with different types of contracts and plans for individual students but having a small team that is at capacity and could use more physical space to support students.

She then answered several questions from the board, and the board expressed gratitude for the work that Deb and the Special Education Services team does – and the hope that the community also appreciates it.

6. Select Town and Committee Reports

a. Board Management Committee

Erin Boyd, the interim chair of the Board Management Committee (BMC), said the committee is continuing to work on updating policies and recruiting new board members. She requested that trustees send any prospective board members to BMC. Additionally, the committee is working on setting the date and agenda for the annual September retreat. Donna added that Blythe Keane, after an extended leave of absence, has now formally resigned from the Board of Trustees.

b. Resources Committee

Paul Mutone, chair of the Resources Committee, said the committee has been reviewing the current fiscal year to date against budgeted projections. Paul reported that overall, the FY23 budget is on track and there might be a small surplus. The FY24 budget is being drafted with departments' needs and wants and then will be aligned with revenue projections. The goal is to have an FY24 budget proposal ready to present to the board at its May meeting. Sheilagh asked whether the DEI Coordinator position in part of the increase in FTEs that Paul had mentioned. Carrie noted that, yes, that position is currently budgeted to increase from 0.6 FTE to 0.8 FTE.

c. Lyme Bridge Update

Ashley Woo, who is part of the Lyme Bridge Task Force, gave a brief update on the Lyme Bridge closure. The bridge will be closing on April 27 for an estimated 18 months. TA was very intentional about reaching out and creating a plan for the current TA Lyme families and are committed to continuing to offer transportation. Both Carrie and Ashley felt TA had done its due diligence and does not expect any large or long-term impacts.

7. Executive Session

Motion: To go into executive session to discuss a confidential personnel issue, with Carrie Brennan remaining in attendance.

Moved: Sheilagh Smith

Seconded: Ashley Woo

The motion passed unanimously, and the board and Carrie went into executive session at 8:05 p.m.

The board came out of executive session at 8:21 p.m.

8. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

None.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Sheilagh Smith

Seconded: Ashley Woo

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Erin Boyd (Trustee and Clerk Pro Tem) and Dana Grossman (Clerk)