

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting – May 11, 2023
Hybrid (some attendees in person at TA, some via Zoom)

MINUTES

Donna Steinberg (Board President) called the meeting to order at 6:49 p.m. Attendance was as follows:

Trustees present: Donna Steinberg, Erin Boyd, Paul Mutone, Dana Grossman, Sheilagh Smith, Katie Saunders, Marisa Donovan, Cara Ray, Rebecca Hanissian, Harry Kinne, Mary Chin (as of her election to the board—see agenda item 4)

Trustees absent: Sarah Adams, Sam Perry, Ashley Woo, Lucy Wagner

Others present: Carrie Brennan (Head of School), Patty McIlvaine (Director of Development), Ben Bailey (Director of Finance), Francine A’ness (Thetford resident), Erika Hoffman-Kiess (Thetford resident), Carter Banks (Chelsea resident), Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

1. Welcome & President’s Report

Board President Donna Steinberg welcomed everyone in attendance. She noted that it is Teacher Appreciation week and emphasized how grateful the board is to all the educators at TA—for the skill they bring to their work and for the fact that they truly care for the school’s students.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Meet Trustee Candidates Francine A’Ness and Erika Hoffman-Kiess

Donna introduced Francine A’ness and Erika Hoffman-Kiess, candidates for the TA Board of Trustees. Each of them spoke briefly about their background and connections to TA. Francine is a professor of Spanish at Dartmouth College and has two children who have gone to TA; Erika, a 1986 TA alumna, is director of the Green Mountain Regional Economic Development Corporation and previously worked for many years in economic development abroad, including in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Pakistan. The members of the board then introduced themselves briefly to Francine and Erika.

4. Consent Agenda

- Meeting Minutes — April 13, 2023, Board of Trustees monthly meeting
- Approve Mary Chin as the Town of Thetford Representative to the TA Board

Motion: To approve the Consent Agenda.

Moved: Katie Saunders

Seconded: Harry Kinne

The motion passed unanimously.

5. Head of School Report

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

- Operation Days Work, held on May 10 this year, when TA students worked in the community and raised over \$5,000 for an orphanage in Kenya
- Two Drama Program productions: the one-act play, *Trip to the Moon*, which won four awards at the state level, and the spring musical, *Godspell*, which will be performed on May 19-21
- An update on the Town of Thetford School Board, including its current membership, its partnership on DEI efforts with TA, and an upcoming community outreach survey
- The fact that enrollment figures for the 2023-24 school year are on target
- The fact that TA's recent Day of Giving, on May 10, raised nearly \$40,000 from 105 individual donors, plus a challenge grant from the Byrne Foundation
- DEI updates, including events during Black History Month and Women's History Month and the introduction of curriculum audit tools

6. River Bend Career and Technical Center Update

Rebecca Hanissian, the TA board's representative to the River Bend board, reviewed the center's offerings. About 175 students from five sending schools (including roughly 22 from TA) are currently enrolled in a variety of trade programs, including culinary arts, cosmetology, automotive technology, and cybersecurity (the latter program hosted at TA). A challenge for TA participants is that it's a half-hour drive each way, and class scheduling is complicated when TA has special days or half-days. Rebecca added that she is very impressed by the passion for the program evidenced by the director, Brian Emerson, and his staff. She also noted that she will be leaving the board at the end of her term, in June, so another board member will need to step up as the River Bend representative.

7. Resources Committee Presentations

Paul Mutone, chair of the Resources Committee, reviewed the contents of TA's 2022 IRS Form 990, noting that a draft of the form had been emailed to all board members several days earlier.

Then Ben Bailey, director of finance, reviewed the latest draft of the school's 2023-24 budget. He highlighted major changes on both the revenue and expense sides.

Action Item: 2022 IRS Form 990

Motion: To acknowledge the receipt of TA's IRS Form 990, and related annual tax filings, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, and the opportunity to review them, enabling all tax filings to occur in advance of the May 15, 2023, extension deadline.

Moved: Dana Grossman

Seconded: Katie Saunders

The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item: FY24 Budget

Approval of the FY24 budget was postponed to the June meeting.

8. Advancement Committee Proposal

Marisa Donovan, chair of the Advancement Committee, updated the board on the committee's hope to conduct a planning study to assess the feasibility of and lay the groundwork for a potential capital campaign to fund campus improvements. She said the committee has interviewed three consultants with the expertise to conduct such a study and especially liked one of them.

Rebecca asked how much the study would cost; Marisa said about \$25,000.

Carrie Brennan pointed out that the committee's work to date has drawn on efforts over the past 10 years to evaluate campus needs, including the recent Barrett Property Task Force. She also clarified that the committee isn't seeking approval to begin a capital campaign, but to study what it would take to execute such a campaign.

Patty McIlvaine listed a few of the campus needs that have been identified, including expanded and improved cafeteria and study space and better accessibility in some buildings.

Paul noted that he's been involved with pre-capital campaign studies before and has always found the information that consultants generate to be extremely valuable.

Motion: To proceed with engaging a consultant to study the feasibility of conducting a capital campaign.

Moved: Katie Saunders

Second: Rebecca Hanissian

The motion passed unanimously.

Paul said the cost of the study will be built into next year's budget, and Patty added that some of the cost could potentially be covered by grants.

9. Committee and Task Force Updates

a. Board Management Committee

Erin Boyd, interim chair of the committee, said the committee is seeking a board member willing to step into the position of vice president, with the expectation of taking over as president when Donna steps down in June of 2024; Marisa has been in the VP role, but she will now need to focus on the capital campaign lead-up. Erin said the committee is also seeking a board member, hopefully from another committee, willing to participate in Carrie's annual review.

In addition, Erin noted that the date for the board's annual retreat has been confirmed for September 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; that the committee is continuing to review and update policies; and that recruitment of new board members for this year is now complete—and the new members will be voted onto the board in June.

b. Tuitioning Task Force

Dana Grossman, who spearheaded this initiative, said the task force's members are Gio Bosco (a former member and chair of the TA board), Ann Bumpus (also a former member and chair of the TA board), Tim Briglin (a former member of the TA board and former state legislator), and Charlie Buttrey (longtime member and chair of the Thetford Town School Board); all four are

also past or present TA parents. The task force has met several times—with Carrie Brennan, Dana Grossman, and Donna Steinberg also in attendance as their schedules allow. The group will be examining the impact on TA of potential statewide changes in how public tuition funds can be used. The timeline for those changes had seemed likely to be quite short several months ago, but there was no action taken by the legislature in this session and it now appears probable that the issue may take some time to resolve.

10. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

In June, the board meeting will be the first Thursday of the month—June 1—rather than the second Thursday, so the board can vote to confer degrees on the 2023 graduates. The board will also vote on the FY24 budget at the June meeting.

11. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Katie Saunders

Seconded: Harry Kinne

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)