

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Monthly Board Meeting – June 1, 2023
Hybrid (some attendees in person at TA, some via Zoom)

MINUTES

Donna Steinberg (Board President) called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. Attendance was as follows:

Trustees present: Donna Steinberg, Ashley Woo, Harry Kinne, Paul Mutone, Dana Grossman, Rebecca Hanissian, Erin Boyd, Sheilagh Smith, Sam Perry, Mary Chin, Marty Jacobs (as of her election to the board—see agenda item 2), Cara Ray (joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m.)

Trustees absent: Marisa Donovan, Sarah Adams, Katie Saunders, Lucy Wagner

Others present: Carrie Brennan (Head of School), Ben Bailey (Director of Finance), Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk), Patty McIlvaine (Director of Advancement)

1. Welcome & President’s Report

Board President Donna Steinberg welcomed everyone in attendance. She mentioned that Spanish teacher Dana Brettell is retiring this year after more than 20 years on the TA faculty, and that both her sons had Dana as a teacher and loved her, and also that one of her sons took part in the recent “fabulous” production of *Godspell*; Donna said they’d hosted the cast party at their house, and when the show’s director, first-year arts faculty member Jeff Seabaugh, arrived at the party, all the students rushed up to him, exclaiming, “Mr. Seabaugh, Mr. Seabaugh!” Her point, she concluded, was that TA’s teachers—whether longtime or brand new— are “beloved and caring.”

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Consent Agenda

- Approve meeting minutes — May 11, 2023
- Election of trustee candidate Francine A’Ness
- Election of trustee candidate Erika Hoffman-Kiess
- Election of trustee candidate Marty Jacobs
- Election of Lyme representative candidate Darin Knaus

Motion: To approve the Consent Agenda.

Moved: Dana Grossman

Seconded: Ashley Woo

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Resources Committee Presentation

Paul Mutone, chair of the Resources Committee, said the committee had discussed and approved an \$8.7 million balanced budget earlier in the week, which was sent to all trustees in advance of

the meeting. He said the proposed budget represents an \$800,000 increase (roughly 10%) over last year's budget, but that some of the increase is due to new pass-through income and expenses for special education; the net increase, minus the pass-through funds, is 8.5%.

He noted that the biggest increases on the revenue side are from the 7% increase in tuition that the board approved in January and from an increase in expected enrollment. And the biggest increases on the expense side are for compensation, including salaries and health insurance, and for capital expenditures (due to their having been underfunded last year to balance the budget). He added that about \$258,000 in revenue is from the school's \$5 million endowment.

Ben Bailey, director of finance, then explained some of the details about the budget.

Ashley Woo asked to see percentage, not just dollar, differentials in future budgets. There was also brief discussion about fluctuations from year to year in grant revenue; Carrie noted that until a couple of years ago, in-and-out grant revenues and expenditures for one-time projects were not reflected in the budget, but it now gives a more realistic, albeit varying, picture of the school's finances to have them included.

Paul added that there is no contingency fund for unexpected expenses (such as equipment failures), but there is a bit of a cushion in that enrollment may end up being higher than the number built into the budget. He noted that it would be good to include a factor for contingencies in the future, but it wasn't possible to do so this year and still come out with a balanced budget.

Motion: To approve the FY 2024 budget as presented.

Moved: Paul Mutone

Seconded: Harry Kinne

The motion passed unanimously.

Paul also noted that the school's two lines of credit with Mascoma Bank—one for \$150,000 and one for \$600,00, used to offset swings in cash flow—have been extended.

5. Head of School Report

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

- The dedication of the new timber-frame pergola, built by student in the timber-framing class, planned for Monday, June 5
- Proposed changes in the Physical Education Department, including a transition to proficient/not proficient grading on a two-year pilot basis
- The fact that 43 seniors are in this year's graduating class
- The fact that seven faculty are leaving TA, and all the positions have been filled with excellent candidates; she added that one of the departures is for a two-year leave of absence and that another longtime faculty member is transitioning to part-time status in anticipation of retirement
- A collaboration between 7th-grade science classes and the White River Partnership to raise and release brook trout fingerlings

- The fact that 2023-24 enrollment is on track to meet and possibly exceed the school's rolling projection model
- The success of the recent Spring Arts Night, featuring chorus and band performances; pottery and woodworking; paintings, drawings, photographs, and collages; design tech work; and culinary arts creations
- A new brochure highlighting sample course plans for use in student recruitment
- Plans for mission-aligned programming over the summer, including "Tuesdays in the Garden" events, a family concert series, the longtime Fun Runs, and the newer Thetford Arthouse Cinema offerings

6. Town Reports

a. Thetford

Mary Chin, the Thetford representative to the TA board, said the Thetford Elementary School principal has reported that things are going very well, and several summer programs are in the works. The recent survey seeking community input for the TES strategic planning process has already drawn 97 responses; there will be a community forum on August 25 to solicit further input for the plan.

b. Strafford

Sarah Adams, the Strafford representative to the TA board, was unable to be at the meeting but Donna Steinberg read a written report from her. She said there have been some resignations and replacement hires at Strafford's Newton School, that 8th-grade graduation is scheduled for June 19, and that "a nice handful" of the graduates will be at TA next year.

c. Lyme

Rebecca Hanissian, the Lyme representative to the TA board, said it has been a tough week at the Lyme School, as a former student, who has younger siblings still in the school, died of a drug overdose, and a longtime road agent and community member also died suddenly. She also mentioned a recent *Valley News* article about the fact that relations between the Lyme school board and the Lyme School faculty are not good currently—which is especially unfortunate given that faculty negotiations, which Lyme does every five years, are about to get underway. She also said they have had several faculty departures, including of a math teacher who will be joining TA in the fall, and that hiring for the vacancies has not yet been completed.

7. Thank You to Departing Trustees Rebecca Hanissian and Julie Acker

Donna expressed much appreciation to two departing trustees, noting that both had made significant contributions to the board, even though they'd served for only a year each—Rebecca as the Lyme representative and Julie as the Thetford representative, with Rebecca's term ending at this meeting and Julie's having ended in March.

8. Confer Diplomas

Motion: To confer Thetford Academy diplomas on the 43 members of the class of 2023.

Moved: Erin Boyd

Seconded: Mary Chin

The motion passed unanimously.

9. Other Business / Future Board Meeting Agenda Items

There will be no board meeting in July. The next meeting will be August 10.

10. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Dana Grossman

Seconded: Harry Kinne

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Drafted by Leif LaWhite (Recording Clerk)

Respectfully submitted by Dana Grossman (Clerk)