

Below are the minutes of the Tuesday, January 17th school board meeting, including information about the proposed FY 2013 budget that will be presented at town meeting. Please note that, although these minutes reflect the discussions held at the 1/17 meeting, the board has since cut the budget further. The numbers in the minutes below are, therefore, not the final budget numbers.

The final proposed budget of \$7,648,168.64 was approved by the board this past Monday. This amount represents a decrease in spending from the FY 2012 budget of 0.7%. Despite this decrease, the school district tax rate is projected to result in an increase of approximately 8.34%. This increase is due to a combination of factors outside of our control, including Thetford's current common level of appraisal and its equalized pupil numbers, both of which are used to calculate the school tax rate. The school board recognizes the current economic realities. We firmly believe that the proposed budget reflects the best available balance between these realities and the educational needs of our children.

We will be providing more information about the proposed budget between now and town meeting, and will hold a pre-town meeting at Thetford Elementary School on February 29th at 7 p.m. As always, you are welcome and encouraged to contact us and to attend school board meetings.

Thanks,  
Elise

**THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Tuesday January 17, 2012  
Thetford Elementary School**

**MINUTES**

Elise Tillinghast convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. in the Art Room. The following were present: Lisa Swett, Shannon Darrah, Howard Sussman, Charlie Buttrey, School Board; Keith Thompson, TES, Faith Alexandre and Keith Merrick, TA, Superintendent Don Johnson, OESU

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Alison Ellsworth, teacher

**AGENDA REVIEW:**

**MOTION** (Sussman/Tillinghast) moved/seconded to approve the agenda as amended (unanimous approval).

## **APPROVAL OF ORDERS:**

MOTION: (Swett/Darrah) moved/seconded to approve payroll order #2697 (unanimous approval).

## **PUBLIC COMMENT & CORRESPONDENCE:**

Tillinghast acknowledged two letters of resignation, from teacher Alison Ellsworth and paraeducator Bev Vaughan. The board expressed regret for the departure of Ellsworth, who will be leaving Vermont with her family, and for the retirement of Vaughan, who has served many years at TES. Both will be missed. MOTION: (Tillinghast/Darrah) moved/seconded to accept Alison Ellsworth's resignation (unanimous approval). MOTION: (Buttrey/Swett) moved/seconded to accept Bev Vaughan's resignation (unanimous approval).

## **PRE-TOWN MEETING:**

Because of the weather, the board needed to reorder the night's agenda at this point to accommodate the late arrival of OESU business manager Sharon Stearns. While it waited for her arrival, they discussed arrangements for pre-town meeting. The board tentatively agreed, with input from Faith Alexandre and Keith Merrick, on a Weds. February 29<sup>th</sup> town meeting, 7 pm in the TES cafeteria. Tillinghast will follow up and confirm with board members and TA (through Faith Alexandre).

Sharon Stearns arrived at 7:20 p.m.

## **OESU REPORT:**

At the board's request, Superintendent Don Johnson had determined how to use money available to the Thetford school district through the federal Education Jobs fund (approximately \$114,000) as revenue for FY 2011. The money will be applied to staff salaries and health benefit costs. Sharon Stearns will create separate accounts to comply with federal requirements.

## **MINUTES REVIEW**

MOTION (Buttrey/Sussman) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of 1/10/12.

MOTION (Tillinghast/Sussman) moved/seconded to approve expression of appreciation to Sharon Stearns and the OESU staff for the recent improvements in OESU in business administration, and preparation of the Thetford school district's budget (unanimous approval).

### **REVIEW OF REVISED BUDGET:**

Sharon Stearns and Keith Thompson led the board through a discussion of the draft FY 2013 budget, including highlighting revisions the board had previously requested, such as the reduction in fiscal services fees and addition of a .6 FTE student services director to administer special education plans. The board discussed the likelihood of a substantial increase in the school district tax rate despite cost containment at both TES and TA, and an overall cut in education spending, caused by items out of board control such as state tax calculation factors (CLA and equalized pupil) and lower revenues. A discussion ensued over whether the board should apply the \$50,000.00 in the Future Expenses special reserve fund to reduce taxes by a small amount. MOTION: (Tillinghast/Sussman) moved/seconded to apply the \$50,000 from the Future Expenses special reserve fund as revenue in this year's budget (approved 4-1, Darrah opposed). After further discussion, the board approved and signed a warning for this year's town vote including two budget articles: a request for a general appropriation of \$7,664,412.00 for support of the school for FY 2013, and request to authorize the school district to borrow an amount not to exceed \$80,000.00 to finance the purchase of 27 acres of land currently owned by the Girl Scouts, and used currently by TES. MOTION: (Buttrey/Sussman) moved/seconded to approve the warning (unanimous approval). The board discussed that this budget, if approved, would result in a likely increase of the school district tax rate of 8.59%.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION: PERSONNEL**

MOTION: (Buttrey/Sussman) moved/seconded at 9:10 to go into executive session to discuss personnel, the premature dissemination of which would clearly place the Board at a significant disadvantage (unanimous approval). Out of executive session at 9:12 p.m. No action taken.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION: TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS**

MOTION: (Buttrey/Tillinghast) moved/seconded at 9:12 to go into executive session to discuss teacher negotiations, the premature

dissemination of which would clearly place the Board at a significant disadvantage. (unanimous approval). Out of executive session at 9:20 p.m. No action taken.

Tillinghast noted that she would be in touch with board members later in the week, to let them know whether an emergency board meeting would be necessary. She requested that they let her know their general availability, in case this was necessary.

MOTION: (Tillinghast/Swett) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 (unanimous approval).

**NEXT THETFORD BOARD MEETINGS:** January 24, 2012, February 14, 2012.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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Elise Tillinghast,  
Board Chair

*These minutes were approved by the School Board on January 24, 2012*