

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Tuesday January 24, 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 Principal, Don Johnson, OESU Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT: Aimee Toth, Teacher, Bren Bennett, Teacher, Joette Hayashigawa, School Nurse, Marty Bouchard, Teacher, Bette Nunez, Teacher, Donna Steinberg, Parent, Leif Lawwhite, Parent

AGENDA REVIEW

Add to agenda: Annual Superintendent Evaluation (will be completed in executive session), Leachfield Offer

MINUTES REVIEW: MOTION (Sussman/Tillinghast) moved/seconded to approve the minutes of 1/17/12 (unanimous approval).

APPROVAL OF ORDERS:

MOTION: (Swett/ Sussman) moved/seconded to approve payable order # 2715 and payroll #2717(unanimous approval).

PUBLIC COMMENT & CORRESPONDENCE:

POLICY PRIORITIES:

Should the Board consider revising kindergarten policy? Parents whose children do not meet the cutoff can send children to a private kindergarten and in the next year enroll their children in first grade

Bette Nunez, TES kindergarten teacher, stated that in her experience, there were a number of children allowed to enter kindergarten early. She also advised that children who have been to private kindergarten do not automatically go into the first grade. They are first evaluated before being placed there. In the current kindergarten classes June, July and August birthday children are always the ones retained. She also said that if the policy were to be changed, her suggestion would be to move the cut off date back to June 1st. Buttrey asked if she meant before the start of school and she said, "yes".

Buttrey advises the Board can revisit the kindergarten admission policy. The Board always reviews and takes another look at all policies on a regular basis. The Board last reviewed kindergarten policy in August of 2011.

The Board advised that the Student Attendance Exception policy will be on the agenda the second meeting. This policy discussion will take more than one meeting. A parent must apply for their student before April 1st for a hearing on this issue.

Kindergarten policy will be on the agenda for February 14th policy and the Student Attendance Exception policy on February 24th. Parent, Donna Steinberg and Leif Lawwhite submitted to Tillinghast some research documents for the Board to review before visiting this issue on February 14th. It is hoped that the Board will make a decision relatively quickly. The discussion will be at a public meeting.

Tillinghast is recusing herself from any motions/decisions on the kindergarten issue because she has a young child with a summer birthday and may not be totally objective. She would like to avoid any appearance of a conflict.

OESU REPORT:

Facilities planning is ongoing for the OESU Administration Offices. A decision will be made soon.

School was dismissed for Oxbow, Newbury and Bradford schools this morning due to of ice on roads.

Principal's evaluation form is ready to bring forward at the Board meeting on February 14th.

Investment Committee Meeting today was cancelled.

Next OESU board meeting is February 6th, Monday.

Sharon Stearns needs another week to prepare numbers for the Annual Report. Year to date numbers will not be included in the Annual Report.

PRINCIPAL REPORT:

The teachers had an in-service session Friday to discuss science notebooks Work is taking place on putting reference and resource materials together for the notebooks.

Tomorrow is a common core math workshop with literacy. Beth Cobb from OESU is also attending. Spelling programs will be on the agenda as well.

Children and adults are using the ice rink. The availability of helmets is not preventing children from being able to skate. They are being shared. In the morning the children are in only their boots and are clearing/cleaning the ice at that time.

THETFORD ACADEMY REPORT:

TA Head Search/Buttrey: The search committee will meet tomorrow evening and there will be more information disseminated at that time. The semi- finalist candidates will be at TA on February 2nd. They will not meet with the public but will meet with the search committee and group of teachers. These candidates will meet with the general public on February 17th.

LAND PURCHASE: A draft Purchase and Sales Agreement was distributed, contingent on voter approval. This was drafted by Swett's boss, Attorney Bryce Wing, and then reviewed by Charlie Buttrey. The purchase would be paid for by a bond. The Board discussed the procurement of a bridge loan until the bond loan is ready. Girl scouts may wish to retain rights to the leachfield only during the summer. The board would like them to relinquish that right so that they would give up all right title and interest in this land. The Girl Scout administration has not as yet reviewed the Purchase and Sales Agreement. Tillinghast and Girl Scout Administration need to sign. MOTION: Darrah/Buttrey move to authorize chair to sign Purchase and Sale Agreement. Discussion: Swett discusses how to acquire title. The easement was signed by The Town of Thetford, Vermont, School District whereas the Town Lister's office shows adjacent property as being held by simply the Thetford School District. The buyer's name should be The Town of Thetford, Vermont, School District. Sussman discussed the Board's need for a competent legal representative in this purchase. Swett will complete details on document (unanimous approval).

PREPARATION FOR TOWN METING (including pre-town meeting, annual report materials and outreach to community):

The TES Budget involves an 8.34 percent tax increase. Tillinghast distributed documents to enhance minutes of January 17th meeting. These documents will go on listserve tonight. Amendments to the documents were discussed and approved. TES is cutting the budget but the tax rate will go up due to a decrease in revenues.

It was suggested to have a one page Q and A prepared regarding the TES budget. Buttrey will prepare this document and in addition he will have prepared charts and diagrams to accompany the same. Buttrey will take this information to the Thetford recycling center each Saturday for the next three weeks. Tillinghast will accompany Buttrey when possible.

Darrah suggests we have a sense of where to cut if this budget is voted down. The Board requested that Thompson prepare a document as regards efforts that have already been made to economize.

The Board discussed what contracts might be released and those which could not.

TES school rooms will be open for the community to go to on town meeting day.

February schedule for the Board will be February 14th and the 28th.

Drop dead date for the Annual Report is Wednesday January 31st.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: TEACHER NEGOTIATIONS

MOTION: (Buttrey/Tillinghast) moved/seconded at 8 p.m. 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 8:59 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: (Darrah/Swett) moved/seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. (unanimous approval).

NEXT THETFORD BOARD MEETINGS: February 14, 2012.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Lorrie Wilkes,
Minutes Clerk

These minutes were approved by the School Board on February 14th.