

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

July 19, 2023

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT: Denise Day, Brian Cisneros, Dan Klein, Heather Smith, Matt Bacon, Tom Newkirk, Giana Gelsey

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Dr. Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Catherine Plourde, Amy Ransom, Andy Lathrop, Rebecca Noe

STAFF PRESENT:

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Chair Denise Day.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Giana Gelsey made a motion to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Heather Smith made a motion to approve the June 21st, 2023 Regular and Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Matt Bacon.

Tom Newkirk submitted the following revision to the Regular Meeting Minutes:

On page 2 in the 3rd paragraph of the DEIJ Final Report strike the sentence and replace it with the following: “Tom Newkirk referenced Chris Hall’s sabbatical work which involved teacher research and suggested it might be a model for working with some teachers in the future.”

Giana Gelsey submitted the following revision to the Regular Meeting Minutes:

On page 2, in paragraph 1 of the DEIJ Final Report change “a Transgender Procedure” to “to draft a clear and improved district transgender policy procedure.” Change the word “on” to “with” so the sentence reads, “test and implement the DEIJ competencies with a group of teachers”. Eliminate the quotes around the word “draft.”

On page 2, in paragraph 2 of the DEIJ Final Report change punctuation and add numbering so it reads, “Additional DEIJ work includes: 1) a BIPOC student group space at the middle school and establishing one at the high school, 2) the UNH Extension Program with two selected OR students, 3) bringing culturally inclusive food to the dining service, and 4) the Manchester Teacher Residency pilot program which aims to diversity staff for growing diversity in student populations.”

On page 5, in paragraph 1 of School Board Resolutions strike all writing and replace with “Giana Gelsey stated that she and Tom Newkirk reviewed the proposed ORCSD resolutions for the upcoming NHSBA annual meeting and decided on a change in plan. They decided to drop addressing the 306 regulations, as their concerns were largely addressed with reservations at this time, but to instead focus on the ramifications of 2021’s HB2, which was signed into law as RSA 354-A:31-34. Although described as an antidiscrimination bill, it includes troubling language that inhibits the ability of teachers to fairly and equitably teach and children to learn honestly learn, and most importantly contains potentially severe penalties to teachers for perceived violations. Giana stated that the NH Department of Education, the Commission for Human Rights, and the Department of Justice provided clarification of the law, but that she and Tom determined that nothing in the clarification nor the law contradicts NHSBA’s policies regarding equity and inclusion. Giana explained there is still a concern for the prospect of civil suits and “disciplinary sanctions” from the state that circumvent local school board policies and removes local control.

In paragraph 2 insert the word “rationale” so it reads “Giana read the proposed rationale and resolution:” and insert the following paragraphs:

“Rationale:

In 2021, HB 2 was signed into law as RSA 354-A:31-34. Described as an anti-discrimination bill, it included a number of prohibitions for teachers with potentially severe penalties for violations. Due to lack of clarity in the law, a FAQ was issued by the NH Department of Education, the Commission for Human Rights, and the Department of Justice. Nothing in the clarification nor the law contradicts NHSBA’s policies regarding equity and inclusion (NHSBA VI:F). However, we are concerned that the prospect of civil suits and “disciplinary sanctions” from the state has already had a chilling effect on efforts to create inclusive curricula which honestly address issues of bias and race. These civil suits and sanctions, as outlined in RSA 354-A:34, circumvent local school board policies that already exist to address parental concerns regarding curricular content. This is again an erosion of local control that we find concerning.

Proposed Resolution:

The NHSBA opposes any policy affecting curriculum that enables parents or guardians to circumvent already extant local school board review policies and exposes teachers to civil suits and sanctions at the state level.”

After paragraph 4, before the motion, include the following:

“Final Proposed Resolution:

The NHSBA opposes any policy affecting curriculum that enables parents, guardians, organizations, or other individuals to circumvent already extant local school board review policies and exposes teachers to civil suits and sanctions at the state level.”

Motion passed with correction 7-0.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Principal Rebecca Noe of ORHS provided the following dates for August:

11th – Football practice begins.

14th – All other sports’ practices begin.

16th – “Career/College Planning 101” for students applying to jobs/colleges. Students can attend one or both sessions from 8-11am or 12-3pm. Registration with a school email is required, see district website.

17th – “Welcome to High School” info session for students and parents from either 1-3pm or 5-7pm.

25th – “Freshmen Orientation/Field Day” from 11:30-3:00pm.

30th – First day of school.

B. Board – None provided.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

A. Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum & Instruction Report(s)

Suzanne Filippone stated that the Durham Parks and Rec summer R.E.A.C.H. camp has been wonderful for students and families and can look forward to a few more weeks of fun programming before it ends on August 4th. She thanked Dan Hammond and Reegan Lalonde for organizing and running it each day. She informed families that Parent Square will be replacing School Messenger; however, no action is required at this time. Further communication about this change will be available in the next few weeks. Faculty have been engaged in a variety of professional development over the summer, including work around MTSS, counseling systems, and AI.

Suzanne provided the Board with a memo summarizing a few minor handbook changes, as well as the addition of information pertaining to AI and GBTChat.

Matt Bacon wondered if all the schools' handbooks are gender neutral, and Suzanne said in recent years changes were made to reflect this, but she will ask principals to review them again. Matt asked for more details regarding the role out of the new communication system and Suzanne stated that parents will receive a letter next week announcing the change and more communication will follow in the weeks leading up to registration, which opens on July 31st. The process will be slow and over a period of time.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Morse discussed the work Athletic Director Andy Lathrop is doing to address the behavior of spectators at sporting events. Due to an increasing number of uncomfortable interactions reported by players and adults, Dr. Morse informed the Board there will be significant changes for fall. While the behavior is not exclusive to Oyster River, it does have an effect on retaining quality coaches across the state and country. Dr. Morse said there had not been accountability for this behavior in the past and due to increased distractions for players and coaches and parents and spectators, they feel it is time to develop policy and procedure. Andy Lathrop shared that he has been working with the Student Athletic Leadership Team, also known as SALT, to develop flyers outlining spectator expectations.

Denise Day wondered if there was a policy that could be referenced, and Dr. Morse said they will look into that.

Matt Bacon asked if there would be a paper sent out for parents to review and sign. Andy explained that the sports registration process requires parents to sign off that they've read the "Athletic Handbook Policies & Procedures."

Dan Klein commended Andy for working with students to develop this procedure. He agreed with Denise that tying it into policy would get the Board behind a difficult task. He encouraged going into greater detail of the thresholds for removing someone from an event and/or excluding them from future events, stating that they will need to be careful to be consistent.

Dr. Morse let the Board know that finalized information will be coming back before them in the 2nd week of August, and in the meantime, they should send him any questions.

C. Business Administrator – None provided.

D. Student Representative Report – None provided.

E. Finance Committee Report – None provided.

F. Other – None provided.

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA – Chair Denise Day asked if any items needed to be discussed separately and there was a question about the Administration in Policy Absence.

- List of Policies for Second Read/Adoption: CHCA – Approval of Handbooks and Directives, CHD – Administration in Policy Absence, CM – Annual Reports.

Regarding paragraph 1, sentence 2 of Administration in Policy Absence, Tom Newkirk wondered if there are any circumstances when administrators would need to take action due to the immediacy of the incident or if Dr. Morse was absent from the district. Dr. Morse stated that the language is as written because he is ultimately responsible. He said principals have direct access to him via cell phone and they should keep him in the loop since he is ultimately held accountable.

Brian Cisneros made a correction to paragraph 2, sentence 1 of Administration in Policy Absence. The word "guides" should be replaced with "guidance."

Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0.

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS – None provided.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 26-27.1 Total is \$2,672,348.49

Vendor Manifest # 27 Total is \$222,309.67

Vendor Manifest # 28 Total is \$133,177.80

23/24

Payroll Manifest #1-1.1 Total is \$217,940.05

Vendor Manifest #1 Total is \$587,946.79

Vendor Manifest #2 Total is \$710,278.71

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

A. Future Meeting Dates: August 2nd, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM MS Recital Hall
August 16th, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM MS Recital Hall

XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II {If Needed}

NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A2 I {If Needed}

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 pm, 2nd Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.

A workshop with NESDEC representatives to discuss the Superintendent Search was held at the conclusion of the regular meeting.

The School Board reserves the right to take action on any item on the agenda.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karyn Laird, Records Keeper