

**Oyster River Cooperative School Board**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**August 16, 2023**

**DRAFT**

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

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:** Maeve Hickok

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

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**GUEST PRESENT:**

**ABSENT:**

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:05 PM by Chair Denise Day.**

Denise took a moment to introduce and welcome Maeve Hickok as the new student representative to the Board.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Giana Gelsey made a motion to approve the agenda as written, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Christianna Wiechert, a student living in Durham, announced a Girl Scout project she has designed to help neurodivergent students and/or students with texture sensitivities choose food from the school menu. Students can look at a texture code to help decipher whether food is spicy, sticky, or chewy, among other descriptors. Christianna spoke to the new food director, Meredith St Onge, who loves the project.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> Giana Gelsey.**

Minutes are still under review.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to table the August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

**A. District**

Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced an increase in sports participation at the start of the school year, noting that 80 students are trying out for soccer and 30 students will be participating in football with Portsmouth. Regarding upcoming dates for August, tomorrow is the Welcome to High School session for students and parents from 1:00-3:00pm or 5:00-7:00pm, new teachers will be in the building Wed.-Fri. next week, Freshmen Orientation will take place on the 25<sup>th</sup> from 11:30-3:00pm, and the first day of school is on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Brian Cisneros shared how exciting it is to see how much the football program has grown over the years.

**B. Board**

Tom Newkirk pointed out that the State Board of Education was considering a proposal from PragerU for a financial literacy course that would be offered in the Learn Everywhere Program. As a citizen, he wrote in opposition to it because of its minimal requirements and low level of standard.

Board members discussed taking a stand against the PragerU program as a Board. Suzanne confirmed that personal finance and economic classes are available for students at the high school. Tom and Giana volunteered to write a draft in opposition to PragerU to present at the next board meeting.

**Matt Bacon made a motion for Tom Newkirk and Giana Gelsey to write a draft against the PragerU literacy program, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

## VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

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

#### Monitoring Student Growth

Suzanne Filippone presented on “Student Data: Monitoring Student Growth” with attention to updated STAR data for grades 2-8 and SAT’s for grade 11. She explained that STAR testing has been around for many years and the data is very valid. It is used as one of the ways to monitor student growth over time and it helps inform classroom instruction and student intervention. STAR tests are computer-adaptive and continually adjust questions based on the child’s previous response. They are given three times a year and the benchmarks are set by the district, which uses the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile for intervention.

Suzanne reviewed reading and math data for elementary and middle school, pointing out the COVID testing years in which students were remote, half a year in school, or in their first full year back in comparison to the most recent school year. She said any plateaus in scores are an indication of growing within the normal range, and she credited rising scores coming out of COVID to the teachers and the Board attesting to tutors. Dr. Morse agreed, stating that tutors have been an amazing tool for classroom teachers and the district is doing a great job supporting students and providing interventions. Suzanne said current trends show that growth is happening within the expected rate of growth, but there is always room for improvement and the district will continually look at ways to support students.

Brian Cisneros pointed out that the math scores from Oyster River recovered so well that they are above state average, and that speaks volumes.

Regarding the SAT’s, Suzanne explained that at OR they are digital and offered during the day. The declined dip in scores post the pandemic has slowly been rising. There has been a shift in how the scores are used by colleges since many are making them optional. Suzanne said it’s a case-by-case scenario whether students are using their scores to apply to schools. Heather Smith wondered if this affected motivation, and Dr. Morse said he hasn’t seen a dip in motivation. In fact, the state of NH requires all juniors to take the SAT’s. At ORHS the SAT scores are mostly used to drive instruction. While they are not used as a benchmark for intervention, the math and English departments look at the scores and note areas of concern. The essays are also reviewed to monitor writing progress. Starting in 2024 tests are expected to undergo changes. They will be shorter in length with shorter reading passages and more access to a calculator. SAT scores from 2017-2022 show that Oyster River is consistently higher than both the state and the nation in both Reading & Writing and Math.

Suzanne reviewed action items and goals for 2023-24, one of which included reassembling the District Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team and refining it over the summer. Making sure tutors are trained and classroom resources are available are part of this team’s initiatives, as well as identifying how the district will monitor progress of interventions. Work will continue around emotional and behavioral support to help students sustain focus, improve executive functioning skills, and meet school wide expectations. Foundations will continue to be implemented in literacy instruction at the elementary level, and the district will be digging deeper into ELA at the middle school and high school levels to identify areas of student growth and support, as well as training for interventionists. Proactive use of flexible times, such as FLEX and BOBCAT will continue to be used in an effort to not remove students from classrooms, but rather use the schedule in a creative way.

Heather Smith was interested in looking at the State Assessment scores for Science from annual science testing. Dr. Morse explained the State tests results are not used the same way that STAR Data is used. State testing is taken more for compliance reasons than for data review.

**B. Superintendent's Report**ORHS Spectator Code of Conduct Procedure – Andy Lathrop/ORHS Students

Athletic Director Andy Lathrop spoke about the recent need to look at policy around spectators' behavior at sporting events. Seniors Delaney Nadeau and Eliza Wheeler, members of the Student Athletic Leadership Team (SALT), have been working with Andy to bridge the gap between athletes and the community. Their hope is to stop offensive behavior, such as flipping off referees and yelling at coaches, to create a more inviting environment for athletes and fans. Under Andy's leadership, they designed a "Spectator Code of Conduct" bulletin that promotes positive participation, including spirit cheering, respecting referees and coaches, and showing Bobcat pride. The messages are positively worded to encourage fun and respectful participation, and they explicitly tell spectators to not call out and/or target individuals negatively. The well designed and visually pleasing messages will be printed on large, readable banners and copies will be included in athletic programs. The "Spectator Code of Conduct" will also be distributed through district communication and building level newsletters. Andy will also coordinate the messaging with other districts, especially rivals that tend to create more passion from fans.

Andy Lathrop and the Leadership Team have also developed "Spectator and Parent Expectations" and "Penalties for Inappropriate Conduct," which will apply to all spectators. They will be signed off by parents of athletes during registration. The Board favored tying these statements into School Board policy by either developing new or existing language to give it greater weight.

Board members showed appreciation for Andy addressing these issues and complimented Delaney and Eliza for their design work. Andy confirmed that in games with anticipated high audience attention or large rivals, the Leadership Team and Officer Nicolosi will be asked to attend.

Enrollment Update

Dr. Morse let the Board know of a 19<sup>th</sup> student added to a Kindergarten classroom at Moharimet, but due to the family's proximity to the school, he and the principals did not feel it was necessary to relocate the student to Mast Way. Other than a small drop in 5<sup>th</sup> grade numbers, enrollment numbers remain as expected and look good for the start of the school year.

**C. Business Administrator** – None provided.

**D. Student Representative Report {Maeve Hickok}**

New student representative Maeve Hickok introduced herself to the Board. She has been in student government for the past three years and is a member of the Student Athlete Leadership Team. Maeve looks forward to this opportunity believing it will provide personal growth while advocating for students. The Board welcomed Maeve and they look forward to the student voice she will bring to the meetings.

**E. Finance Committee Report** –First meeting for the upcoming school year will be August 30<sup>th</sup>.

**F. Superintendent Search Committee**Focus Groups

Heather Smith presented information on focus groups and a tentative schedule for the new superintendent search. Topics of interest included a remote and in-person focus group meeting with various stakeholders, an online survey, candidate profiles, a board workshop, appointing a screening committee, and conducting interviews. The goal is an agenda item to hire a new superintendent at their December 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 meeting.

**Denise Day made a motion to approve September 27<sup>th</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup> for Focus Groups, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**G. Other:** None

**VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA – Chair Denise Day asked if any items needed to be discussed separately and there were no concerns.**

- **MOH Maternity Leave of Absence from Approximately September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 through February, 2024.**
- **Facility Use Fee Schedule.**

**Denise Day made a motion to approve the unanimous consent agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative in the affirmative.**

Chair Denise Day called a 5-minute recess and the student representative left for the night. The meeting resumed at 8:37 pm.

**VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

Discussion on School Board Goals for the 2023-24 school year.

The Board reviewed the 2023-24 school year goals. Theme 1: Superintendent Search & Transition was agreed upon. Theme 2: Curriculum, Instruction, and Competency-Based Learning, Reporting and Survey will be rewritten with a built-out timeline and brought back to the next meeting. Much of the content will coincide with the revisions provided by Giana Gelsey. Theme 3: Strategic Plan was removed. Theme 4: Facilities Use Fees and Theme 5: Communications were agreed upon.

A newly revised draft will be presented at the next school board meeting.

**IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES**

Denise Day announced Matt Bacon and Giana Gelsey as the Manifest representatives.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS –** None provided.

**XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** September 6, 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 (b) {at beginning of meeting}

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper