

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

December 6, 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, Catherine Plourde, Rebecca Noe, Bill Sullivan, Misty Lowe

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**GUEST PRESENT:**

**ABSENT:** Amy Ransom

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 6:00 PM by Chair Denise Day.**

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.**

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon.**

Heather made the following revision: On page 2 under the heading Superintendent Search Committee, in the sentence “She thanked all the members of the Superintendent Search Committee...” change “Search” to “Screening”.

**Motion passed with correction 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey.**

Heather made the following revision: On page 2 in the sentence “Amy and Heather calculated figures...” strike “and Heather”.

Giana made the following revision: On page 2 the acronym should be “HVAC” not “HPAC”.

**Motion passed with correction 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

**A. District**

Misty Lowe of Mast Way spoke on behalf of both elementary schools since David Goldsmith was attending Moharimet’s concert. She said students had a fantastic time during today’s Coding & Cocoa sessions. Misty thanked Susan Leifer of Mast Way and Sarah Curtin of Moharimet for their work. She also thanked the special visitors from the Shipyard, Turbocam, and other businesses, as well as the volunteers that came out to the schools.

Please note the following dates:

12/13 Mast Way Chorus Concert at 6:30 pm in the ORMS Recital Hall

12/21 Special Musical Performance by visiting ORMS students

12/22 Early Dismissal at 12:35 pm (breakfast & lunch still provided)

Bill Sullivan of ORMS said students showed a lot of enthusiasm for Coding & Cocoa and gave a big shout out to Janet Martel for organizing it.

Upcoming winter concerts in the ORMS Recital Hall are as follows:

12/12 Orchestra (grades 6-12) at 6 pm

12/14 Band (grades 6-8) at 6 pm

12/18 Chorus (grades 6-8) at 6 pm

On Friday, 12/8 from 5:30-7:30 pm there will be a social for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students with music and a movie.

In other updates, basketball is underway, several clubs are occurring such as Guitar Club, Destination Imagination, Chess, Vintage Video Game Club and Math Counts, and school nurses are working with staff to help families in need.

Rebecca Noe of ORHS gave a shout out to Celeste Best for organizing the annual Coding & Cocoa event. She recognized the cast and crew of the fall play *Arsenic & Old Lace* and the director Alex Eustace for their amazing performances. Rebecca congratulated Haley Kavanaugh for being the only female runner in NH to qualify for nationals and Mackenzie Cooke for being a national qualifier for Boston.

The school Senate is currently holding a food drive through advisories. *Chaos & Kindness* will promote positivity and inclusion during a daytime performance on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>. On Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> the high school will be released at 12:10 pm and classes will resume on Tuesday, Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

Lisa Huppe announced that the Transportation team will hold food drives before the middle school music concerts on Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 14<sup>th</sup>. Food and monetary donations will help benefit Oyster River families & End 68 Hours of Hunger.

## **B. Board**

Chair Denise Day gave a big thank you to anyone involved in any way during the Superintendent Search. She thanked the Screening Committee for their time and effort and the three finalists for their willingness to serve the district. Denise also thanked the Board Superintendent Search Committee members Brian Cisneros, Tom Newkirk, and Heather Smith for their incredible job and countless hours.

Denise said the first issue of the Mouth of the River (MOR) is amazing and contains informative and well-written articles. Anyone can subscribe to it by contacting high school teacher Shawn Kelly.

Heather Smith attended the Mental Health Matters community event and appreciated the messages shared, especially around parent anxiety. She reminded the listening audience that events with a student panel are not just for students to attend. Parents should also attend since there is so much information and advocacy for student health.

Heather also attended the Hate Speech forum, which sparked a lot of good conversation and ideas, and she encouraged parents and community members to attend February's forum.

Giana Gelsey reiterated how excellent the forum discussions have been and suggested making sure the events are well-advertised to all families including the younger grades.

## **VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

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

Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Filippone announced there will be a parents-only informative presentation by Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm in the ORMS Recital Hall. The 90-minute event includes a video and questions and is open to all grade level parents. It will also be publicized to surrounding school districts.

During the May Teacher Workshop Day, the district will welcome Mirko Chardin, author of *Equity by Design*, and Chief Equity and Inclusion Office of NOVAC education. He will speak about universal design for learning so teachers can learn how to design lessons around equity, inclusion, and restorative practices.

**B. Superintendent's Report**Hate Speech Parent Meeting

Superintendent Dr. Morse recognized Rachael Blansett, SRO Mike Nicolosi, Rebecca Noe and Suzanne Filippone for their time and contribution to the Hate Speech forum. He agreed that communication needs to reach parents to increase attendance at informative events. Dr. Morse said it was apparent during Nicolosi's presentation that he is committed to students and their safety. He thanked the parents and community members that came out to express their concerns and support for the district.

Re-statement of Board's Decision of the FY25' District Budget

Dr. Morse recapped the factors that led to the recommended FY25' budget increase of 4.2%, most notably the 15.1% in health care costs that resulted in an unforeseen one-million-dollars. This factor was compounded by the negotiated tutor agreement and an increase in utilities costs. Dr. Morse spoke to other districts and confirmed that the budget increase is in line with what other districts are seeing in the region.

Overview of Barrington Tuition Agreement

Dr. Morse reviewed the district's decision to partner into a tuition agreement with Barrington. If there had been no new enrollment over the years, Dr. Morse said the district would have had a loss of staff and programming. Throughout the years, the relationship with Barrington has been a positive one. It stabilizes enrollment, increases offerings, and adds specialized positions. We now have an Extended Learning Opportunities Coordinator, Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor, School Resource Officer, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Director because of the stable enrollment in the district.

**C. Business Administrator**

In Amy's absence, Dr. Morse stated ~~the default budget there~~ is a difference ~~in the amount~~ of \$318,732 ~~between the default budget and the proposed budget~~. It is less than the approved 4.2% budget since there was not a lot new in the budget and the salaries from non-bargaining agreements were excluded. A default budget vote will occur at the Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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

Student Representative Maeve Hickok thanked Celeste Best for organizing Coding & Cocoa and provided the following dates:

12/11 Blood Drive at ORHS

12/15 Chaos & Kindness (inclusivity themed event)

12/22 Early Release

**E. Finance Committee Report** – None provided.

**F. Superintendent Search Committee**

Heather Smith informed the board that a total of 433 online survey responses were received and reviewed by the committee. All the handwritten responses from the students who attended the "Meet the Candidate" sessions were also considered. She gave her appreciation to everyone that reviewed the candidate's resumes, attended forums, and completed surveys. She gave a special shout out to the ORMS students who delivered a "firing line" of questions that were the hardest part of the candidates' visits and the highlight.

Giana thanked everyone for attending the candidate sessions and for the invaluable collective wisdom from our community. She encouraged people to reach out to the board to share their thoughts and keep communication going.

**G. Other** – None provided

**VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA** – None provided.

**VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

2024-25 School Calendar for First Review

Suzanne informed the board that the district conferred with area schools to create a draft 2024-2025 Calendar. Holidays, vacations, and a majority of the Teacher Workshop (TW) days are shared, although there are some variations. There is a small number of conflicting days among the Rochester, Dover, and Somersworth calendars for Career Technical Education (CTE) students. Two days are out of alignment for the Rochester/Dover locations and eight for the Somersworth location. Dr. Morse said the state mandates that no more than ten days be out of alignment with one CTE center, and our district has three. He thanked area superintendents for the collaboration between the districts that helped to make sense of a difficult situation. It was noted that if ORHS students are not in school a day CTE is open, they can still attend their program.

Giana Gelsey commented that many religious holidays fall on TW days and weekends, which is a fortuitous advantage for planning. She suggested beginning the conversation of possibly pushing the start of the school year up a week to end school prior to Juneteenth. In other words, begin earlier in August. Brian Cisneros said there has been a conversation at the local and state level to push the start of the school out past Labor Day. Although it did not pass in last year's legislative session, it is still a topic of discussion. Dr. Morse agreed it would be good to begin having these types of conversations if the board wants to suggest a different start date.

#### FY 25' Default Budget

The FY 25' Default Budget vote will take place at the next school board meeting.

#### Draft 2024 Warrant Articles

Dr. Morse let the board and listening audience know that the warrant article drafts are vetted through an attorney and legal language is required. The intention is not for the language to be confusing or convoluted, and a summary will be provided for each one. Dr. Morse reviewed the eight warrant articles, an amount more than usual this year, and noted that three board seats are up for election.

Tom Newkirk pointed out the language for the Barrington Agreement that covers the next 10 years. It limits the number of tuition students per grade level, and he wondered if there should be flexibility to go above. Dr. Morse reminded the board that the middle school enrollment numbers will be decreasing over the next decade, and he anticipates the middle and high school numbers to settle back down. He said the first five years of the agreement will not allow for an increase in Barrington students, but the second five years may. He will provide new language for the board to review that will create flexibility in years 5-10 for Barrington to send more students.

Brian Cisneros suggested moving article 6, the Barrington Agreement, to the end of the list so the articles are in the order that they get paid if there is funding.

#### List of Policies for First Read: JLCE – Emergency Care and First Aid, JJIF – Athletic Policy – Sanctioning of Sports, ACN – Lactation Accommodations

Dan Klein let the board know that tonight's policies are a first of two reads and range from relatively minor to extensive changes. He confirmed that the new less specific language in policy JJIF was intentional so sports can adapt to changes without policy.

**Dan Klein made a motion to approve the List of Policies for First Read: JLCE – Emergency Care and First Aid, JJIF – Athletic Policy – Sanctioning of Sports, and ACN – Lactation Accommodations for First Read, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

#### **IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES**

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 9 Total is \$753,471.36  
 Payroll Manifest #10 Total is \$816,896.80  
 Payroll Manifest # 11 Total is \$740,240.88  
 Vendor Manifest # 10 Total is \$910,082.72  
 Vendor Manifest # 11 Total is \$392,109.68  
 Vendor Manifest # 12 Total is \$791,596.71

Heather Smith reported that Sustainability Committee will meet on Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>.

Giana Gelsey reported that the DEIJ Committee met on Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> and a majority of the discussion was in preparation for the Hate Speech forum. She said it was a valuable discussion that included ideas to improve the

situation and ways to talk to students to conceptually understand hate speech. Plans for a March public forum is underway with more details to come.

Tom Newkirk reported that the Survey Committee met and went through the previous survey to select and eliminate questions for the final survey. Dr. Morse stated that UNH has agreed to activate a web-based survey for the district.

Dan Klein reported that Policy Committee will meet on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>.

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

#### **XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** December 20, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
January 3, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
January 10, 2024 – Public Budget Hearing @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
January 17, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall

#### **XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II (b)**

- The hiring of any person as a public employee.

**Denise Day made a motion to go into Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3 II (b) the hiring of any person as a public employee, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed by roll call vote.**

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:2 {If needed}**

#### **XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 PM, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0.**

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper