

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

**December 20, 2023**

**DRAFT**

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

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:** Maeve Hickok (absent)

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Dr. Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Catherine Plourde, Amy Ransom, Gen Brown, Rachael Blansett, Rebecca Noe, Bill Sullivan, Misty Lowe, David Goldsmith

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**GUEST PRESENT:** Dr. Robert Shaps

**ABSENT:**

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

**Ia. 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), 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.**

Regular Meeting resumed at 7:06 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Denise Day made the following change to the agenda:

The motion to approve the hiring of superintendent will be moved from Non-Public to Public.

**Denise Day made a motion to approve the agenda as amended, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0.**

Heather Smith made a comment that the opening of a new door is exciting, but it comes with the closing of a door which is also bittersweet.

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the hiring of Dr. Robert Shaps as superintendent for a term of 3 years at an annual salary of \$210,000 in accordance with the negotiated contract and to further authorize the chair, person Denise Day, to sign the contract on the Board's behalf, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros.**

Brian Cisneros shared that the process was long and short, and there were a lot of great people involved. They received applications from very qualified potential superintendents and when it came down to the final three, they were all outstanding candidates that were more than qualified to do the job. Only one person could be chosen, and he said Dr. Shaps is a great person and he is looking forward to seeing how he leads the district.

**Motion passed 7-0.**

Denise Day congratulated Dr. Shaps and invited him to the podium. Dr. Shaps thanked the board and said it was an honor and privilege to be selected as the next superintendent. He thanked everyone for their trust and confidence in his leadership. He was impressed with the screening process since it was not only thorough and rewarding, but also revealing as it allowed him to see what the district values and that a joy of learning is everywhere. He thanked Dr. Morse for making it a welcoming day and he looks forward to listening and learning more over the next 6 months.

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

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the November 29, 2023, minute correction for Default amount, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey.**

Amy Ransom made the following revision:

Strike the amount \$54,450,352 and replace it with \$54,415,352 in the November 29, 2023 motion by Brian Cisneros to accept the Fund 10 balance.

**Motion passed with correction 7-0.**

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the November 30, 2023; December 1, 2023; December 4, 2023 Regular Superintendent Screening Public and Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon.**

~~Matt Bacon made the following additions:~~

~~Non-Public Meeting ended at 7:56 pm and the Regular Meeting resumed at 7:59 pm.~~

~~Brian Cisneros made a motion to seal minutes of the Non-Public Session for a period of one year, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.~~

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

**Motion passed ~~with correction~~ 7-0.**

**Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros.**

~~Matt Bacon made the following additions:~~

~~Non-Public Meeting ended at 7:56 pm and the Regular Meeting resumed at 7:59 pm.~~

~~Brian Cisneros made a motion to seal minutes of the Non-Public Session for a period of one year, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.~~

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

Giana Gelsey made the following revisions:

On page 2 under "District Updates" replace the spelling of "Cavanaugh" to "Kavanaugh" and "Cooke" to "Cook".

On page 3 under "Business Administrator" the first sentence should read "...Dr. Morse stated there is a difference of \$318,732 between default budget and proposed budget."

**Motion passed with correction 7-0.**

## **V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

### **A. Board**

Tom Newkirk announced that he will not be running again in March for the Durham seat. He encouraged anyone interested in running to reach out to him so he can answer questions and provide information.

### **B. District**

Principal Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced that she was proud and impressed by the XC Teams. At the NH XC Awards Banquet the girls were recognized as "Girls XC Team of the Year" and Patrick O'Brien was recognized as "Coach of the Year." The school has been celebrating a special "Staff Appreciation Week" before the holidays in honor of everyone's hard work and dedication. When school resumes on Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>, there will be two weeks of classes until midterms. Quarter 3 of the new semester will begin on Wed., Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>.

DEIJ Director Rachael Blansett shared updates of her work involving professional development planning and activities with students at the high school and elementary schools. The February Teacher Workshop Day will include a Bias Bootcamp session and on March 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> a 4-part training series titled "Intersections of Identities" will be available to 50 staff members who register. Recently, Rachael was able to connect, collaborate, and share work with other regional DEIJ directors at a retreat. She is also preparing transition work that outlines everything she has done. It will be a helpful reference for anyone in the district to access now and down

the road. DEIJ Committee meeting dates for the new semester will be available in January and another community event will be planned.

Rebecca added that the group Chaos & Kindness, who spreads messages of positivity and inclusion, performed at the high school and students really enjoyed the special event.

## VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

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

Suzanne Filippone informed the board that STAR Assessments would be given in the new year. She recently met with the social studies department about the Civics in Schools state requirement, and currently, all seniors have passed the Civics Exam. Also, the updated Eureka Math model is running, and Suzanne thanked Sarah Farwell and Ellen Ervin for all their work involved with the implementation. Suzanne let faculty know that Sabbatical Applications are available for submission until January 15<sup>th</sup>. She recognized Julie Kelley, head member of the Sustainability Committee, who is stepping down and thanked her for her service to the district and students. Parents and community members who may be interested in joining the district's Sustainability Committee can email Suzanne Filippone.

#### February 13, 2024 Teacher Workshop Day Adjustment

Regarding the February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Teacher Workshop (TW) Day, the district had anticipated the primary; however, since it is not occurring they have determined that moving it to March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 will be in better alignment with Rochester, Dover, and Somersworth school districts. Suzanne noted that March is also a more traditional time for a TW Day.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve moving the February 13, 2024 Teacher Workshop Day to Friday, March 15, 2024, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0.**

### Superintendent's Report

#### Update on Competency Survey

Dr. Morse thanked Dan Klein, Tom Newkirk and Giana Gelsey for their contributions to the Competency Survey Committee and development of the draft being presented tonight. He also thanked the remaining members of the committee which included administrators, teachers, students, and a parent representative. He made special note of the middle school students who communicated very thoughtfully about competency-based reporting during the discussions. The goal is for the UNH Survey Center to distribute the survey via the web mid-January so that results can be collated in February.

Dr. Morse also spoke about the advertisement for a new Facilities Director since the Aramark contract has been discontinued. The purchase of the new kitchen equipment was negotiated without buyouts.

Denise Day pointed out a change to question P13 for survey language consistency. She suggested a revision that was noted. She also asked about what led to the changes. Dr. Morse explained that they eliminated leading questions, especially ones that were negative, in order to neutralize questions. Giana Gelsey noted that language within the survey was carefully critiqued and revised for consistency and better understanding by the various participants.

A discussion was held amongst board members as to the grade levels the survey should address and have access to with the consensus being 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Giana Gelsey made a motion for the survey to address and have access to ~~up to~~ for 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Klein. Motion passed 4-3-0 with Giana Gelsey, Matt Bacon, Heather Smith, and Dan Klein in favor; Brian Cisneros, Tom Newkirk, and Denise Day in opposition; and no abstentions.**

### C. Business Administrator

#### Review FY 25' Default Budget for Public Hearing

Amy Ranson reviewed the 2024 MS-DSB default budget which is reported to the Department of Revenue. She noted that the figure of \$55,929,305 also includes funds related to Food Service.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to accept the Default Budget as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0.**

#### Review 2024 Warrant Articles for Public Hearing

Amy Ranson reviewed the warrant articles along with #5, a new warrant article added to address cost items of Tutor CBA if defeated.

Brian Cisneros explained that if the Tutor Agreement doesn't pass, there is no recourse until the following year. He felt Warrant #5 was standard practice and without it, the tutor agreement would not have any support to fall back on should voters not pass it.

Denise Day wondered if the language would confuse voters and discourage them from passing it.

Heather Smith felt the new article was reasonable and wondered if using the language this year would normalize it for following years.

The board tabled a decision on Warrant Article #5 until the next meeting.

**D. Student Representative Report {Maeve Hickok} – None provided.**

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

#### **F. Superintendent Search Committee**

A token of appreciation was presented to Heather Smith for all the hard work and time she spent organizing the timeline and planning details for the Superintendent Search.

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

- ORMS Physical Education Teacher Letter of Resignation.
- List of Policies for Second Read/Adoption: JLCE – Emergency Care and First Aid, JJIF – Athletic Policy – Sanctioning of Sports, CAN – Lactation Accommodations.

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

#### **VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

##### 2024-25 School Calendar for First Read

Dr. Morse met with fellow superintendents to align the 2024-2025 calendar as much as possible with Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester. The February and April breaks are now aligned with the NH state calendar.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the 2024-25 School Calendar for First Read, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0.**

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

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 13 Total is \$781,188.74

Vendor Manifest #14 Total is \$1,011,816.76

Dan Klein stated that the Policy Committee met last week and due to the on-going occurrence of hate speech they are looking at all policy related to make it clearer and more robust. These incidents, although unfortunate, are a necessary opportunity to update and revise policy and procedure for everyone involved.

Heather Smith stated that the Sustainability Committee met on Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> and is working on reducing waste across the district. Moharimet's Sustainability Club recently held a secret challenge in which waste was weighed after each lunch. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade received an extra recess for being the least wasteful. Cookies will no longer be wrapped in individual plastic bags and the nutrition department is looking into using baskets instead of paper boats. A spring event for Earth Week has been tentatively planned and they are looking for additional members to join the Sustainability Committee.

Giana Gelsey stated that she attended the NHSBA legislative preview workshop where 300+ proposals are being tracked. She also noted that ~~one~~ a proposed rule change by the NH Board of Education for the Learning Everywhere program would replace the review period of a particular program from one year to three years and would also reduce the probation period of a teacher and remove the mandatory criminal background check. She learned that some schools have a legislative committee and wondered if our district should consider forming one. She stated that she rote a letter to the BOE in opposition to these changes.

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

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

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** 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  
 January 23, 2024 – Joint Board Meeting w/Barrington @ 6:00 PM – Barrington SAU

**XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION:** RSA 91-A:3 II (b) – [moved to beginning of the meeting]

- The hiring of any person as a public employee.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:** RSA 91-A2 I {If needed}

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

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. 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