

# Oyster River Cooperative School Board

## Regular Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2024

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, Catherine Plourde, Rachael Blansett, Rebecca Noe, Bill Sullivan, Misty Lowe, David Goldsmith

**STAFF PRESENT:** Sean Peschel

**GUEST PRESENT:** David Totty, Dylan Brothers, Priscilla Romero, Zack Sheehan,

**ABSENT:**

**O. MANIFEST REVIEW/APPROVAL AT EACH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING**

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

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Under Superintendent's Report, Denise Day added the approval of Director of Facilities.

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

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

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the January 17, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey.**

Denise Day made the following revision:

On page 4 under School Board Committee Updates, in Denise Day's comment insert the word "Alliance" so it reads, "...she attends Dover Mental Health Alliance monthly meetings..."

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

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the January 17, 2024 Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

**A. District**

David Goldsmith of Moharimet announced that the traditional sugaring season has begun. Classes are already tapping trees, and the sap is flowing. He thanked Fire Chief Jim Davis who is head sugarer, evaporator, boiler, and all-around educator, as well as the many parent and community volunteers that are part of the process. Third graders will perform a World Music concert on Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm in the ORMS Recital Hall. Reading Week kicks off next Monday. It will include activities, school-wide reading, and visiting author Matt Tavares. After break, in early March, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders will take the writing portion of state testing. The remaining tests for reading and math will occur in late May. The community can look forward to the annual Pancake Breakfast in early April. Be on the lookout for a date and more information.

Misty Lowe of Mast Way shared that kindergarten families recently participated in an evening of coding called "Robotics & Rice Krispies." She gave kudos to organizer Susan Leifer and the high school Computer Science Honor Society students who helped run this fun event. During the Global School Play Day, Misty said social emotional learning (SEL) skills came to life as students used problem-solving and conflict resolution while playing games. Kindergarten registration has begun for the 2024-25 school year. On February 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a Family Literacy night full of activities provided by Alison Neri and on February 16<sup>th</sup> author Matt Tavares will visit.

On February 22<sup>nd</sup> the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade will perform Ode to Joy, a collaborative PE/music performance, led by teachers Cathy Baker and Chris Milner. Performances will occur at 6 pm and 7pm in the ORMS Recital Hall. Misty reminded the listening audience that electronic and paper progress reports will be provided prior to break, and there is no school February 26-31. Upon returning from break, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders will take the writing portion of state testing on Wednesday and Thursday.

Bill Sullivan of ORMS thanked the board, Dr. Morse, and the community for their support in his acceptance as official principal of the middle school. Basketball season comes to an end with tomorrow night's last game. ORMS recently held a very successful 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Snowball dance, and this Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades will have a social from 5:30-7 pm. Bill reminded the listening audience that quarter 2 progress reports went out last week and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing for selected students will take place this month. The 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade transition is underway. High school counselors recently provided information about course selection and grading, and an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Parent Information Night will be held on February 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. Kindness Week takes place February 19-23 in which staff and students will participate in a variety of activities.

Principal Rebecca Noe of ORHS gave a huge thank you to the guidance department in honor of National Counselor and School Psychologist Week. She recognized the time, effort, and hard work counselors and psychologists put in throughout the year. Recently they delivered presentations to upcoming ORMS students. Rebecca congratulated the well-deserved nine teachers nominated for Teacher of the Year including Gab Anderson, Jaclyn Jensen, and Karen Van Dyke from the Social Studies Department; Peter Harwood and Erica Cooke from the Math Department; Sara Cathey from the Science Department; Corey Blais from the English Department; and Jarika Olberg and Andrea von Oeyen from the Music Department. Rebecca also recognized a team led by Assistant Special Education Director Nancy Michaud that created more guidelines for late work and reassessment. Team members include Kim Cassamas, Alex Eustace, Jen Weeks, Maggie Trier, Nate Oxnard, Jen Wainwright, Chris Kearney, and Jackie Casey. A group aimed to provide student voice to administration, created out of Gab Anderson's sociology class, is focusing on tutoring. It was a need expressed by students post mid-terms. The student group is re-instating a center of tutoring with Library Specialist Lisa Harling. Junior Colton Brisard was the only New Hampshire athlete selected to play in the All-American Football Bowl in Florida, an event that showcases top football players in the country. Rebecca reminded the listening audience that report cards are available on PowerSchool. She thanked the Music Department for creating a PEP Band for sports games, acknowledging that the music has made a huge difference to players and fans. Lunar New Year Community Day, an event to kick off the year of the dragon, will take place this Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, from 10-2 pm in the high school.

DEIJ Director Rachael Blansett announced March professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. On the March 15<sup>th</sup> Teacher Workshop (TW) Day she will lead a Biased Bootcamp from 1-4 pm. GLSEN, a national organization created to improve K-12 school climate for LGBT+ youth, will hold a 4-part training series. A session on Friday March 15<sup>th</sup> from 5-8 pm includes dinner and sessions on Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup> include snacks. Registration was provided on February 8<sup>th</sup> and is limited to 50 participants on a first come first serve basis. For the upcoming Kindness Week, Rachael is working with Bill and Alida to provide a February 23<sup>rd</sup> assembly around the "Power of Words" for middle schoolers. The DEIJ committee's spring event will feature the theme "Belonging and Building Relationships through Storytelling." While details are still being worked out, this tentative May 2<sup>nd</sup> event hopes to include panels of lived experiences and community outreach. On February 21<sup>st</sup> Rachael will present a DEIJ workshop to the board, topic to be determined.

## **B. Board**

Tom Newkirk referenced an article in NY Times that examined learning loss and gain pre, during, and post pandemic. It recognized Oyster River for its high level of recovery in math. Tom commended the district for the critical decision-making they faced at that time. He said to be where we were, what we went through, and where we are now is an extraordinary story that is a tribute to heroic efforts of teachers, administrators, and kids. Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Filippone agreed it is nice to see the acknowledgement in conversations outside of the district and it is a testament to the community in and outside of school.

Brian Cisneros acknowledged the district's loss of Paul Bamford – a coach, parent, and great man that touched a lot of people. He was a mentor to Brian as well as many others, and he will be sorely missed.

Heather Smith attended the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) parent presentation and found it to be really informative. Suzanne is going to make links available on the district website.

Giana Gelsey spoke about HB1473, a bill she's tracking, that would make SEL teaching prohibited in New Hampshire. She offered to write a letter; however, Brian assured the board it will not pass and Denise preferred saving energy for bills that have the possibility to pass.

Denise Day attended the ICAC parent presentation, stating it was extremely well-done, a terrifying reality, and provided really good messages for parents.

## **VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

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

Suzanne Filippone echoed the importance of the ICAC information and let parents know that if they google "ICAC" or go to ICACtaskforce.org it will bring them to links and NetSmarts. The REACH summer camp will take place mornings from July 8<sup>th</sup> - August 2<sup>nd</sup> and the afternoons will be run by Durham Parks and Rec. Registration will open on 2/19 and close on 4/19. All summer programming, including ESY and credit recovery, will be housed at ORMS. Also, summer professional development planning is underway for staff. In honor of Counseling and School Psychologist Week, Suzanne thanked K-12 counselors and school psychologists who provide daily support in academic, career, college, and social emotional education. She also gave a shout out to literacy specialists for working on Literacy Framework K-5 for ELA scope & sequence.

#### FY25 (2024-2025) School Calendar Revision – Due to State Primary

Suzanne said a calendar revision for 2024-25 was recently identified by regional superintendents. Since the State Primary will be held on September 10<sup>th</sup>, the district will shift the May teacher workshop to September 10<sup>th</sup> to be in alignment with Dover.

#### **Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the revised FY25 (2024-25) School Calendar due to State Primary, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros.**

Heather Smith commented that in past years the May TW day has been cancelled because of additional snow days. Dr. Morse said they did think of that, but since it's weather dependent, it's not something they can plan around.

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

#### Sabbatical Committee Decision Update

Tom Newkirk announced the Sabbatical Committee has recommended Sarah Curtin for a half-year sabbatical. Her proposal focuses on integrated learning at the elementary level.

#### **Heather Smith made a motion to approve the proposed sabbatical, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Tom Newkirk.**

Heather asked about the timeline, which is still being determined, but is likely to be during the second semester.

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

#### Student Presentation - Stella Pillet-Shore

Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Coordinator Sean Peschel announced that Junior Stella Pillet-Shore's summer internship experience at Portsmouth Regional Hospital brings to life the high school's theme "Empowering Positive Pathways". He recognized Dylan Brothers, the Academic Partnership Coordinator for Portsmouth Hospital Corp., who chose 14 interns for their second Career Exploration Program. Sean introduced Stella, the youngest student selected, to share her experience with the board.

Along with other high school and college students, Stella spent seven-weeks attending a summer paid internship that shadowed professionals in various healthcare roles. She rotated through an inpatient unit, surgical services, the emergency department, and other various services such as lab, imaging, and outpatient therapy. Stella's mentor was Priscella Romero, the Vice President of the Human Resources department, and under her guidance she completed a required hospital-based project.

Stella's project focused on introducing students to healthcare careers by designing and creating a Healthcare Career Expo. Objectives of the project included rebuilding excitement of healthcare in the community, showing a

wide range of career pathways in healthcare, and strengthening community relationships with schools and community members. The expo, which featured 16 department stations and 2 keynote presentations, engaged participants to visit stations with a passport, collect career cards, and enter chances to win t-shirts and other swag. The expo was such a success, that Dylan has plans to use it in the hospital's marketing efforts across the state.

Stella spoke about her personal take away from the ELO experience, stating that her favorite unit was the Operating Room because of the energy, strength and teamwork that goes into every experience. In 10 years, she sees herself beginning a post-Medical School Residency. However, her biggest take away was realizing that in healthcare the goal is not treating a "people" or a "population," but treating one person holistically and kindly at a time.

Board members had an opportunity to ask questions about the internship and ELO credit work.

## **B. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Morse stated that these opportunities for students exist as a direct result of the board's decision 9 years ago to create an ELO Coordinator position. He thanked board members and the community for their support over the years.

### Nomination of Facilities Director

In Dr. Morse's 12-year tenure as superintendent, a facilities director position has always been contracted, and so it was with great honor to nominate David Totty for facilities director. David comes to the district with experience as a director and HVAC systems operator.

### **Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the new facilities director, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

David Totty thanked the board, administrators, and community for this opportunity, and he looks forward to working in the district.

Dr. Morse informed the board that 600 student and 300 adult survey responses were collected from the recent grading and assessment survey. UNH recommended closing the survey a week early to have time to collate the results. Since plenty of data was gathered, he agreed. Survey results will be discussed at the February 21<sup>st</sup> board meeting. Dr. Morse thanked the board for their work on this initiative and everyone who took the survey. He credited Gen Brown and her communication reminders, stating what a great addition she has been to our community.

Dr. Morse thanked David Goldsmith and the Moharimet staff for their great job on the recent evacuation. He said it was fast and MOH staff did a fabulous job thanks to great leadership. The high school administrators acted quickly to provide lunch and a movie, and parents who picked their kids up early were great and appreciative. To the kids perspective, it was a surprise field trip.

### Fair Funding in NH Presentation – Casey Neal [30 minutes]

Dr. Morse touched upon the ConVal lawsuit that focuses on equity and funding across New Hampshire. In an effort to promote that every student deserves a quality education, he invited Executive Director Zack Sheehan from the NH School Funding Fairness Project to speak more about the matter.

The presentation titled, "Advocating to make school funding more equitable for students and taxpayers alike," examines school funding and property taxes. Zack said in the current system taxpayers and students are not treated equitably or fairly. Not only is it getting worse, but it is unconstitutional. He provided comparisons in which schools only 30 miles apart have considerable differences in teacher pay, graduation rate, math & reading proficiency, and education property taxes. He stated that NH relies overwhelmingly on local property taxes to fund public education with state adequacy and federal aid contributing less than 20%. Several lawsuits have gone before the state since the 90's. Although SWEPT, a statewide education property tax was created, and a ruling stating that the taxes the state uses for education must be uniform across the state, the burden on local taxpayers to fund public education continues to exist.

More recently a ConVal ruling resulted in a base adequacy cost increase from \$4,100 to no less than \$7,356.01 per pupil per year, although the true cost is likely much higher than that. As a result of additional lawsuits, educational funding is a major focus of the state budget process. It has increased funding by about \$157 million over the last two years, but there is still a discrepancy on who is responsible. New law proposals would increase base adequacy to \$10,000 and make changes to SWEPT and its negative education property taxes for some towns. On the other hand, there are proposals that would reduce funding based on proficiency scores and reinstate the Interest and Dividends tax.

In summary, Zack stated that neither taxpayers nor students are treated equitably or fairly, and the problem is getting worse. In fact, over \$2 billion is downshifted to local property taxpayers each year. Lawsuits and pressure by taxpayers have resulted in some change, and he urged community members to engage state level lawmakers to push for more change and progress.

#### Positions in Budget ~ Post Early

Dr. Morse let the board know that he will advertise soon for next year's approved new positions in an effort to secure high quality candidates.

**C. Business Administrator** – Moved to after Student Rep. Report.

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

Maeve Hickok announced that mid-terms went well, including the new schedule with built in review time. At the recent coffee house, they had their biggest turnout of 100 people and she thanked everyone for attending. Track, ski, and swim teams have meets coming up this weekend.

The board took a 5-minute break at 9:00 PM and the student representative left for the evening.

Regular meeting resumed at 9:06 pm.

#### **Business Administrator**

##### FY24 Budget Update half year report

Amy Ransom informed the board that the numbers are in line for this point in the year and there are no concerns.

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

**F. Other** – None provided.

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

- **Nomination of ORMS Assistant Principal.**
- **Mast Way Maternity Leave of Absence from June 4, 2024 to the End of the School Year**
- **ORMS Maternity Leave of Absence from May 13, 2024 to the End of the School Year**

**Denise Day made a motion to approve the unanimous consent agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0.**

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

##### Facilities Fees [Procedure KF-R1] – Current and Revised

Amy Ransom said the only change made to the Facilities Fees document was a newly added definition stating the PTO will not pay a fee.

Tom Newkirk said he prefers a cap for the daily rate of the turf field and a lower cap for the other fields. He pointed out that if ORYA were to use the field for one day under current rates, they would pay over \$1K. Giana agreed with a max daily rate and costing out by field. Dan Klein felt summer field rentals should include access to bathrooms, but since the school is closed, they are not available. He suggested building in a porta potty cost. Brian Cisneros will take these suggestions back to the Finance Committee for consideration.

School Board Self Evaluation

Denise Day suggested postponing the school board self-evaluation to the next regular board meeting. She also suggested a meeting start time of 6:30 pm. The board was in agreement.

**IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES**

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 14 Total is \$687,324.09

Payroll Manifest # 15/15.1 Total is \$761,699.20

Vendor Manifest #16 Total is \$121,163.41

Vendor Manifest # 17 Total is \$911,323.16

Heather Smith announced Sustainability met on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and shared the following updates: the middle school sustainability club is gearing up for Earth Week, there is an initiative to turn off cars during idle, and an upcoming student activity includes building Dream Lego Schools based on efficiency. Save the date for the April 11<sup>th</sup> Community Dinner, which will be followed by a Mast Way performance of Wonka Jr at the high school.

Tom Newkirk said the Sabbatical Committee discussed what the proposal should be for, stating that historically it was for teachers to focus on improving their teaching. However, a shift on making a programmatic change to the district has put a lot of weight on applying. He wonders if the Policy Committee should look into the sabbatical language, specifically the wording around proposals.

Dan Klein announced Policy met last month and there is nothing new for first read at this time.

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

**XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** February 21, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 6:30 PM @ORMS Recital Hall  
 March 6, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM @ ORMS Recital Hall  
 March 20, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM @ ORMS Recital Hall

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

- Personnel Matter

**Denise Day made a motion to go into non-public at 9:26 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II (c), 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.**

Public meeting resumed at 9:42 pm.

- Superintendent Evaluation

**Denise Day made a motion to go into Non-Public at 9:44 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II (c), 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.**

Public meeting resumed at 9:52 pm.

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

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 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