

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

March 2, 2022

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT: Michael Williams, Denise Day, Brian Cisneros, Tom Newkirk, Al Howland, Yusi Turell, Dan Klein

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Olivia Gass

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Jim Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Rebecca Noe, Jay Richard, David Goldsmith, Andy Lathrop, Catherine Plourde, Sue Caswell

STAFF PRESENT: Kara Sullivan

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Michael Williams

Chair Michael Williams informed the audience that the School Board acts in accordance with district policy regarding masks and they are optional at school and board meetings.

In honor of Tom Newkirk and Al Howland's last board meeting, Michael presented each of them with a small token of appreciation and words of praise. He thanked Tom for being the "Masterclock" of the Board for the past 10 years and stated he admired his pedagogy and background. He thanked Al for his budgeting work and his commitment to wellness and sustainability, as well as his commitment to the district staff which was evident during negotiations.

Board members shared parting thoughts & words of appreciation to Tom and Al. Both men were praised for putting students in the center of everything and being student advocates all the time. A few comments shared about Tom included, "he led us through challenging decisions and was a voice of reason", "he gave great advice and was not only a mentor, but a friend", "creating the GOVOTE ORMS was one of his greatest ideas", and "he created a culture of thoughtfulness and helped us function in a positive way". A few comments shared about Al included, "when he started, he hit the ground running", "he focused on meeting needs with a fiscal goal in mind", "we could respectfully disagree and end up in the same place", and "I really enjoyed working with him".

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Michael Williams requested holding off on two agenda items: bid for tennis courts and Moharimet ventilation.

Michael Williams moved to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kara Sullivan, an ORHS teacher and parent of a senior football player, thanked the Board for their support of the football cooperative between Oyster High School and Portsmouth High School. This year marks the first graduating class of seniors who played football all four years. She thanked Krista and Jeff Butts for their efforts in establishing the cooperative, Andy Lathrop for his involvement, and Dr. Morse, Brian Cisneros, and Tom Newkirk for attending games. Kara congratulated the 24 players who participated and gave a special recognition to the following 6 seniors: Silas Garland, Joseph Sigmon, Julian Severance, Cole Spires, Keegan Tillinghast and Ethan Yu. Kara shared that one OR player made All-Conference Honors, two received awards from coaches and players and one OR player made the CHaD All-Star team, a first for our school. Kara explained the sacrifices families make, including paying to play and providing transportation to and from practices, and stated these are sacrifices not every family can make. She hopes in the future the cooperative can be expanded.

Darren Keller of Lee raised questions about the bidding process believing that vendors are not being challenged enough to get the best price. He'd like the voting and procurement process to be looked at and as a comparison shared some information about SAU 70's board policies stating they are more comprehensive and more in depth. He suggested appointing a project manager to handle negotiating and purchasing.

Bill Hall was pleased to view the new middle school building and favored its innovative design and being environmentally controlled. He thanked Dr. Morse for all his work through COVID, building a new middle school and still being superintendent.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Denise Day moved to approve the February 2, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Brian Cisneros.

Denise Day submitted the following revision on behalf of Loren Selig:

On page 1 of the public comment the last line should read, "If the October Teacher Workshop Day was moved ahead by two days, Jewish students would not have to choose between attending school and observing their holiday."

Brian Cisneros submitted the following revisions:

On page 7 the word "lucid" should be "lucrative".

On page 7 the name "Lauren" should be spelled "Loren".

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

Denise Day moved to approve the February 2, 2022 Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Brian Cisneros.

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

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

David Goldsmith of Moharimet shared that the trees were tapped prior to break and sap was also collected. Although the weather and snow halted the production at times, he noted the sap is flowing again. He stated the kids have been excited to view the buckets, at times seeing frozen maple, and are learning the true effects of being a maple sugaring farmer of New England. Regarding the new mask phase, David said it was a very normal transition back. They are working together as a school community to encourage respect and support for mask choice. He said some students continue wearing masks, others are excited to be mask free and overall, there have been no incidents of disrespect. The comments have been focused on how great it is to see faces.

Denise Day asked what happens in the situation a family is requiring their child to wear a mask but at school the child is choosing not to. David replied that in that situation they would talk it through with the family in a positive conversation, but this has not been an issue they've had to address. Dr. Morse said they are counting on kids to do what their parents have asked them to do.

Jay Richard of ORMS thanked the Board for the three teacher workdays that were granted before break. He shared that the community open house was a lot of fun, and it was great to witness happy and impressed community members who came to see what their tax dollars paid for. He said he also loved talking with parents and seeing their reactions at the family open house nights. Jay announced that last week the Robotics Team was at the State Championship where six teams qualified, five of them were in the top ten and one of those received first place. Three teams will be traveling to Dallas for the World Championship. He thanked coaches John Silverio and Jason Duff for their involvement. He also praised Rocky Coast Printing for providing boxes for the move saving the district thousands of dollars. On a last note, he thanked Al and Tom for their years of service and in helping him become a better principal.

Rebecca Noe of ORHS said during the first few days back from break the mask wearing was 50/50 or 60/40 as kids were still feeling out what is best for them. She took 60 seniors to visit the old middle school where they were happy to have that time, find their 8th grade signatures, and walk away with pieces of the old middle school including clocks and ceiling tiles. She announced that since the March 8th Election Day is held at the high school the students will be remote, the SAS Science testing will be on March 16th & 17th, the PSAT & SAT's will be on March 23rd, and the next edition of the Mouth of the River is out with copies circulating the school.

B. Board

Denise Day listened to the Candidate Forum sponsored by the middle school PTO and felt that no matter who is elected the Board will be in good hands. She brought up the CTE program and increasing participation. She encouraged parents to talk to their kids about these options in addition to seeking counselors for information. She commended the MS Building Committee, Dr. Morse, Tom Newkirk, Brian Cisneros, Jim Rozycki, and the rest of the committee for all the hours they committed to this project and remarked that the facility is amazing.

Yusi Turell acknowledged that it is still a hard time for students as they look to each other during the mask transition and feel out what is best for them. She thanked Dr. Morse for posting candidate pictures and biographies for the upcoming candidate election.

Tom Newkirk thanked fellow board members past and present for 10 years of working together. He said they accomplished a lot and he appreciated them as collegiates and friends. He stated what a privilege it's been to work with Dr. Morse who trusted in his judgement, let them logically work through matters and taught them to be a good board. He appreciated the personal and professional time they spent together.

Al Howland commented that over the past 10 years the board has become a stabilizing force, a stable place to share ideas and grow, and it's been very gratifying. He stated how impressed he's been with the staff and students of the district.

Brian Cisneros shared how special it was to be at the new middle school on the opening day ceremony. He reflected on the past two years which included securing a town vote, coming in on budget even through COVID, and getting interest rates that were half of what they planned on. He commented on how incredible it was to hear the sound quality of the hall and the phenomenal ability of the 7th grade student performing. He enjoyed seeing the reaction of teachers who expressed their gratitude for the building and visiting classrooms that had been individualized and personalized. Brian explained that the town of Lee profited by collecting cardboard in a large 125-135-ton dumpster, which exemplified towns working together. He thanked Pete Harmon and his son for using a drone to create a visual drop off aid for parents and ultimately thanked Tom for trusting in him to serve as a member of the MS Building Committee. For the future he suggested they form a subcommittee to host candidate nights. He felt all the PTOs could come together, along with 1-2 board members, to cover all bases, start the process earlier and be more efficient.

Michael Williams remarked that they moved a school and his biggest hope in everything they do as a board is that it's better because it's easier. He wished everyone good luck in all their teaching and learning.

V. DISTRICT REPORTS

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

Suzanne Filippone announced that the 2022 Summer Reach Program with Durham Parks & Rec will be taking place. A flyer recently went out advertising a March 18th registration date for morning and afternoon programs available to grades K-5. She credited director Rachel Gasowski for working with her and creating weeklong programming at an affordable cost of \$120 per week including lunch.

Suzanne reported that the March Staff Development Day will be connected to the Strategic Plan in the following areas: K-5 - Literacy, ORMS - Technology, ORHS - DEI Opportunities.

Dr. Morse stated that the Summer Reach Program is an incredible program for the district at a reasonable cost for families. Since it fills up very quickly, he recommended the district send out multiple flyers prior to registration.

Yusi Turell asked if the classes and opportunities will be listed prior to registration and Suzanne said they hope to have all those details available to parents before the 18th.

COVID METRIC

Catherine Plourde provided the March COVID metrics noting that although the new cases per 100,000 is still in the substantial range, the numbers have come down significantly from 1,000s a few weeks ago to 400s. The Transmission Rate is minimal, and the ICU Capacity is down into a moderate range, which is a relief for the state and hospitals. The state no longer requires contact tracing since they have adjusted their reporting guidelines due to home testing, nor do they want data on clusters or outbreaks. Catherine reminded everyone that tests are available for families and to contact the schools.

Catherine shared the following local data still being collected from the schools noting that numbers have dropped significantly:

Mast Way – 0 positive cases, 5 in quarantine, and 1 tested
Moharimet – 1 positive case, 3 in quarantine, and 1 tested
Middle School – 0 positive case, 1 in quarantine, and 0 tested
High School – 2 positive cases, 3 in quarantine, and 4 tested

She also reported the following local data for COVID cases, which are dropping significantly:

Barrington - 8
Dover – 25
Durham – 60
Lee - 5
Madbury – 1-4
UNH – 111

Catherine said the local data is very helpful in looking at what is effective in the mitigation layers they continue to have in place. Brian Cisneros wanted to reiterate to parents that all our current mitigation layers are still in place with the only change being masks optional. These layers, including social distancing, staying home when you are sick, and frequent hand washing, will continue to help keep local numbers down.

Dr. Morse shared that in response to the Feb. 25th state decision for optional masks in schools and on busses, the district is having discussions about performances and field trips. Yusi Turell asked if masks can be required for field trips and Dr. Morse replied that on school transportation masks will be optional all the time unless private transportation is used and requires masks.

Kara Sullivan, ORHS teacher and Debate Club advisor announced that a student-led Candidate Forum will take place tomorrow night at 7pm. It will be livestreamed and available live to watch on YouTube. She said students chose 5 topics to address including: DEI, Mental Health, Student Voice, COVID, and Student Activities. Kara credited Sarah Lion for contacting all the candidates and Olivia Gass for her involvement, as well as the entire debate team for setting it up.

Dr. Morse clarified to the listening audience that community members will only be able to stream the event and they will not be able to participate or ask questions since it is a student only exercise.

B. Superintendent's Report

LRPS Report

Dr. Morse thanked Heather Smith, head of the Long-Range Planning Committee, for her hard work. He acknowledged that the data is valued and used.

Heather Smith conducted a slideshow presentation titled Enrollment Projections for ORCSD, 2022-2031. She shared the Long-Range Planning Committee Goals including providing projections to the School Board for each of the next 10 years, try to provide timely projections for consideration during the budgeting process and continually improve and refine the model.

Heather explained the methodology discussing linear regression as a function of historical births and enrollments, historical MW/MOH splits, Grade Progression Ratio (GPR), and high school enrollment with and without tuition students. Her results showed that the ORMS & ORHS predictions are fairly good and consistent while the most discrepancy is seen at the elementary levels. In summary, she stated the totals ORCSD enrollment is predicted to decrease by 130 students in 2029 as compared to current enrollment. Heather offered other factors to consider for future enrollment citing the opening of the new ORMS may result in students choosing to come back from private schools, students that disenrolled during the pandemic may filter back over the next few years and the effect of the voucher bill is unknown.

Board members thanked Heather for her work and asked questions, one thought was to offer tuitioning students to the middle school down the road since HS numbers are predicated to go down.

Dr. Morse realized he had an electronic comment that he read to the audience.

Robin Mower of Durham urged the Board to provide information that is readily available and easily accessible to taxpayers, especially the non-school population. She stressed the importance of making everyone informed prior to voting.

Dr. Morse thanked Robin for her comment and said more information is available tonight at the district website.

MS Opening Day

Dr. Morse applauded Jay Richard and Bill Sullivan for their efforts expended in closing one school and opening another. He recognized Jim Rozycki and his recycling efforts so that materials didn't end up in a landfill. He gave recognition to the Middle School Counselors for their incredible job welcoming students, creating an atmosphere of excitement, and providing fun activities and games for the first day. Dr. Morse thanked the teachers and support staff for their communication, the hours they put in getting ready and for making Monday a special day.

Spring Sports

Andy Lathrop thanked Al & Tom for their incredible support to athletes and sports across the district. He congratulated all winter teams and athletes for not only their great athletic display but also their COVID compliance. Andy announced the Quarter-Finals Hockey Games to take place this weekend. The Oyster River Clipper Cats girls' team who are #1 in state will play on Friday and the ORHS Boys' team who are #2 in the state will play at the UNH Whittemore Center. Andy reviewed the following changes to the Spring Sports Program: masks will be optional for athletes and coaches, athletes will provide their own water and will not share water bottles, 3 ft of social distancing will be practiced, masks will be available on hand, any one sick should stay home, and for fans, masks will be optional and they will be encouraged to practice social distancing.

Denise Day asked about the NHIAA in terms of COVID changes and Andy stated that the NHIAA has left the protocols up to the schools. He said as far as coaches, their practice is to follow the protocol of the school that has the stricter requirements.

Tom Newkirk thanked Andy for running sports through the pandemic and allowing students to have contact through athletics.

Kindergarten Registration Update

David Goldsmith stated that Moharimet had 45 completed Kindergarten packets and Dr. Morse reported that Misty Lowe had 59 at Mastway.

C. Business Administrator

Sue Caswell provided the February Report since she wasn't at the last meeting. She pointed out that the discrepancy in the Teacher line is from encumbered funds for stipends or teacher vacancies from subs. Overall, she feels good about the budget right now.

D. Student Representative Report

Olivia Gass announced that the Debate Club is hosting a Candidate's Forum on March 6th, 2022 at 7pm, the MOR published an article before break and the Boy's and Girl's Quarter Final Hockey Games will take place Friday and Saturday. She also spoke about three upcoming Senior Class fundraisers:

- 1) March 4th Rock Your Socks (for every 3-pack of socks sold, a pair will be donated to the Dover Children's Home)
- 2) March 8th Krispy Kreme doughnut sales
- 3) April 3rd Mattress Fundraiser

E. Finance Committee Report – No report given

F. Other: None

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

ORMS Maternity Leave of Absence from May 2, 2022 to End of Year and from Beginning of Year to November 28, 2022.

ORMS Maternity Leave of Absence from Beginning of Year to November 28, 2022.

Board members did not request a separate discussion of either item.

Michael Williams made a motion to approve both ORMS maternity leaves of Absences, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

VI. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

Board Self-Evaluation

Chair Michael Williams announced the Board would complete its annual self-evaluation as required by policy BA. He explained the process they'd following including time for each board member to comment and time for a roundtable discussion on any matters they'd like to discuss in greater detail. He provided a list of areas to consider in commenting.

Brian Cisneros asked if it could be held separately after tonight's meeting. Dan Klein expressed wanting to go through the evaluation process with the current board members and Denise Day felt the same.

Michael announced a 5-minute recess at 8:59 and student rep Oliva Gass left the meeting for the night. The meeting resumed at 9:05 PM.

The Board conducted their self-evaluation. A brief outline of the discussion is as follows:

Al Howland – Suggested more background on policy progression to stimulate conversation, felt the Board was respectful and lots of ideas were pitched and implemented on, believed goals should be done in the fall with an

opportunity in spring to think about them. For future focus areas he said MS competency grading and foreign language at the elementary schools.

Brian Cisneros – Suggested the Finance Committee meet soon after election since a finance member is leaving and the budget is challenging, felt the negotiations went well and put the district in a good spot, encouraged the Board to be cognitive and careful of what they request of the Administrative Team.

Michael Williams – Felt the big focus at the start of the year was opening school and getting as many kids there as possible. Goal setting can be a bigger focus moving forward, as well as prioritizing some other items like competency-based grading.

Dan Klein – Felt they reestablished clarity in roles and responsibilities and for the future suggested doing things right and not all at the same time or forcing things.

Denise Day – Felt they accomplished a lot this year and communication improved among committees. For the future would like to see continued communication efforts with the community as well as setting board goals earlier.

Tom Newkirk – Felt there was past ambiguity on leadership and roles and that it's been resolved. For future focus he identified communication, specifically fixing the website. He felt Michael did a wonderful job as Chair, the 360° Evaluation of Superintendent is a good tool moving forward and advised the Finance Committee to communicate clearly around budgeting since he felt the logic behind the numbers was often absent or misunderstood until the end.

Yusi Turell – Thanked Michael as Chair. Felt she trusted the committees' work and for negotiations they were able to talk about values such as lifting up lower paid staff and this was brought to fidelity. Thorny issues that remain are figuring out what they can do to take the load off administration, such as using community volunteers and communication, such as rules about speaking with each other individually and with others to communicate how they're moving forward strategically to answer bigger questions.

Michael Williams thanked the Board for their reflection and summed up the following themes: 1) Prioritization and sensitivity to the burden placed on administration, 2) Return to goal setting with a more robust approach, 3) Readdress the Strategic Plan, 4) Make progress on communication (specifically the website).

Approval for first read Policy GEA – Hiring of Coaches

It was explained that Policy GEA – Hiring of Coaches will now take the decision making from the School Board to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will review the recommendations and approve the candidates, afterward these approvals will be forwarded to the School Board for informational purposes. Dan Klein explained that the chief objective behind this change was to streamline the process to no longer wait for the School Board to approve coaches since coaching often begins well before the season starts.

Denise Day clarified and corrected one sentence under section heading Continuation and Dismissal.

Denise Day made a motion to approve Policy GEA – Hiring of Coaches as amended for first read, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion was approved 7-0.

VII. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Vendor Manifest #17 \$1,878,043.54
 Vendor Manifest #18 \$1,381,122.18
 Vendor Manifest #19 \$1,381,122.18
 Payroll Manifest #15 \$1,456,286.74
 Payroll Manifest #16 \$ 999,549.20
 Payroll Manifest #17 \$1,547,719.77

Tom Newkirk reported that the Sabbatical Committee met and there is a feeling that the conditions of a sabbatical may need to be clarified so faculty understand what it is for and how it will be evaluated. There is a worry that the intent of personal betterment is not translating, and faculty may think the expectations or outcomes are more encompassing.

Yusi Turell reported that the DEIJ Committee met Monday. It was facilitated by Shannon Brown, and they discussed real-life situations a teacher might find themselves in. She valued this opportunity to learn from one another.

Brian Cisneros reported that the Construction Committee met regarding taking down the old middle school. The Fire Department recently used the building for trainings and the site is now prohibited. The asbestos still needs to be abated and the power and gas disconnected. He also shared that a charter school was grateful to take thousands of pieces of furniture from the old building.

Michael Williams asked the Board if they should go into non-public session prior to the approval of the Superintendent's contract and the Board agreed it was not necessary.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the Superintendent's salary as written for 5% or \$192,651 for the 2022-23 school year and for 4% or \$200,357 for the 2023-24 school year, 2nd by Tom Newkirk.

Yusi Turell asked about other criteria in the contract.

Brian Cisneros amended his motion to include the Superintendent's request to have up to 30 days of vacation time bought out at the end of the 2023-24 school year at his per diem rate.

The amended motion passed 7-0.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dean Rubine of Lee and the Math Counts Coach of the Middle School stated that seven kids will be going to the state competition at the end of the month. He was happy to share that he taught calculus to the club on the opening day of the new school and shared his model for Archimedes' Quadrature of the Parabola. Dean said he also came out to say goodbye in person to Al and Tom and informed the audience they can access current events, history of the Board and information about the new candidates at his blog ORCSD Clean Slate.

Darren Keller of Lee showed great concern for the enrollment data stating that in 2013 the numbers were used to justify tuition deals and that since then the teacher-student ratio has never changed, although he was under the impression it would. He questioned past decisions that were made based on numbers stating he believed they were wrong before and they will be wrong again since no economic factors are being considered.

IX. CLOSING ACTIONS

- A. Future Meeting Dates:**
- March 16, 2022 Regular Board Meeting – ORHS Library 7:00 PM
 - March 30, 2022 Manifest Review Meeting – SAU 3:30 PM
 - April 6, 2022 Regular Board Meeting – Location to be determined

X. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II (c) **Not Needed**

- Superintendent Evaluation

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

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

Brian Cisneros moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:49pm, 2nd by Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karyn Laird, Records Keeper