

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

March 6, 2024

DRAFT

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

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Maeve Hickock

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Dr. Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Amy Ransom, Gen Brown, Josh Olstad, Rebecca Noe, Bill Sullivan, David Goldsmith, Misty Lowe

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Hawley

GUEST PRESENT: ORHS First Robotics Club

ABSENT: Dan Klein

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

Denise Day added the topic "Candidate Forum" under the Discussion & Action Items and a Non-Public to follow the regular meeting.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the amended agenda, 2nd by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Keith O'Brien of Lee is a taxpayer, parent, ORYA volunteer coach & board member. He stated his opposition to the facilities fees and said hundreds of other parents feel the same way. He reasoned that ORYA is a non-profit, has had a long-term partnership with the school, and rallied the town to show support of the new turf field. He argued that ORYA offers youth sports in the absence of school sports and that fees would be double taxing the parents and taxpayers.

Matt Glode of South Berwick is the director of ORYA. He stated that if the facilities fees are approved it will cause a \$62k increase to the program. To illustrate this point, he told several board members what their increased costs would be according to their number of children and the sports they play. In another example, he calculated an additional \$750 to a family's fees who has multiple children participating in ORYA.

Jill Piparo of Lee thanked board members for serving. She asked the board to not pass the fees onto families and said ORYA is the only chance for every kid to play outside of school, especially since there are cuts for middle school sports.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the February 21, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Misty Lowe of Mast Way announced that the Family Literacy night was very successful, and the 2nd grade movement & music performance was fun and well-enjoyed by families. She thanked Sarah Farwell and Susan Leifer for coordinating with UNH professors John Gianforte and Amy Keesee to provide upcoming solar eclipse education at Mast Way. She also thanked Amy Keesee for writing a grant that will give all students safety glasses for the viewing. On April 3rd from 6-8 pm UNH's DeMeritt Hall will offer an evening of solar eclipse related programming. Classroom and school-wide learning will also take place in the weeks leading up to the celestial event. She let parents know that the writing portion of SAS testing is occurring for 3rd and 4th grade this week,

and there will be no school on March 15th for the Teacher Workshop Day. March is *Read Across America* month and to kick it off they are holding a Scholastic Book Fair. It is a PTO fundraiser that uses book sales to cover the costs of field trips and student events. Students can purchase books during the day and parents can attend during the morning of March 17th from 9-12 pm and the evening of March 18th from 4:30-6:00 pm. During the week of March 18th-22nd the school will participate in activities related to literacy and USA regions for the theme "Reading Takes you Places". Third grade classrooms can look forward to a visit by WMUR's meteorologist Matt Hoenig on March 19th.

David Goldsmith of Moharimet announced that the writing portion of SAS testing is occurring this week for 3rd and 4th graders, which is earlier in the year due to new state writing prompts. They continue to celebrate the theme "Year of Water" with monthly assemblies. March will feature visiting ORMS students who will lead science-based water labs under the guidance of science teacher Michele Martin. Also, professors John Gianforte and Amy Keesee will visit to deliver solar-eclipse presentations. The 4th grade musical *Nemo Jr.* will take place on April 2nd at 6:30 pm in the ORHS auditorium. David thanked Jim Davis and all the parent and community volunteers helping with the maple syrup boiling process. The annual Pancake Breakfast will take place on Saturday, April 13th from 8:00-11:30 am in the Moharimet cafeteria and gym.

Bill Sullivan of ORMS announced that SAS testing has gone very well, and he credited IT with fixing the few technical issues they faced. March is known as the *Month of Music in Schools*, and to celebrate the middle and high school Chamber Orchestra will perform on March 11th at 6 pm in the ORMS Recital Hall. On March 15th the Director of the UNH Observatory Professor John Gianforte will speak to students about the solar eclipse. The VEX Robotics Worlds Championship will take place on May 1st-3rd, and New Hampshire is sending three teams. This year all three teams are represented by ORMS, which is an amazing achievement. Bill recognized the teamwork and excellence of all 16 robotics teams, and credited John Silvero, Jason Duff, and Jade Terrill for their hard work and leadership.

Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced there will be an opening reception for the Scholastic Art participants and award recipients on March 6th at the Durham Public Library. Student artwork will be on display in the library's second floor for the remainder of the month. Rebecca recognized Molly Schmidt, Will Blandini, and Micah Bessette for their February Jazz All-State auditions and acceptance. Haley Kavanagh has been recognized for breaking both the 1500 division and school record. In February, Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Coordinator Sean Peschel gave a presentation to over 60 parents who were interested in learning more about ELO's, Career & Technical Education (CTE), Early College, internships, and other opportunities for students. During the upcoming March 15th Teacher Workshop Day leaders from the following committees will present to faculty: Vision of a Graduate, Reassessment and Late Work, and Academic Integrity. Incoming Barrington students will select courses on March 31st at the Barrington Course Night held at ORHS. PSAT's for sophomores and SAT's for juniors will take place on April 3rd, while freshmen will participate in other activities. Seniors are encouraged to pursue other options, such as completing current coursework, touring campuses, and working on college or work applications. Rebecca acknowledged the counseling team for sitting with each student one-on-one to review their course selections. Resources are being put into place for struggling seniors and overall, they do a phenomenal job helping students choose their classes.

B. Board

Denise Day acknowledged the two board members leaving, Dan Klein and Tom Newkirk. Dan has served for three terms and in those 9 years he has made a big impact on the district. He has shown a commitment to students and has done a remarkable job on district work, including negotiations and policy. Denise thanked Tom for his previous work on the board and for returning to fill this year's vacancy. She recognized his work on the superintendent search and finance committees and for overall being a huge help to the board.

Tom Newkirk stated that at the last meeting he should have acknowledged Giana Gelsey for her involvement with state law proposals and NHSBA resolutions. In terms of future district goals, he encouraged the board to consider universal preschool. Tom thanked Dr. Morse for teaching him how to be a board member and for modeling day to day good judgment.

Denise Day let the board know that she will not be seeking another leadership position. Although it's been a great experience, she said it is good to have new leadership and she encouraged board members to consider the opportunity.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

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

Suzanne Filippone announced that April 15-19th is Earth Week and a variety of activities will occur district-wide, including a Plastic Free Lunch on April 16th. The Sustainability Community Dinner will take place at ORHS on April 11th from 5-6:30 pm followed by the Mast Way performance of *Willy Wonka Jr*. The dinner will include information tables on sustainability and E-waste collection. Suzanne publicly thanked Susan Leifer and the rest of the sustainability leadership team. Summer professional development will be coming out soon, and the REACH and Durham Parks & Rec camp signups will remain open until April 19th. Suzanne thanked Stephanie Kadden for providing a refresher on childhood trauma training to faculty and staff.

ORHS ROBOTICS Presentation

Suzanne introduced the remarkable students of Team Overdrive who attended tonight's meeting to represent the ORHS Robotics First program. Students explained that they compete as one team, but they divide into sub-teams to assign tasks and stay organized, similarly to how a business operates. Robotics is a world-wide STEM program with a collaborative setting. There are two phases to the competition, one of which includes racing against other robots to complete a timed task. Students focus their design on speed, accuracy, and efficiency, as well as programming to drive the robot. This year, Team Overdrive's robot must pick up and toss rings into a container. The other phase of the competition tests the robots' coordination. Last year robots faced a balance challenge and this year they will need to climb. Team Overdrive will compete on March 16 and 17th in Lewiston, Maine and on March 30th at the UNH Whittemore Center alongside 40 teams. Admission is free and spectators can tour pits and be a part of the action. Board member Heather Smith recognized coordinator Mike Hawley for receiving a leadership role nomination, stating it is phenomenal to have been nominated. Mike thanked the board for their support and said a lot of work goes into the endeavor. While students' bear the brunt of the work, there are considerable efforts made by parents and community members to make it all happen. Mike Hawley is retiring from ORHS Robotics after this year, and parties interested in replacing him should contact the ORHS administration or Suzanne Filippone.

Monitoring Student Growth

Suzanne presented the slideshow "Student Data: Monitoring Student Growth" to provide updated scores on Star Data Grades 2-8 and SAT's Grade 11. She stressed that individual scores from Star Assessments are one point of data among several measures, and they are helpful for teachers and families to understand student progress. Star tests are given three times a year and throughout the course of the school year they help inform the MTSS Teams of individual learning and progress. It is a computer-adaptive test that continually adjusts questions based on the child's previous response. While the percentile rank nationally compares students in the same grade, the district sets benchmarks specific to achievement goals.

Math scores grades 2-4 indicate a remarkable 85% proficiency over the last two school years, and reading is right up there with a score of 80% proficiency. Since 2018 the fall scores show a dip at the start of the school year due to summer, but as the year progresses the scores also progress. Suzanne felt the district is doing a fabulous job post-pandemic. The MTSS system is an integral part of raising scores, and the gains are attributed to resources, interventionists, and tutors. Similar to the elementary school, grades 5-8 are showing scores of 79% proficiency in reading and 85% in math.

Since the transitions from K to 1st grade and 4th to 5th were most impacted by the pandemic, Suzanne said the district has been concerned with their monitoring. Graphs for both the Classes of 2032 and 2029 show growth in the at or above proficiency scores and a shrinking of the in the between and below scores. Again, this is due to interventions, MTSS systems and Tier 1 reading support.

At the high school level, the SAT is the NH State Assessment for all juniors. Suzanne went over the recent changes to the test, which include being fully digital, shorter reading passages, easier access to tools, and an overall shorter length. Also, beginning this year, the PSAT is now fully digital for juniors. The SAT test is nationally normed, and district data shows comparisons between ORHS, NH, and the nation. ORHS scores are consistently higher than the state and the nation as far back as 2017. The 2024 SAT's are not until April 3rd, so scores will be reviewed at a later date.

Suzanne reviewed Action Items/Goals for 2023-2024 including a continuation of the Multi-Tiered System of Support, Foundations literacy instruction, updated Eureka Math Programming, progress monitoring tools for math, analyzing MS and HS reading/writing data and more.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Morse provided the latest CDC guidelines for COVID. As of now, individuals no longer have to isolate for five days for a positive test. However, upon returning to school, students and adults need to be 24-hour free of fever and vomiting. Mask wearing is encouraged out of respect for others, but it is not mandated.

Regarding the solar eclipse on April 8th, the field of vision for our area will be 2:30-3:30 pm, and Dr. Morse said it would make sense to make the day a half day. Since our district counts hours verses days, it will have more than enough at the closing of the year. He encouraged the board to consider treating April 8th as a half day to allow families to participate in the historic event. An official recommendation will occur at the next board meeting.

In terms of enrollment, Dr. Morse let the board know there may be a need for two additional teachers at the elementary level. As of today, kindergarten enrollment numbers are 127 and 3rd grade is over-enrolled. He told the board to keep this on their radar, so they are following policy and adhering to enrollment numbers the district believes in.

Heather Smith proposed making the April 8th half day decision tonight. Dr. Morse said that on a normal school day, students would be riding on the bus during the eclipse, and it could be a potential safety issue if they were not wearing protective eyewear.

Heather Smith made a motion to make April 8th a half day in honor of the solar eclipse, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Student Senate Candidate Night – See Discussion & Action Items.

C. Business Administrator – None provided.

D. Student Representative Report {Maeve Hickok}

Maeve Hickok announced that the Girl's and Boy's Hockey teams will play in the finals this weekend. The Girl's Indoor Track team won the D2 State Championships and Girl's Swim were D2 runners up. *Recent Bringing in the Bystander* presentations focused on abuse and healthy boundaries. The Student Senate will host a Candidate Night on March 7th to introduce the individuals running for school board. Students have been working hard to complete projects for the March 26th National History Day.

E. Finance Committee Report – Brian Cisneros reported that the Finance Committee has revised the Facilities Fees document for approval, which will occur later in the meeting. They also agreed on a district-wide system for Capital Improvement Plan scoring prioritization.

F. Other - None provided.

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

- Revision to 02/21/24 Mast Way Maternity Leave of Absence from June 4, 2024, to the End of the Year to now state May 28, 2024, to the End of the School Year and one year Leave of Absence for the 2024-25 school year.
- Moharimet Maternity Leave of Absence from June 3, 2024, to the End of the School Year and for the Beginning of the Year to November 1, 2024.

- List of Policies for Second Read/Adoption – Policy GBEB – Staff Conduct with Students, Policy GCM – Professional Staff Workload and for Deletion Policy GCG - Job Sharing/Part Time/Substitute Professional Staff Employment.

Denise Day made a motion to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda, 2nd by Heather Smith. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

ERate Bid for the 2024-25 School Year

Josh Olstad informed the board that the district uses the federal ERate program to purchase such services as internet, building to building connectivity, internal cabling, firewalls, software subscriptions and more. Through this program the district receives a rebate based on free and reduced lunch numbers. The last time the program was updated was in 2017. This year the ERate was posted nationally for companies to respond, and the district received two bids. One was generic and lacking in requirements, so it was eliminated. The other was Omada, a New Hampshire based vendor, which has been used in the past and has reasonable and fair pricing. Omada's bid was verified by ERate consultants and is the district recommendation.

Giana Gelsey made a motion to approve the ERate Bid for the 2024-25 School Year, 2nd by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Athletics – Girl's Hockey Cooperative – Adding Coe Brown Northwood Academy to ORCSD Cooperative Hockey Program

Dr. Morse, along with Principal Rebecca Noe, requested board permission to add Coe Brown to the ORHS girl's hockey program. They informed the board that a cooperative can include three schools and that the football cooperative with Portsmouth has worked extremely well. Athletic Director Andy Lathrop was not able to speak tonight since he was attending the Boy's semi-finals hockey game. Rebecca passed on his belief that ORHS players will not lose playing time since only a handful of Coe Brown students are anticipated to join. High school hockey numbers are down since students have been electing to play in other club teams, however if numbers go up the decision can be reversed during its yearly renewal.

Giana Gelsey made a motion to approve Athletics – Girl's Hockey Cooperative – Adding Coe Brown Northwood Academy to ORCSD Cooperative Hockey Program, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Candidate Forum

Denise Day suggested adding a sub-committee to moderate the Candidate Forum on an annual basis. Dr. Morse said the Student Senate is enthusiastic to do the work and suggested they meet with them to discuss adding community questions. Dr. Morse credited Giana Gelsey for the year she organized the forum citing how well it was run. Tom Newkirk expressed the need for a central place for the public to review candidate information. He suggested having an additional candidate forum separate from the Student Senate, and to incorporate a public generated questionnaire. It was discussed that the board can oversee a forum but should not run it, a non-school board member moderator should be appointed, and questions should be filtered so they relate directly to the school board position. The board will consider adding a Candidate Forum Sub-Committee to coordinate these details.

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

Brian Cisneros stated that the Finance Committee addressed the issues raised at the last board meeting. He recalled that updating the Facilities Fees was identified as district work back in October, and the board has been actively talking about it since January. The committee, including Business Administrator Amy Ransom, has spent considerable time examining locations and types of facilities, the various groups using them, and identifying how profit and non-profit organizations are charged. He emphasized that fees are not a revenue source but rather a necessity to maintain the facilities, especially from excessive wear and tear. Brian let the public know that they have not been in alignment with neighboring communities for several years and the district has lost money due to outdated fees. He pointed out that the high school turf field will need to be replaced. While the money to maintain schools comes from the taxpayers, it is not realistic to not charge organizations who use the space

outside of the regular school day. Brian said it comes down to either the people using it will pay to offset the additional maintenance expenses or everyone in the district pays.

Denise Day thanked everyone for their emails and said they were all read. She confirmed that if an organization rents a gym for three practices on a Saturday morning, they will be charged the one daily rate, not the rate tripled. Heather Smith expressed feeling that the Finance Fees were not final. She wondered about an hourly rate versus a daily rate for classroom use. For example, Scouts may only use a classroom for one-hour. Denise felt that the fees need to be looked at again and suggested creating real use scenarios in terms of total cost. Brian reminded the board that if custodians have to come in it's an expense, and on the weekends, overtime is charged. Giana Gelsey felt some cases may warrant an hourly fee and agreed the discussion is not done. She felt the language should be clear with no ambiguity. Denise sent Facilities Fees back to the Finance Committee for further review.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 17 Total is \$796,984.61

Vendor Manifest #18 Total is \$1,653,204.68

Heather Smith announced the Sustainability Committee met on Monday March 4th and will meet again on April 1st.

Giana Gelsey announced the DEIJ Committee met before break and finalized the May 2nd program. The event, which promotes a bigger sense of belonging in the community, will include panels, speakers, student input, art, and community outreach.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Heidi Bogle of Durham is a parent, ORYA basketball coach, and flag football coach and coordinator. She heard about the ORYA facility fee increase and cares about the impact. She said sports are a core part of identity, a way to make and connect with friends, and take pride in where you live. Heidi urged board members to consider the community's concerns before they make a decision.

Jody Walker of Madbury is a parent of four children in the district. She told the board that families with multiple children will be impacted by the increased costs. She pointed out that Portsmouth has a Community Campus funded by the town and other towns have resources our district does not have. Jody felt increases to program pricing could lead to financial limitation and an overall effect on student participation. This could have an impact to the competitive edge of the ORMS and ORHS school sports. She urged the board to ensure that costs are affordable for families. She suggested a more collaborative effort among the district, ORYA and Durham Parks & Rec for a sports program that is more inclusive and efficient.

Scott Bogle of Durham said the ORYA sports program promotes teamwork, healthy and physical activity and fun. It has served all three towns for over 50 years. He asked the board to consider charging other programs more, for example Maximum Velocity who has enrollment of kids from outside of our towns, rather than organizations with local participants.

Jill Piparo of Lee remarked on the candidate forum stating the school board could give more direction without hindering the process. She said no board member should comment on any candidate publicly. She urged the board to not double tax people. Regarding Brian's comment about facility users paying verses all residents, she asked him if seniors without kids should have to pay taxes for schools.

David Desmond of Lee is an ORYA treasurer and board member. He is disappointed by the school board's approach to the fee structure. He said ORYA is over 80% of the district's kids in grades K-8 who are playing 15 sports. He said if the board cannot get behind the organization, then they are doing the kids a disservice. He felt strongly that the fields and gyms are part of public infrastructure and should be treated like that.

Matt Glode of South Berwick told the board he respects their decision to keep the discussion open. He is happy to provide any information and encouraged the board members to reach out with any questions.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

A. Future Meeting Dates: March 20, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM– ORMS Recital Hall
April 3, 2024 - Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall

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

Denise Day made a motion to enter into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) to discuss the superintendent's evaluation, 2nd by Heather Smith. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:37 pm, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 6-0.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper