

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

**March 20, 2024**

**DRAFT**

**SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:** Denise Day, Brian Cisneros, Matt Bacon, Heather Smith, Giana Gelsey, Kelly Ickes

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:** Maeve Hickock

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Dr. Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Amy Ransom, Shannon Caron, Rachael Blansett, David Totty, Rebecca Noe

**STAFF PRESENT:** Sarah Gahm

**GUEST PRESENT:**

**ABSENT:**

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

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Superintendent Dr. Morse.**

**ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

1. Review ORCSD Policy BBAB – Selection and Duties of Officers
2. Election of Officers
3. Annual Review of “B” Policies

Dr. Morse asked for nominations for chair. Denise Day nominated Matt Bacon. There were no other nominations.

**Denise Day nominated Matt Bacon to serve as Chairperson, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 5-0-1 with Brian Cisneros abstaining.**

Chair Matt Bacon asked for nominations for vice-chair. Denise Day nominated Heather Smith and Giana Gelsey nominated herself.

**Denise Day nominated Heather Smith to serve as Vice-Chair, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 5-1.**

**Giana Gelsey nominated Giana Gelsey to serve as Vice-Chair, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion failed 0-5-1 with Giana Gelsey abstaining.**

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Matt Bacon added a Non-Public Meeting and moved the “Transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9” presentation from Discussion & Action Items to the Assistant Superintendent Report.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the amended agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Keith O’Brien of Lee is a parent and ORYA board member and volunteer. He thanked the board for their service and time, and for answering emails. He felt the conversation at the last meeting was tense and heated, and that it was unfortunate and unnecessary. He stated that we are all on the same team and have the same goal to provide the most opportunities to the greatest number of OR kids. He said we all have a desire to take care of the fields and facilities, and the school spaces should be viewed as community gathering places. He believes an equitable solution and fee to upkeep them should be figured out, and he told board members he appreciates their efforts to make that happen.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Denise Day made a motion to approve the March 6, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey.**

Giana Gelsey made the following revisions:

All spellings of “Amy Keece” should be changed to “Amy Keesee”.

On page 3 under “ORHS Robotics” change the spelling of “Lewison” to “Lewiston” and “Whitmore” to “Whittemore”. In the last sentence change “...students’ brunt most of the work...” to “...students bear the brunt of the work...”. Add the sentence “Mike Hawley is retiring from ORHS Robotics after this year, and parties interested in replacing him should contact the ORHS administration or Suzanne Filippone.”

**Motion passed with correction 6-0 with the student representative in favor.**

**Denise Day made a motion to approve the March 6, 2024 Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative abstaining.**

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

### **A. District**

Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced that 15 National Honors Society students participated in *Read Across America* today at Mast Way. The FIRST Robotics team competed this past weekend in Lewiston, Maine and they received their best results ever. They were Alliance Captains, their Alliance took 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, and they won the FIRST Sustainability Award. Their next competition is at the UNH Whittemore Center on March 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>. They are currently ranked 56<sup>th</sup> overall, and it is highly likely they will advance to the New England Championship April 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>. On the recent Teacher Workshop (TW) Day faculty reported out from various committees, including Vision of a Graduate and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). For the April 13<sup>th</sup> PSAT/SATs, sophomores and juniors will be testing, freshmen advisories will have Substance Abuse, EPW, and Inclusion activities, and seniors will not have school.

Please note the following dates:

3/21 – Barrington Course Selection Night

3/22 - 3/23 – *Little Women* musical at 7 pm on Friday and 1 pm and 7 pm on Saturday

3/27 – Active Event Drill (during school)

4/5 – Quarter 3 Ends

4/13 – PSAT & SATs (no school for seniors only)

DEIJ Director Rachael Blansett informed the board of several upcoming events for students and staff. She has cross-collaborated with the DEIJ Director from Manchester Community College for *Ignite*, a student empowerment conference. It will be held on 5/17 and they are looking for student presenters. A LGBTQ+ retreat called *Flourish & Thrive* will take place at the Manchester Community College on 5/26 from 9-2 pm. This event is free, and busing is available. Eleven faculty members recently attended the Bias Bootcamp session on the 3/15 TW Day, and she is awaiting new dates for the GLESN Intentional Training Series that was postponed. The DEIJ Committee will meet on 3/25 at 6 pm in the ORHS Library. Planning continues for the spring event and advertising will begin soon. Save the date for May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6 pm in the ORMS Concert Hall and Learning Commons. Rachael will provide an inclusion activity for freshmen advisories on 4/3, and in June she is co-leading the *Equity and Leadership Institute* at Philips Exeter Academy. She will coordinate with a group of teachers to attend June 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>. A summer DEIJ professional development opportunity will include reading and discussing the book *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence*. A date is still being determined.

### **B. Board**

Denise Day thanked the community members and coaches who have emailed or made public comment about having access to sports. Her concern is the use of taxpayer money over something the district doesn’t have control over or accountability for. Since ORYA hasn’t previously been charged for facility use, and coaches are volunteers, she is curious how the programming fees have been distributed. Denise felt this information is something for the board to consider and find out.

Brian Cisneros thanked the Student Senate for running the recent Candidate Forum, which he felt was very well put together and he hopes it continues for the years to come. The moderator did a phenomenal job and great questions were asked.

Matt Bacon echoed his agreement and thanked the Student Senate for their hard work.

Giana Gelsey commended students for stepping up to run the Candidate Forum and gave future suggestions to rotate the questions, provide all the candidates with a microphone, and include scripted questions. She was impressed by the Scholastic student artwork on display at the library and noted that some students included a mental health theme in their artwork. She told voters she appreciated that all the articles were passed, especially the mental health counselor.

Matt reminded the listening audience that the artwork will be on display at the Durham Public Library through the rest of the month.

Matt reviewed the B Policies. Brian requested going over them with their attorney in a Board Workshop to ensure board member compliance.

## **VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

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

Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Filippone announced the Sustainability Committee will meet on 4/1 to finalize the details of the Community Dinner, which will be held on 4/11. Earth Week will be celebrated April 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> and it will include a Plastic-Free Lunch on 4/16. Faculty have received an email regarding Summer Professional Development, and April 19<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for summer programming through REACH and Durham Parks & Rec.

#### DEIJ Student Presentation

Suzanne introduced DEIJ Club president Abby Trojan and member Elise Bacon to present a “Hate Speech & Vandalism” slideshow. Abby and Elise explained that all students attended a large group assembly led by Principal Noe and Assistant Principal Perron in response to the bathroom hate speech and vandalism. A definition of hate speech and the specific people targeted were discussed. Afterward, students attended their advisory to reflect. While some advisories held meaningful conversations, some did not. Presumably, student incompatibility, lack of hate symbol knowledge, relevance, and/or feeling uncomfortable affected the quality of the conversations. The DEIJ club is concerned with making sure every advisory has a positive conversation. In the future they hope all students attend discussions that are meaningful, engaging, and respectful. Possible future steps include peer to peer training, working with Ms. Blansett, and accessing the Anti-Defamation League, which is a “no place for hate” program. In closing, they recognized that hate crimes are a hard and sensitive topic to speak about, that adults and students are not trained, and it is new territory. The goal moving forward is to build the best path to get through it.

Board members had the opportunity to ask questions.

Sabbatical Conclusion Presentation – Jennifer Weeks – Presenter absent and presentation delayed.

Transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9 – Shannon Caron and Sarah Gahm *{Moved from Discussion & Action Items}*

Suzanne introduced Director of Counseling Shannon Caron and ORMS Grade 8 Counselor Sarah Gaham to present the “High School Transition” slideshow. They let the board know that transitioning to the high school is an extensive, multi-year process. It incorporates preparation for academic planning and the social/environmental changes at the high school. In early January students participated in math curriculum and planning for placement, CTE opportunities, grading lessons, counselor presentations, and appointments with counselors. Parents of 8<sup>th</sup> graders also attended a Parent Night. In the spring, students will take placement tests for Pre-Algebra & Algebra 1 and attend high school tours. During the summer students can attend an Intro to High School presentation, and the week before school starts a 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Orientation to begin building a community in

their advisories. After school starts, 9<sup>th</sup> graders participate in a Browne Center fall field to continue investing time and energy into forming bonds. New this year has been a focus on Habits of Learning for 8<sup>th</sup> Graders so they can improve on the skills that will set them up in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Student voice and surveys have been important to refining the transition process. In a grading survey, 85% of students reported that the transition to the grading scale was either somewhat easy or extremely easy, and 93% reported that they now understand the grading system at ORHS. It has become apparent that each year there is a small percentage of students who would benefit from additional preparation and transition opportunities, such as extra tours and adult/peer support.

Board members had the opportunity to ask questions. The following are key topics discussed:

- Supporting the 20% not transitioning well and getting them ready for independence and less structure is a concern. When students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade are not going to class or doing HW how do you get them ready for increased responsibility and not being on a pod?
- In the survey results, identify Barrington vs ORMS students to see if there are differences in their understanding of grading.
- Increase the meetings between middle and high school teachers to discuss practices and understand where students are coming from vs where they are going.
- Student advice and comments are impactful, so publishing student comments and having more face-to-face contact between 8<sup>th</sup> graders and high school students would be beneficial.

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

Dr. Morse welcomed new Durham board member Kelly Ickes. He made a general reminder to use the school email, which is the dedicated platform for all board related correspondence.

For *Read Across America* week, Dr. Morse read to kindergartners and said it was no greater treasure and no greater pleasure.

### Election Results

Dr. Morse congratulated the newly elected board members. Voters selected Michael Williams for moderator, Kelly Ickes for Durham, Brian Cisneros for Lee (re-elected), and Matt Bacon for Madbury (write-in). The operating budget passed with over 74% in favor, and the remaining warrant articles also passed. Dr. Morse said it was an incredibly successful election and he thanked the community for being so supportive of the Oyster River Cooperative School District.

Since Matt Bacon was elected to the Madbury Seat, the board has an At-Large one-year vacancy. Board members discussed the process for filling the position and referenced policy to determine the timeline, interviews, and voting. They'd like to decide by April 10<sup>th</sup>, so the elected member is seated no later than the April 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Candidates will be invited to the April 3<sup>rd</sup> regular meeting to introduce themselves. Depending on who applies and whether they previously participated in the Candidate Forum, the agenda will include an "Interview" item.

Interested candidates should send a letter of intent and resume to Wendy DiFruscio (wdifruscio@orcsd.org) at the Central Office by 3:30 PM March 28.

### Acknowledgement of Retirees

Dr. Morse recognized this year's amazing group of retirees. Combined they represent 378 years of experience and almost 4 centuries of commitment and work on behalf of ORCS D students. The following retirees were acknowledged for their years of service:

Mast Way – Catherine Baker & Barbara Paquette

Moharimet – Lydia Cupp, Ann Gordon, and Margaret Kelley

Middle School – Ruth Gehling, Janet Martel, Patricia McCarthy, and John Silvero

High School – Barbara Milliken and Michael Troy

District-Wide – Timothy Gehling, Robert McCann, and Nancy Clavette

Several board members shared sentiments and personal comments about the retirees. Heather Smith remarked that the district is losing a lot of character, and pointed out that they are also losing Dr. Morse, which brings the total years of experience to the district to 425.

**C. Business Administrator** – None provided.

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

Student Rep. Maeve Hickok announced that spring sports started on Monday. She congratulated the Boy's Hockey Team for winning State Championships and the Girl's Hockey Team for getting Runner-Up. She congratulated the following students for receiving All-State status: Boy's Hockey – Cam Miner and Talon Beyer; Girl's Hockey – Kira Jakobs, Megan Rinko, and Eliza Farwell; Boys' Basketball – Matt Jernigan; Girl's Basketball – Viv O'Quinn; Track – Erin Carty, Mackenzie Cook, Maddy Cook, Haley Benzanson, Haley Kavanagh, and Talia Banafato. The gameshow *Besties, Baes & Beaus* will take place on Wed., March 27<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 pm in the ORHS auditorium. Admission is \$5 at the door.

**E. Finance Committee Report**

Update on Facility Fees – No report, the committee is still working on projects.

**F. Other** – None provided.

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

- Nominate and approve Continuing Contract Professional Staff Members as submitted by the Superintendent.

**Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Denise Day. Motion passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

Transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9 – Shannon Caron and Sara Gahm – *Moved to Assistant Superintendent's Report.*

Giana Gelsey asked if the Competency Based Grading Survey was ready to be posted. Dr. Morse is still reviewing individual comments and does not have an anticipated release date.

Committee Assignment Requests:

- What is the committee and what does it do?

The board will wait until it has its 7<sup>th</sup> member to determine committee assignments. Current members should prepare by making their selection preferences.

**IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES –**

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 18 Total is \$769,546.61

Payroll Manifest 19 & 19.1 Total is \$668,510.87

Vendor Manifest #20 Total is \$274,831.24

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

## **XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** April 3, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
April 17, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
May 1, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – Moharimet Cafeteria

Chair Matt Bacon welcomed and congratulated the newest board member, Kelly Ickes.

## **XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II {If Needed}**

**Matt Bacon made a motion to enter into Non-Public Session at 8:59 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II, (c) 2<sup>nd</sup> by Denise Day. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

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

## **XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Board returned to public session at 9:03 PM.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to seal the minutes of the non-public session until July 1, 2024, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 6-0**

**Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kelly Ickes. 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