

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2024

DRAFT

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

ABSENT: Renee Beauregard-Bennett

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Maeve Hickock (absent)

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Dr. Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Amy Ransom, Catherine Plourde, Rachael Blansett, Rebecca Noe, Gen Brown

STAFF PRESENT: Sean Peschel

GUEST PRESENT: Michaela Downs (ORHS student)

o. MANIFEST REVIEW/APPROVAL AT EACH SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Chair Matt Bacon.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Denise Day made a motion to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 6-0.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS –None provided.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the April 4th, 2024 Regular and Non-Public Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 6-0.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced that during March counselors met one-on-one with each student to review course selections and graduation requirements. She appreciates the time and dedication they give to students. Rebecca gave a big shout out to Shannon Caron and Heather Machanoff for working on the master schedule. FIRST Robotics qualified and competed in the New England Championship for the first time. Sustainability Club students have been working very hard to prepare for Earth Week. They have created the following schedule of days: **BNG Monday** – bring your reusable cup to Breaking New Grounds and receive a 20% discount on coffee; **Trashless Tuesday** – the cafeteria is providing a plastic free lunch; **Walking Wednesday** – carpool, walk or bike to school; **Thrifty Thursday** - 3rd annual clothing drive and swap; **Film Friday** – a showing of *The Monster in Our Closet* during Flex 3. Rebecca recognized the music department and the following students who were selected for All-State in Band, Chorus, and Orchestra: **Band** – Geneva Ruml and Courtney Giroux; **Chorus** – Molly Schmidt, Libby Bessette, Maren O’Keefe, and Micah Bessette; **Orchestra** – Ella Higginson, Peter Wierda, and Erin Turnbull. Next week is April Vacation.

Since Student Representative Maeve Hickock was at a sport’s event, Rebecca shared her update. The Student Athletic Leadership Team (SALT) will be hosting a Super Fan BBQ and Student Senate has prepared activities for Mental Health Week, which will take place after break from May 29th – April 3rd.

DEIJ Director Rachael Blansett announced that at Monday’s LGBTQ+ Parent/Caregiver support space there was a lot of good discussion. She received great feedback from the 8 participants and moving forward she is hoping to hold two meetings a semester. A few students are signed up for the May workshops hosted by Manchester Community College. *Ignite* and *Flourish and Thrive* are free and any student interested in attending can email Rachael at rblansett@orcsd.org. The DEIJ community event “One Community, Many Voices” will be held on May 2nd at 6 pm in the ORMS Recital Hall and Learning Commons. The next DEIJ meeting will be on April 29th at 6 pm in the high school library.

Brian Cisneros publicly thanked Rachael.

B. Board

Giana Gelsey announced that the high school Science Olympiad teams competed on Saturday and 4 out of the 12 teams placed. She gave a shout out to advisors Sara Cathey and Paul Lewis for their involvement.

Heather Smith announced there was a packed house for the recent Wonka Jr. production and she recognized the 3rd and 4th graders of Mast Way for putting on a great performance. She also thanked Gab Anderson for inviting the board back to conclude the sociology discussion. Heather gave kudos to the ORMS band students who put on a fantastic concert.

Matt Bacon echoed his enjoyment of both Wonka Jr and the middle school concert. He complimented the band students on showing great improvement in their music abilities since the beginning of the year.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**A. Assistant Superintendent/Curriculum & Instruction Report(s)**

Suzanne Filippone announced that the Wellness Committee met and discussed hosting a Community Dinner and Wellness Fair for fall of the next school year. They plan to invite various providers and resources to network with families. The next Wellness meeting is on May 30th.

Student Presentation – Future in Childhood Education – Michaela Downs

Suzanne invited sophomore Michaela Downs and CTE Coordinator Sean Peschel to the podium. Sean introduced Michaela Downs, the student spotlight for the “Empowering Positive Pathways” theme.

Michaela presented her slideshow “Future in Childhood Education” to the board. Freshmen year she was placed in Ms. Beranger’s advisory, and it led her to change her study hall to a peer-helper experience in her class. The experience allowed her to discover her interest in becoming a teacher, which is something she had never thought about. Michaela is currently enrolled in the CTE class Foundations of Education, and her time is divided between time in a preschool and in a classroom. One of her projects allowed her to interview teachers to learn about mandatory reporting. In the preschool “Small Wonders” she created several projects, including a charades game to promote reading and comprehension development, an activity focused on motor skills, spatial reasoning, and imagination, as well as an activity based on fine motor skill development. Michaela said she anticipates receiving 16 college credits through Great Bay, which will open early college opportunities. She is part of an organization that supports future educators, and she serves as the vice president of Spaulding Educators. She also has an application in for state officer. Currently Michaela is a volunteer at William Allen Elementary during the day and on Thursday nights she provides childcare for a parent support group. Michaela said her future includes completing college credits in her current program, as well as other college courses that Oyster River offers.

Brian Cisneros applauded Michaela for the challenging pathway she picked and the college courses she is taking while in high school.

Dr. Morse praised Michaela for following her passion and getting credits along the way. He thanked Sean for bringing EOL presentations to the board, which have made the year better.

Sean stated that 156 students applied for CTE’s. Although 14 withdrew and 21 were waitlisted, 121 students are enrolled in CTE courses for next year, which is an increase from the current enrollment of 76. Sean said when he started back in 2017-18 only 20 students were enrolled in CTE’s.

In other updates, Bake Shop students recently attended Popover’s in North Hampton for Hospitality Month. The firsthand experience was so successful that the bakery has offered an open invitation for students to come back each semester. Recently students attended an Exeter Hospital Expo and students from Intro to Culinary and Nutrition will be taking a field trip to Tino’s Kitchen for a farm to table experience. The end of May will feature an aviation field trip and Intro to Engineering Teacher Sara Cathey will be taking her class to view Formula One Hybrid/Electric cars built by the Dartmouth Team. They will also tour the Turbo Cam manufacturing facility.

Suzanne thanked Sean for his dedication and work over the last 7 years. She said the growth of the program is a direct result of the relationships he has built with students and the community.

Student and Teachers Last Day of School

Suzanne reviewed a memo from the district advising the last day of school to be June 14th since the district has enough hours to exceed the requirements set forth by the state without making up the remaining four snow days. Suzanne said the week of June 17th – 21st would include Teacher Workshop (TW) days on Monday and Tuesday, a holiday on Wednesday for Juneteenth, and virtual Teacher Workshop days on Thursday and Friday.

Denise Day voiced her opposition. She asked why we have snow days in the calendar if they are going to be ignored. She suggested Tuesday, June 18th for the last day of school as a compromise.

Brian Cisneros said snow days are included because they are required. He didn't believe much work would be done in the extra two days since learning would be wrapped up and exams completed.

Denise disagreed with this reasoning for eliminating learning time.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve June 14th, 2024 as the Last Day of School, 2nd by Heather Smith.

Chair Matt Bacon asked for board discussion.

Giana Gelsey largely agreed with Denise and felt the effect of the blue/white day rotation could mean less hours for certain classes.

Suzanne and Rebecca weren't certain of the exam schedule but said most likely the classes will have stopped prior to exams. Remaining days would be dedicated to review, assessment, and a make-up day. This timeline could occur prior to June 14th or if the year was extended, exams could fall on Friday and Monday with a make-up day on Tuesday, June 18th.

Heather Smith pointed out that the last day of school is traditionally a half-day and Dr. Morse confirmed this. He said his office has received many phone calls from parents asking about the last day of school. Families are hoping it will be June 14th since they have already made plans for summer camps and travel.

Kelly Ickes felt they should consider families at the elementary level that have registered for camps starting on Monday, June 17th.

Denise disagreed, stating that summer scheduling should not occur without knowing the last day of school. She reiterated her point that if snow days are in the calendar, they should be used.

Suzanne let the board know that if students went Monday and Tuesday of the following week, Wednesday would be a holiday and Thursday and Friday would be TW days for faculty.

Giana suggested moving the entire school year up to avoid running into the Juneteenth holiday. She said an earlier start date would make sure that school always ended prior to the holiday regardless of snow days. She reminded the board that she had raised this concern previously and had suggested they synch up with surrounding districts to create a calendar that begins earlier.

Board members wondered when other schools were ending and whether other districts were adding in snow days, and if so, if it would affect OR students from missing CTE.

Suzanne said other schools are deciding their last day now. Dr. Morse pointed out that other districts have unions and contracts different from ours and because of that schools would end on different days. Dr. Morse and Sean Peschel said that CTE courses typically finish early in preparation for exam week. They did not believe students would miss any class time since they stop attending the centers prior to the last week of school.

Brian requested to move the vote.

Motion passed 4-2 with Denise Day and Giana Gelsey voting no.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Morse announced that the Sustainability Dinner went very well. He thanked the community for taking the time to be present.

Elementary Enrollment Update

Dr. Morse reviewed enrollment numbers at Mast Way and Moharimet. He let the board know that since the upcoming kindergarten class is large, they will need to consider adding a teacher and a decision should be made no later than June. The new classroom would be at Mast Way since they have the spacing capacity and Moharimet does not. Dr. Morse said the district has a balanced approach to placement based on student location and needs. Even though placements are not made until August, he reiterated his recommendation to hire a new kindergarten teacher soon.

Dr. Morse told the board there is an imbalance in 3rd grade. One school is full, and one has wiggle room for adding students. He encouraged the board to consider making a freeze in May for the school with the highest enrollment. That way, any new 3rd grade enrollment would go to the other school.

Aligning Staff to Enrollment at the ORMS

In 5th grade the enrollment starts to go down and over a 4-year period the middle school will see numbers decline by over 100 students. Dr. Morse said they will need to address the situation globally. Next year there will be one less PE teacher at ORMS. For the next meeting Dr. Morse would like an agenda item to discuss adjusting teachers and enrollment.

Regarding new hires in the district, Amy Ransom and Dr. Morse will look at the budget through hiring and savings to calculate retirement savings vs the cost of new hires based on credentials.

Denise Day emphasized to the listening audience that the enrollment trend is not a pure decline. It is decreasing slowly over time with rise and falls, which was predicted.

C. Business Administrator

FY 25 General Assurances

Amy Ransom informed the board that the General Assurances FY 25 must be signed by the superintendent and board chair for the district to receive federal grant money.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to give authority to the board chair to sign the FY25 General Assurances, 2nd by Heather Smith. Motion passed 6-0.

Amy let the board know that a new employee will start on July 1st to fulfill Tim Gehling's position. She is happy to be fully staffed.

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

E. Finance Committee Report – None provided.

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.

- List of Positions for Affirmation of Hiring for the 2024-25 School Year.

Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 6-0.

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

Committee Assignment

Chair Matt Bacon announced the following change to committee assignments: Denise Day and Giana Gelsey switched committees. Denise will represent Equity and Giana will represent Sustainability.

Giana shared her concerns for workload distribution.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to appoint School Board Members to the various Board committees as listed, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 6-0.

Assign two Board members for Manifest Review for the Next Six Months

Denise Day and Heather Smith volunteered to serve for Manifest Review.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to assign selected board members for Manifest Review for the next six months, 2nd by Kelly Ickes. Motion passed 6-0.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

Denise Day thanked Giana for swapping committees with her and suggested she attend the May 29th meeting since she has overseen planning for the upcoming event.

Giana Gelsey proposed writing a letter, with board editing, of the school board's stance on the current review of the 306 regulations to bring to the State Board of Education. She felt that some of the changes are profoundly disturbing, specifically those removing equity, class size, and funding for electives.

Brian Cisneros felt that a letter would not make a bit of difference. He thinks the idea is excellent, but he doesn't think it will be valuable since the Board of Education has already made up their mind.

Giana argued that being on record is important and raising a voice is of pivotal importance. She said other school board reps are speaking up.

Dr. Morse agreed that having a letter on record is a good thing, but also agreed with Brian that most likely nothing would happen as a result. He applauded his colleagues that are in the forefront of this work.

Denise pointed out that the timing of the next board meeting would not allow for editing prior to submitting the letter.

Heather Smith favored drafting a letter and suggested for the future to have more pre-planning so that a few members could review and edit prior to a full board review and the submission date.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

A. Future Meeting Dates: May 1, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – Moharimet Cafeteria
 May 15, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall
 June 5, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall
 June 20, 2024 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall

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

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

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 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