

Oyster River Cooperative School Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

September 20, 2023

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, Catherine Plourde, Amy Ransom, Shannon Caron, Rebecca Noe

STAFF PRESENT: Sean Peschel, Adam Lacasse

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

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

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Heather Smith made a motion to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the September 6th, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Heather Smith.

Tom Newkirk submitted the following revision:

On page 4, change “brining” to “bringing” so it reads “...bringing the total loss...”

Giana Gelsey made the following revision:

On page 5 under “Discussion on School Board Goals” insert “and students” in the second line so it reads, “...Giana Gelsey suggested including a few parents and students as another stakeholder on the committee.”

Denise Day made the following revision:

On page 5 under “Discussion and Action Items” change the NHSBA meeting start time from “11:30 am” to “10:30 am.”

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

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Rebecca Noe of ORHS announced that freshmen will be traveling to the UNH Browne Center on either 9/29 or 10/2 based on their advisory. Students will participate in team building activities as part of the EPW curriculum. Open House will be on 10/5 at 6 pm. Parents will follow their child’s schedule to see classrooms and meet teachers. National Honor Society members will be available to help parents navigate the school. Juniors can sign-up to take the PSATs, which are voluntary and will be held on 10/25. Interested students should reach out to the counseling office for information. Picture retake will be on 10/27.

B. Board

Tom Newkirk made the request to include “Appoint a Survey Committee” as an agenda item for the next board meeting.

Giana Gelsey recently attended a state Board of Education meeting as a public member. She said a vast majority of teachers, school board members, and education groups voiced in opposition to PragerU. Despite repeated testimony stating it was not appropriate for public education, the Board approved PragerU's online financial literacy course. Giana stated this will be an on-going concern since it takes away local school board control and presents a true danger to education.

Dr. Morse agreed the district will have to pay attention to how it reacts to options going in front of students that are not quality programs. He said as a district we have an impact on the 306 revisions. He acknowledged Durham resident and former NH Board of Education member Fred Bramante who has been diligent in listening to teachers and parents across the state. Dr. Morse gave a shout out to Fred for bringing integrity to the process.

Denise Day shared her excitement in receiving a Parent Square account as a community member. She thanked Josh, Gen, and everyone else involved.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

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

Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Filippone announced that the October 6th Teacher Workshop will include faculty trainings in suicide prevention, CPR, and CPI.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Morse shared that he traveled to a superintendent's workshop in San Antonio, and it was one of the best he's attended in his career. A pre-survey of district needs and interests tied superintendents to vendors of relevant product. He appreciated the rich dialogue that was exchanged and the interesting seminars he attended.

Covid Protocols {Catherine Plourde}

Catherine Plourde reviewed Covid protocols, which are similar to those followed in spring. A small change is that in days 6-10 upon returning to school, mask wearing is strongly recommended, not required. The state governor no longer gives public schools the authority to enforce mask wearing or to shut down because of Covid. Dr. Morse explained that a teacher who gets Covid has the option to work their 5 days of isolation remotely if they feel well enough. In this instance, a substitute will be in the classroom to monitor students and the teacher/specialist will provide the content virtually.

Catherine said the district is reporting illnesses to the CDHC for tracking cases of noroviruses. Monitoring of any illness is based on data nurses are required to provide. Normal colds, flu, and strep have resurfaced and it is recommended that everyone follow good hygiene practices. Free Covid tests are still available through the school and many insurance companies are still covering them. Although the district is not tracking COVID numbers, it was noted there have not been large amounts of staff and students out. Principal Noe stated that global absence at the high school is no higher than usual.

Giana Gelsey urged mask wearing while exhibiting cold symptoms to decrease transmission of illness to fellow students and for the good of the public health.

C. Business Administrator – None provided.

D. Student Representative Report

Maeve Hickok shared that the recent career and college planning session was well attended, and she let students know that the writing center offers college essay help. For sports highlights, Girls' volleyball is undefeated. At the Bobcat Invitational Girls' cross country came in first and Boys came in third. This weekend is the Manchester Invitational Cross Country tournament. In other updates, the Student Senate is planning for the mental health panel and *Mr. Bobcat*, an annual pageant show, has been renamed *Bobcat* to be more inclusive.

Dr. Morse applauded the name change.

E. Finance Committee Report – The next meeting is Wed. Sept. 27th at 6 pm.

F. Superintendent Search Committee

Heather Smith reviewed the screening committee structure and asked for approval.

Tom Newkirk moved to approve the structure of the screening committee for the superintendent search as presented, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Heather let the board know that the in-person focus group date previously planned for Oct. 3rd was submitted to the SAU as Oct. 4th. She did not catch the error until after the spaces were reserved and the communication was publicized at all levels. NESDEC was able to accommodate the Oct. 4th date, so the only conflict is the school board meeting that night.

Denise Day did not feel the focus group should conflict with the school board meeting. She presented the following options to the board: an action only meeting from 6-7 pm on Oct. 4th, move the board meeting to Tues., Oct. 3rd, or move forward with the focus group and board meeting occurring at the same time.

Brian Cisneros favored a 6-7 pm meeting on Oct. 4th since he cannot attend on Oct. 3rd.

Amy Ransom stated that Manifest could be moved to 5:30 pm on Oct. 4th or they could meet at the SAU at an earlier time.

Denise Day made a motion to move the October 4th regular school board meeting to a start time of 6 pm as an action only meeting, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

G. Other: None

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

- **Nomination of District Truant Officers for the 223-24 school year.**

Denise Day made a motion to approve the unanimous consent agenda as presented, 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Dr. Morse thanked Durham, Lee, and Madbury for providing an SRO and Truant Officer from each community. He stated what an honor it is to have three officers since some districts struggle to get one.

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

Advanced Programming at the High School {Rebecca N., Shannon C., Sean P. Adam L.}

Dr. Morse introduced high school Counseling Coordinator Shannon Caron, Extended Learning Opportunities Coordinator Sean Peschel, and Business teacher Adam Lacasse stating that because of their hard work, our district gives kids so many choices and pathways. If our district doesn't offer a course, the high school works hard to find it or help students create it.

In the presentation "Expanding & Enhancing the ORHS Student Academic Experience," Shannon Caron explained that the school's "Choice Model" aims to enhance and individualize student education through an elective system, heterogenous rosters, student interests and student voice. She said the elective system is always expanding and designing based on the interests of students, which is determined through surveys. Last year, students were polled for their interest in various social studies topics and this year they will do the same for science. Based on the survey results, Genocide and Religion became new course offerings this year. Dynamic groupings allow students to attend a class based on their interest rather than level. Shannon said this model allows any student who is curious about a topic to take a class to see if they are really interested in it.

Adam Lacasse spoke about the Running Start/Early College/Dual Enrollment options that offer college coursework and credits. He thanked several teachers that have taken the time and energy to become accredited to teach courses that transfer to UNH or provide credits from Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and Great Bay Community College. He said AP courses can be about passing the test for some students, and about demonstrating competencies of standards for others depending on their interest or college path. Adam thanked

the school board for their support of these offerings, as well as the family, friends, and teachers K-12 that all play a role in supporting students.

Shannon described the UNH CATS Program which stands for “Challenging Academically Talented Students” through accelerated opportunities. After students have exhausted all the required classes in the high school, students can attend UNH classes. Currently, the UNH math classes are very popular with many students taking advantage of a tuition-free first course and a reduced rate second course. Shannon said that the high school works in collaboration with the middle school so advanced math students can take high school level math classes. This often leads to students accessing the CATS Program when they attend high school.

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses are recognized through CollegeBoard, and the high school has a long list of AP classes they continue to expand. In fact, AP Precalculus was a new offering this year. If the school doesn’t offer an AP class, students can create one through the Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO), which is led by Sean Peschel. An after-school Mandarin class is a course that is being piloted this year as an ELO.

Sean is also the coordinator for the Career Technical Education (CTE) classes, which includes programs at Dover, Somersworth, and Rochester. Currently, 83 ORHS students are enrolled in CTE classes, and the popularity of this program is growing each year. Unfortunately, this is causing more waitlists than prior years. Some programs are offered at only one location, while others overlap locations. In this instance, there is flexibility for selecting the location that best suits the student. Centers collaborate to put a student in the right environment where they will be most successful.

Dr. Morse commented that a thought for future growth is to offer certain programming at our high school in the form of “Mini CTEs” in the areas we have the ability to teach. This could help with waitlists for popular programs.

Sean spoke more about ELOs, which is when a student expands their learning by creating a course. This option is presented to students when they are seeking a course or topic the school don’t offer. ELOs, however, are not used to replace an existing course. ELOs present a variety of possibilities, including independent coursework, advanced studies, career exploration, internship, and peer instructor opportunities. Students will identify and meet competencies for the course they are creating. A ½ credit course requires 4-5 competencies and a 1 credit course requires 8-10 competencies. For example, after taking Pottery 1 & 2, if a student wants to take Pottery 3 and the school doesn’t offer it, they can create it as an ELO ½ or 1 credit course. It was noted that ELOs are used to meet the elective category of credits, not the required graduation course credits.

Board members thanked the presenters for their presentation and for providing a rich and diverse program of studies to our students. Several board members asked questions about program specifics and the following are key points from the discussion:

- The CATS program is not strictly math or academic, students interested in music courses should contact the UNH music department for audition requirements.
- Post-Covid it was determined that students were missing essential skills, and the sophomore electives were revamped to meet this need. Juniors and seniors get priority, and sophomores are still given choice within certain subjects and can select electives that are not full.
- Freshmen have the least number of options since they receive foundational courses. EPW is strongly recommended for 9th grade, but if a language, music, art or computer class conflicts, EWP can be delayed to 10th grade.
- Credits for Running Start courses are awarded by Great Bay College, and they can transfer to over 175 schools across the state. Dual enrollment classes are awarded credit by SNHU. The CATS program awards UNH credits to students who attend a UNH class after exhausting the class offerings at the high school.

Denise Day stated that she hopes students whose interest and talents lie within language art rather than math also have the opportunity to advance in their coursework.

Dr. Morse stated that what was once a limited choice model is now unlimited possibility and that is because of the support of the community. He gave credit to the history of the district’s staff and thanked the progressive high school administration for allowing OR to be unique in its course offerings. It’s the plethora of choices that attracts families to the district.

List of Policies for First Read.

Denise Day suggested adding the sentence “A full year sabbatical will be at half salary” to the end of the first paragraph in the Sabbatical Leave policy.

Tom Newkirk suggested rewording a question on the Sabbatical Application, so it asks the teacher to explain how the sabbatical enhances their ability to provide student learning. He felt a sabbatical can be classroom focused between a teacher and students and it doesn’t have to focus on enhancing a department or the entire school. Dr. Morse agreed it is worth changing a question to tie a teacher sabbatical to student learning. Suzanne will work with the Sabbatical Committee to reframe the question based on Tom’s suggestion.

Dan Klein noted that on the front page of their policy packet it incorrectly lists the polices as “second read” instead of “first read.”

All board members are invited to submit policy suggestions, considerations, or questions to Dr. Morse or Wendy DiFruscio. Denise let the board know that they don’t have to be on the Policy Committee to review policy and suggest modifications. Policies are reviewed on a chronological basis and currently all policies are being reviewed for pronouns.

Heather Smith pointed out that number 2 on the Spectator and Parent Expectations policy lists spectators and number 5 leaves them out. She was concerned it could be a loophole. Dr. Morse explained that the policy was derived based on what student’s wrote under athletic director Andy Lathrop’s guidance and the committee wanted to honor their wording. After discussion, board members agreed that adding “other spectators” to number 5 would clear up any confusion, and it wouldn’t take away from the students’ voice.

In the Health Education and Exemption From Instruction policy’s third paragraph Giana Gelsey changed “curriculum” to “curricular.” She asked why the phrase “sufficient to meet state requirements for health education” was crossed out and Dr. Morse said it was redundant since any assignment must meet state requirements.

Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve List of Policies for First Read: IHAM – Health Education & Exemption From Instruction, JJIB-A – Spectator & Parent Expectations, GCBD & R – Sabbatical Leave & Proposal, JLCE – Emergency Care and First Aid – Current w/Narcan Language, 2nd by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Procedure KF-R1 Facility Fees.

KF-R1 Facility Fees was approved at the Aug. 16th School Board meeting, confirmed by Matt Bacon.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES –

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 6 Total is \$715,499.43

Payroll Manifest # 6.1 Totals \$715,271.02 & \$228.41

Vendor Manifest # 7 Total is \$1,181,690.53

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

A. Future Meeting Dates: October 4, 2023 - Regular School Board Meeting @ 6:00 PM MS Recital Hall
October 18, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM Mast Way Cafeteria
October 26, 2023 – Board Budget Workshop @ 8:00 AM – Durham Council Office
November 1, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM MS Recital Hall

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

- Superintendent Evaluation

Denise Day made a motion to enter into non-public session at 8:51 pm in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) for the Superintendent’s Evaluation, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed by roll call vote.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 pm, 2nd by Dan Klein Motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper

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