

Oyster River Cooperative School Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

October 18, 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, Rebecca Noe, Misty Lowe

STAFF PRESENT:

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

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

- **NON-MEETING SESSION:** RSA 91-A2 I (a)
 - Strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining for OR Intervention Tutors Association.

The Board resumed their regular meeting at 7:17 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Giana Gelsey made a motion to approve the October 4th, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 6-0-1 with the student representative voting in the affirmative. Brian Cisneros abstained.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Misty Lowe welcomed the Board to Mast Way and spoke about their recent full school assembly honoring all the bus drivers. Through music and song they recognized the importance of school-wide expectations in school and on the bus and acknowledged the bus drivers for all their hard work. Misty also gave kudos to Lisa Huppe and Nancy Clavette in the transportation office.

Rebecca Noe of ORHS congratulated students Owen Nelan, James Li, and Chris Hawley for earning a Letter of Commendation from the National Merit Scholarship Program. In sports, boys received 2nd place overall at the JV States Cross Country Meet and Rebecca recognized both the boys' and girls' athletes for their efforts. The recent Barrington Information Night was well-attended and well received by families. Homecoming is this Friday from 7-11 pm. Although ticket sales have closed during lunch, students can purchase tickets during FLEX or at the door. Sign-ups for the PSATs must be done by this Friday, October 20th in the counseling office and the \$25 fee can be paid by cash or check. The PSATs, which are elective for juniors, will take place on Wednesday, October 23rd during the school day.

Please note the following dates:

11/7 No School (Teacher Workshop Day)

11/10 No School (Veteran's Day)

B. Board

Heather Smith shared that pumpkin carving took place today at Moharimet and she credited the many parent volunteers who came in to help. This activity is part of the school's annual tradition of planting and harvesting pumpkins for a family event called the Pumpkin Stroll. The stroll is being held this Thursday, 10/19 from 5:30-7:30 pm. It includes a pumpkin lit pathway, a bonfire, music, and baked goods for sale by the PTO. More details about the event and parking can be found in the school's email and newsletter.

Giana Gelsey recently attended the ORHS Open House and found the night to be fun and valuable. She liked hearing what teachers had to say and felt it provided an effective snapshot of what is being taught. Giana also attended the NH School Board Association Delegate Assembly and the resolution they had written was passed with amendment. She worked with others to narrow the resolution's language, which had been previously considered too broad, and felt the outcome was a positive one.

The amended resolution reads, "NHSBA opposes any legislation that divests local school boards of original jurisdiction relative to complaints about local curriculum, instruction, and instructional resources such as books, library materials, and other instructional resources. Further, NHSBA opposes any legislation that subjects school district staff to civil lawsuits and sanctions relative to curriculum and instruction."

Giana also said there were some failed resolutions by boards in areas of sustainability and a universal subsidized meal plan for students and she felt they would be important to bring back up for future consideration.

Brian Cisneros recognized the ClipperCats football team for being undefeated so far this year. There are two games remaining before playoffs and he encouraged everyone to attend and support the players.

Denise Day attended the NH School Board Association Delegate Assembly to present on behalf of the board since they were awarded School Board of the Year. She said the presentation was extremely well received by the attendees. She thanked Matt Bacon for the perfectly laid out slideshow and Dr. Morse for co-presenting. She said the most common questions were around our superintendent evaluation process. Dr. Morse said Denise did a fabulous job and agreed that the presentation was very well received.

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

Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Filippone thanked Felicia Sperry, Kim Felch, and David Geschwendt for their district-wide presentation on suicide prevention.

On November 8th the district will hold its second "Plastic Free Lunch," which is a challenging goal that kicked off last April. An email will be sent home with details in the coming weeks. On November 6th the Sustainability Committee is hosting an event that includes a 45-minute version of the film "Kiss the Ground." Locally provided refreshments will be served and a student panel discussing building level sustainability will follow the film. They are tentatively planning on a 6 pm start time with more details to come.

B. Superintendent's Report

Due to the Board's current workload with the superintendent search, Dr. Morse has delayed the Barrington Oyster River joint meeting and he proposed the following alternative dates: 1/8, 1/9, 1/23 and 1/26. He asked board members to check their calendar and contact Wendy so she can find a date that works best.

Update on Aramark Contract

The hiring of a facilities director and custodial supervisor through the Aramark Contract will be terminated at the end of June. The district will conduct the hiring for more control of the process and supervision of staff.

Sustainability Committee/Plastic Bottles

Dr. Morse informed the Board that moving forward any work around plastics will be passed on to the Sustainability Committee. Since the district values sustainability practices and plastic bottles have proven to be costly, he'd like the committee to work on reducing or eliminating plastics in the district.

In terms of the Tutor Contract, Dr. Morse stated that the tutoring work is instrumental to the district. It helps students who struggle but may not qualify for supports. The contract includes a 3-year agreement with professional wage based on the teacher contract. The contract will go before the district as a warrant article in the amount of \$155,000. Highlights from the negotiation include health insurance, sick and personal days, disability, life insurance, and continued education support. Dr. Morse stated it is a well-deserved contract for the staff who tutor our students to help them reach their full potential.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to the approve the Tutor Contract as presented, 2nd by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Dr. Morse asked if the Finance Committee members would be willing to stay after the Budget Workshop to recap, and Heather and Brian agreed.

C. Business Administrator – None provided.

D. Student Representative Report {Maeve Hickok}

Student Representative Maeve Hickok shared that Spirit Week has been a fun way to promote building unity. Advisories have been decorating different parts of the building and students have dressed to theme days, noting that Tuesday's "Anything but a Backpack" had students carrying lobster traps, laundry baskets, and even a kayak. Students attended a Hypnotist event last night and the annual "Bobcat" pageant will take place on Thursday at 7 pm.

On October 23rd the Student Senate will host a Mental Health panel on the theme "Breaking Stigma." It will consist of local experts in mental health as well as counselors and students.

On November 9th the first Coffee House of the year will take place from 6-8 pm.

E. Finance Committee Report – None provided.

F. Superintendent Search Committee

Affirm Screening Committee

Heather Smith announced that in September the Board approved the structure of the Superintendent Search Committee, and since then the various stakeholder groups have chosen representatives. The following individuals have been seated on the Superintendent Screening Committee:

School Board Members – Heather Smith, Brian Cisneros, and Tom Newkirk

District Liaison – Catherine Plourde

SAU Support Staff – Wendy DiFruscio

Building Administrator – Rebecca Noe

SAU Director – Rachael Blansett

Teachers – Carina Dolcino, Kristen Hughs, and Shawn Kelly

Support Staff – Tyler Patria

Student – Elise Bacon

Parents – Debby Curran and Kelly Ickes

Community Member – Todd Selig

Heather said the screening committee work will begin on November 1st.

Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the Screening Committee members as presented, 2nd by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

G. Other: None provided.

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA – None provided.**VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

Dr. Morse let the Board know that the Budget Books will be available on the Friday before the Budget Workshop.

Regarding the Superintendent Search, it was estimated that 50 attendees participated in the in-person and remote focus groups, and approximately 254 surveys were completed. The information gathered will be used to create a general candidate profile. The superintendent application window closes on Friday, October 27th, and work to review the candidates will begin on November 1st.

Draft Budget Goal

Dr. Morse let the Board and listening audience know that every year the district faces budget challenges. This year the biggest challenge is a substantial increase in health insurance with the potential of reaching the increased maximum of 15.1%. The district won't know until April if these anticipated costs will come in lower. An unusually large increase in utilities is another challenge this year. The costs of these two items estimate 1.2 million dollars, which comes in addition to the already anticipated teacher pay raises in the amount of 1 million dollars.

Regarding this next budget, Dr. Morse stated that it is obvious that neither the low end of a 3.3% increase nor the high end of 5.0% increase are realistic goals. He suggested they focus on a budget range of 3.5%-4.2% so the board can meet its needs and student needs. It will be important for the board to identify what they can realistically accomplish within this range. As far as state revenue goes, information won't be available until November 16th.

Denise Day asked for more information about the utilities increase. Dr. Morse explained that the district's contract of \$.6 per kilowatt-hour ends in December and the best price for 2024 is \$.11 per kilowatt-hour, which almost doubles their electric costs. Another factor to consider is that the district doesn't own the solar array, which is currently benefitted by the investors since taxpayers did not purchase it. In 3 years, the district will have ownership of it.

Board members acknowledged that three budget goals would be reasonable and that the 5.0% goal was not necessary. Denise Day proposed a budget range of 3.6%, 4% and 4.32%.

Matt Bacon made a motion to approve the Budget Goals of 3.6%, 4%, and 4.32%, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

ORHS Proposed Graduation Date

Principal Rebecca Noe proposed June 7th (rain date of June 8th) for the 2024 graduation. She said this date aligns with the historical date of graduating on the Friday before the last day of school and since the date will not need to be moved based on snow days, she'd like to set the date early so families can plan in advance.

Heather Smith made a motion to approve June 7th (rain date June 8th) as the 2024 Graduation Date, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Topics the Board would like to cover at the Budget Workshop

Dr. Morse requested that board members send him their budget questions and concerns to better prepare for the upcoming Budget Workshop. Heather Smith asked Dr. Morse to identify costly line items as he has done in the past. They agreed that line items in the excess of \$20,000 or more will be outlined, in addition to the big-ticket items.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest # 8/8.1/8.2 Totals are \$745,962.70/\$336.39/\$1217.56

Vendor Manifest # 9 Total is \$990,893.23

Heather Smith stated that the Sustainability Committee met on October 10th. There is a sustainability club at the high school, middle school and now at Moharimet. Recently, the 5th grade participated in “Trash on the Lawn” to identify sustainable items vs. trash and on Nov. 6th, the film “Kiss the Ground” will be featured at a sustainability event. She let the listening audience know there are more sustainable options to use while hosting events, such as sports banquets and staff brunches, and to contact Child Nutrition Director Meredith St Onge to purchase reusable tablecloths and flatware.

Regarding Policy Committee, Dan Klein let the board members know that if they have any policy suggestions or revisions, they can be forwarded to Dr. Morse.

Giana Gelsey said the DEIJ Committee met, and they are looking into programming for spring, which may include a focus on class. The Wellness Committee met on October 10th and discussed nutrition, compostable products, and mental wellness for teachers. Since the Wellness Committee focuses mainly on nutrition and physical education, it was identified by parents and students that mental health is separate from wellness and that the two don't necessarily fit together. Moving forward she encouraged the Board to consider a separate committee around mental health so there is a bigger membership capacity to support each one.

Tom Newkirk shared that he is glad the issue of single use plastic bottles is going to the sustainability club. He referenced Amy Ransom's estimation that 52,000 plastic bottles are sold in a year and felt it was astounding. This amount of plastic usage is not demonstrating sustainability as a community, and he felt it is an important issue to address.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None provided.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

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

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

NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A2 I (a) {**Moved to beginning of the meeting**}

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Heather Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 pm, 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper