

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

**October 20, 2021**

**DRAFT**

**SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT:** Michael Williams, Denise Day, Brian Cisneros, Tom Newkirk, Dan Klein, Al Howland, Yusi Turell

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:** Oliva Gass

**ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:** Jim Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Sue Caswell, Catherine Plourde, Jay Richard, Rebecca Noe, Andy Lathrop

**STAFF PRESENT:**

**GUEST PRESENT:**

**ABSENT:**

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 7:00 PM by Michael Williams**

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Brian Cisneros moved to approve the agenda as written, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dan Klein. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Susan Richman of Durham stated she is in favor of a DEI coordinator. She spoke personally about racially charged incidents and addressed the need for educators to use contemporary articles to teach about race and diversity.

Julie Kelly of Durham a member of the Integrated Waste Management and member of the Sustainability committee is interested in how the town can bring together Sustainability & DEI initiatives to establish a relationship between the two so they can work in tandem.

Loren Selig of Durham expressed her support of both the district's DEI work and the creation of a coordinator position. She asked the board to consider going back to using last names and titles during school board meetings. She thanked the nurses in the school district for all their hard work.

Paige Bird, a junior of ORHS, stated her support in a trained DEI coordinator to educate our community and to ensure all the crucial work being done is sustainable.

Janet Perkins Howland of Durham spoke in favor of a DEI coordinator and suggested the district use this opportunity to be proactive to social injustice rather than reactive.

Kristen Forselius of Lee expressed her gratitude for the DEI initiatives and gave her full support for a coordinator. She spoke about her involvement with at the Community Church of Durham and the impact DEI has to youth, specifically citing the LGBTQ community. She expressed a need for this work to continue to address painful comments that are stated as "jokes." Kristen thanked the board for all their support.

Dr. Morse told the listening audience that they can submit public comments electronically. He stated that written comments can be up to 250 words and will be read for the allotted 3 minutes given to a speaker.

Dr. Morse read the electronic comment submitted by Jana Petrikova of Lee. She gave her support for the district initiatives and would like to see an actionable plan to address sustainability and climate change. She would also like the board to consider connecting Sustainability with DEI and hire one coordinator for both.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Denise Day moved to approve the October 6, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros.**

Denise Day submitted the following revision:

On page 5 under COVID metric, ophthalmologist should be epidemiologist.

**Vote on motion to approve the October 6, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes with correction passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

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

##### **A. District - None**

##### **B. Board**

Tom Newkirk praised Middle School teacher Chris Hall for his upcoming publication of The Writer's Mindset. He shared, quoting the author, the book serves to address revision as an imbedded component of the writing process, while also emphasizing that revision is a form of flexible thinking. Tom stated the book is wonderfully written and recognized Chris for his achievement.

Teacher Chris Hall shared his sabbatical journey with the board citing teacher research as his spark and fuel for his book. His goals behind writing The Writer's Mindset included improving teacher instruction, battling the revision resistance of students, and changing the mindset of the entire writing process so revision was not viewed as a single step. Chris credits his work done at Oyster River School district as the fuel for the book and thanked the wonderful teachers he worked with. Chris also gave special thanks to the board for their support in his learning and writing endeavor.

Denise Day reported out on the Moharimet Counseling Open House, held virtually, and thanked Carina Dolcino and Brittany Prendergast for their wonderful job explaining the role counselors have in supporting students' well-being and education.

#### **VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

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

Suzanne Filippone addressed the district's strategic plan stating that by 2024 they would have the tools in place to respond to incidents of social injustice. She announced that K-12 counselors will be attending a 4-day professional development workshop focusing on multi-tier systems of intervention. She stated that counselors will leave the conference with usable documents to address restorative practices in K-12 MTSS and DEI work.

##### COVID Metric

Catherine Plourde shared the latest copy of the metrics report provided by Dr. Meghan Harvey citing a substantial transmission rate in our county. She stated the positive percentage rate is up, while the transmission rate stays the same.

##### SASS/Adult COVID Testing

Catherine reported that surveillance testing is proving to be very successful with an increase of new staff and students being tested each week. In addition, the district nurses have conducted 229 symptomatic tests during the school day with results provided within the same or next day. She stated the testing is beneficial in that teachers and students can often return to school sooner and it eliminates co-pay expenses. Catherine described

the on-site testing as very successful, praised the nurses for doing an amazing job and gave credit to UNH for providing the PCR tests and Concord for providing the rapid tests.

Regarding surveillance testing, Dr. Morse stated that in over a 3-week period 1,000 tests have been given and they have identified 0 cases of COVID. He commended the parties involved in surveillance testing and recognized this incredible layer in our mitigation efforts.

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

### DEIJ Presentation

Dr. Morse gave an overview of the history behind the DEIJ work. He stated a mission "to engage every learner" was created 10 years ago through the lens of academics. Over time, a need to support a student's emerging sexual self was recognized by the district, resulting in the creation of the first transgender policy. At this time administrators and educators realized the critical need to step outside the scope of academics to address every learner. Furthermore, the first documented racial incident with a student called for an examination of racial inequality in the school district. There had been no record of racial incidents at school nor in federal government reports, and the data did not make sense to Dr. Morse. He realized that the problems were being addressed as bullying rather than race. Dr. Morse spoke about very engaging staff workshops with Andrew Smith, and his transforming insight that resulted in the district's first version of DEI. There was a tremendous start and many volunteers involved, but after the loss of Andrew, the work was not as readily sustained. Dr. Morse stated that after news of Black killings across the country, a second version of DEI resurrected itself with students, parents, teachers, and administrators stepping forward to speak the raw truths of racial inequality. Dr. Morse stated the last five years have been a journey of board and community members coming together to demonstrate amazing support and work around DEI. Dr. Morse stated that board level resolutions have been achieved and by continuing the work with NH Listens they will focus on future goals around communication and curriculum.

Suzanne Filippone shared with the board that she is seeking approval to hold two community events in the wintertime. She stated DEIJ hopes to elevate the support of the community by having conversations focused on celebration and awareness of their work.

A student, teacher, and community member each shared their personal testimony on why they promote DEIJ work, resources, and the hiring of a coordinator:

Kyra Dulmage, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at ORMS, believed educators should be neutral, providing activities that are age-appropriate and safe. She stated conversations are happening among students, whether they are in the hallway or in the classrooms, and teachers need resources on how to best address the topics being raised and the questions being asked. She emphasized the necessity of a DEI coordinator to educate staff on diversity, tolerance and equality in ways that will empower our students, the future leaders.

Shannon Browne shared her personal story describing a blended family in which her children do not fit the typical narrative. She said it is the responsibility of an educator to stretch the narrative of what is typical for families today. She recalled the incident on the bus that brought about a painful realization that racism is real in our community. Shannon stated that since then, much progress has been made and that the partnership with NH Listens remains critical. She commented the work is not done, it needs to be embedded in the district and not viewed as an add on.

Zoe Selig, a Junior at ORHS, stated the DEIJ work matters so students feel respected. She stated it is important they learn from multiple perspectives but worries that teachers are not fully trained to do so. She believed that teaching a socially broadened curriculum will lead students to be anti-racist, more empathetic, and more inclusive. Zoe stated that recently she has witnessed more diverse viewpoints being taught and that the student body is very receptive. She emphasized a need for teachers to have a knowledgeable DEIJ leader to guide them in teaching equity, inclusion, and justice.

Dr. Morse concluded by stating that the goal tonight was to provide a holistic presentation for justifying a need for a coordinator with the approaching budget season. He thanked the board for the opportunity to present.

Denise Day thanked the presenters stating it has been an honor to serve on the DEIJ committee. She appreciated the authentic voices and experiences that were courageously shared. Denise stated she has learned a lot and looks forward to continuing the work.

Al Howland spoke about his involvement with DEIJ as a board member for the past 5-6 years. He acknowledged the various perspectives shared by the speakers and the clear message that the DEIJ work is not yet fully imbedded in the curriculum. He stated he hears the testimony that teachers are not trained, but he also stated that board members are not trained either. He commented they are being asked to create policies, so the work is sustainable, but with no training it feels detached for the school board to look through the lens of DEIJ. He felt workshops need to be held with the board and there needs to be support for members to attend.

Michael Williams asked Suzanne Filippone to discuss the goals of the two DEIJ events that she proposed.

Suzanne and Yusi Turell described a table talk style event with facilitated conversation. Yusi stated that she believes a "talking to" model with an audience is not the best fit at first and that smaller table talks will lead to more respectful dialogue. While the events still need to be planned, the first event could generate thoughtful questions and the second event could involve the district's answers. NH Listens has agreed to support both events. Suzanne stated the goal is not to reach agreement necessarily, but rather to reach understanding.

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the two DEIJ events as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Denise Day. The motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

Michael Williams appreciated the DEIJ background that was delivered and the voices that were shared.

#### Winter Sports Guidelines

Andy Lathrop commended the athletes, coaches, and parents involved in fall sports as they entered their last week. He stated there have been zero sports shutdowns due to COVID and attributed it to our district's mitigation layers in place. Regarding winter sports, Andy stated the guidelines have changed since last year. He informed spectators that they will follow the mask protocols specific to the venue's rules they are attending. Athletes will wear masks on the sidelines and will remove them when actively in play. Andy asked the board for permission to limit fans from both the home and away schools to maintain a 3-foot distance in the stands. He stated that spectators would be made aware well in advance and both teams would get equal amounts of tickets for each player to invite supporters to attend. Andy would like additional tickets to be available for the student body on home games.

Dr. Morse asked if we limited attendance to ticket holders last year.

Andy responded that last winter only parents were allowed to attend. He stated they recently implemented a ticket scenario for volleyball, and it worked well. They gave each player of the home and opposing teams 4 tickets and an additional 30 tickets was given to our student body since it was a home game.

Michael Williams asked if all the venues confirmed access for winter sports.

Andy replied that all were not confirmed entirely, such as the UNH pool, but they are having conversations and are planning as though venues will proceed with participation.

Dan Klein asked about the effect of not having a Middle School gym on winter sports.

Andy stated they are working on carving out time for middle schoolers to practice at the high school gym heavily in November before the high school teams start.

Dan Klein commented that last year they only played schools with similar COVID guidelines and asked about this year's level of participation.

Andy stated that they are proceeding with a Regular Division II schedule. The district has an agreement with athletic directors from the division schools to follow our mask protocol at home games. Our district will wear masks at away games; however, the home team will follow their school's protocol which may include not wearing masks.

Dan Klein stated he would like the sports families to know that our district can control protocols for our students, but while visiting away team facilities we will not have this authority on their students.

Andy commented there would be no NHIA penalty for a team in the case of a COVID shutdown and they cannot reschedule the game. He stated it would be considered a “no play” instead of a forfeit.

Tom Newkirk shared his appreciation for Andy’s hard work and how well he handles the circumstances given.

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to adopt winter sport guidelines as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

#### Communication Survey by UNH

Dr. Morse stated he met with the attorney and received approval. He commented they are in a good place to release the survey.

#### **C. Business Administrator:**

##### Sustainability Report

Sue Caldwell introduced the Sustainability Report led by Meg Maloney a UNH intern and the Sustainability Director who is currently in Dayton, Ohio. Due to technical difficulties, the Sustainability Report was concluded after the Student Representative Report.

#### **D. Student Representative Report**

Olivia Gass thanked Athletic Director Andy Lathrop for all his hard work with fall sports and looks forward to the next season of winter sports. She shared her excitement for the high school’s upcoming Club Fair that will be held during advisory and FLEX to describe all the clubs being offered to each grade. Olivia stated the high school is currently holding student government elections. She stated at the beginning of the week they watched candidate videos, which were done really well, and casted their votes. Olivia also shared that the first inductions for NHS since COVID took place and thanked the students who came to speak.

Denise Day asked how she felt about this year’s schedule.

Olivia stated she liked the flow and it is better having white and blue days alternate rather than be on specific days of the week. She stated the schedule on bobcat days seemed like a lot since they meet with every class, which has been hard to get used to. Also, Olivia stated the change of not having a FLEX period every day has been a challenge.

##### Sustainability Report (continued)

A video created by Sustainability Specialist Meg Maloney educated the audience on what is included in the sustainability plan. First, she discussed the overarching sustainable goals: 1) a strategic way to limit greenhouse gas emissions, 2) save the district money by using alternative forms of energy, 3) educate on climate change and how to live a sustainable life, and 4) complement larger global plans. Then, she explained the three main parts to a plan, which include sustainability strategies, sustainability curriculum, and stakeholder plan & engagement. In her process of making the plan, Meg met with an internal stakeholder team and went over ten top plans from other districts to create the best plan for Oyster River. She combined local stakeholder feedback with the United Nations’ 17 sustainability goals as her framework for “UNH Sustainability Fellowship.” Meg stated her report outlines what has been done, where we need to go, the benefits, and what we will track along the way. She spoke about clear focus areas that contain an objective, goal, and strategies to be implemented. In all, there are a total of 75 strategies for the district to fulfill. Meg provided examples of how social justice and sustainability are interwoven, emphasizing the need to recognize problems and develop a shift in mindset which is discussed in her curriculum development chapter. Meg stated the next steps for sustainability in our district are to hear more voices and opinions to make any edits to the plan and gain stakeholders, plan for a new coordinator since Maggie will be stepping down in December, work on an internal action plan, and provide annual reporting to the board. Meg concluded her video thanking everyone who was involved in the process.

Meg Maloney took comments and answered questions in a live virtual session.

Denise Day shared she was so impressed with Meg's thorough report.

Yusi Turell asked how other districts implemented their plans.

Meg replied that one group hired a coordinator to focus primarily on schedule and budget, one hired a teacher coordinator, and another hired an educator to focus on curriculum and a director to focus on facilities.

Michael asked if there is one goal or theme the district should focus on.

Meg felt the district could easily obtain an ability to be carbon neutral by choosing a non-renewable supplier. She stated it would have a big impact on the waste audit and compliment the community and staff efforts.

### **E. Finance Committee Report**

Sue Caswell reported that on October 28<sup>th</sup> there will be a ½ day budget workshop and that the central office is consolidating the administrator's executive summaries and putting together the budget books.

Al Howland encouraged administrators to be prepared to present any new positions they are asking for and to come prepared with questions to ask.

Dr. Morse told the board that administrator budget books would be available for pick up at the end of the workday on Monday October 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **F. Other:**

Dan Klein shared that he attended the School Board Association Assembly and that Keene's proposal, that had been supported by our district, passed overwhelmingly. He also stated that 15 delegates supported removing our gun policy.

## **VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA**

**Michael Williams moved to approve BEDH & R & R1 for 2<sup>nd</sup> read/adoption, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Denise Day. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

## **VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS**

### Substitute Pay Proposal

Dr. Morse shared that our substitute pay was on the low side in comparison to neighboring districts and in response the negotiation's team derived two new models for substitute pay. For substitutes committed to a single day's work the hourly rate will be \$15 per hour totaling \$105 per day. This amount was previously \$80 per day. For substitutes committed to working multi-days, the hourly rate will be \$20 per day totaling \$120 per day. This amount was previously \$99 per day. Dr. Morse stated the new models with hourly rates provides more flexibility. He also stated the rates for long-term subs required no change.

Tom Newkirk stated he supports the increase in substitute pay proposed in the two models. He wondered if the amounts should be raised annually, like the rest of the district contracts, to stay fair and to avoid lull periods followed by big jumps in pay.

**Tom Newkirk moved to approve the substitute pay proposal, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

### 360° Process for Superintendent Evaluation

Michael Williams deferred the conversation to the next meeting. He stated that any comments regarding the 360° process should be sent to Dr. Morse.

MOA with OR Teacher's Guild

Dr. Morse relayed his conversations with the teacher's Guild citing the following: A focus on health and safety of staff and students, the teacher's maintenance of electronic lessons readily available to absent students, and the nursing offices offering of in-house testing. Dr. Morse stressed they will keep a watchful eye on increasing demands of the nurse's workload. He stated the impact of COVID continues to affect the substitute pool and the need for teachers to provide coverage for absences. Since the opening of school, teachers have voluntarily given up their planning period to provide coverage and as a token of thank you, the Teacher's Guild has agreed to \$25 compensation.

Dr. Morse expressed how impressed he was working with the Teacher's Guild, and he shared his sincere gratitude for the resolutions they achieved together.

Tom Newkirk wondered if the DHHS guidelines and the school's COVID plan ever conflicted what would happen.

Dr. Morse replied that "our plan", meaning Oyster River School District, is one that is comprehensive and specialized to our environment. In his opinion it is better than what is being put out by larger organizations where there may be room for misinterpretation. He stated that if the two ever diverged then conversations will take place, however, our plan is stronger and clearer because it is focused on our district needs rather than the nation.

**Denise Day moved to approve the 2021-22 MOA with OR Teacher's Guild, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros.**

Michael Williams commented on the work that was done well on both sides resulting in a pleasant agreement.

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

List of Policies for First Read:

Denise Day stated the three policies for first read emphasizing that the school board safety policy is new but reflects current practice of what they are already doing.

Michael Williams asked why the title changed for EEAEA when the document talked about a lot more than drug and alcohol testing. He stated the change of title is misleading and changes the scope of the policy narrowly.

Yusi Turell suggested using the title School Bus Driver Requirements.

Michael Williams expressed concern for the delay in background checks and wondered if it affected the district's ability to hire when the state is behind.

Dr. Morse replied that the longevity of new hires is contingent upon the background check, but if positions were not filled immediately there would be many vacancies across the district. Dr. Morse assured the board that he meets with every new hire who holds a record to ensure the safety of students and staff.

**Denise Day made a motion to approve GBCD – Background Investigation & Criminal History Record Check, EEAEA – School Bus Driver Requirements, and EEAE – School Bus Safety Program for first read, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES**

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest #8 Total is \$1,003,214.26

Vendor Manifest #9 Total is \$167,892.20

Denise Day announced that all policies will be reviewed and changed to gender neutral pronouns. She stated these changes will take place as they move through each policy, which will subsequently take a while. Dr. Morse confirmed these changes will not require board approval.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Dr. Morse read a card from Bridget Bleckmann whose family relocated to the district. Bridget shared her reasons for choosing Oyster River citing its academic ranking, athletic opportunities, and collegiate and engaging activities. She stated the family looks forward to their participation, to learning more about the PTA, and becoming involved in the school.

**XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

- A. Future Meeting Dates:** October 28, 2021 ½ Day Budget Workshop – Durham TC Chambers  
November 3, 2021 Regular Meeting – ORHS Library  
November 17, 2021 Regular Meeting – ORHS Library

**XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION:** RSA 91-A:3 II {Not Needed}

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

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

**Brian Cisneros moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:10pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Karyn Laird  
Records Keeper