

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

**November 1, 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, David Goldsmith, Misty Lowe, Bill Sullivan, Rebecca Noe

**STAFF PRESENT:** Meredith St Onge, Josh Olstad, Andrea von Oeyen, Wendy DiFruscio

**GUEST PRESENT:**

**ABSENT:**

**I. CALLED TO ORDER at 6:00 PM by Chair Denise Day.**

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

**Denise Day made a motion to enter Non-Public Session at 6:03 PM under RSA 91-A:3 II (c), 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.**

The Board resumed their regular meeting at 6:17 pm.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Tom Newkirk made a motion to approve the agenda as written, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Giana Gelsey. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS** – None provided.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Heather Smith made a motion to approve the October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon.**

**Heather submitted the following revisions:**

On page 3, under the first motion, add “Tom” so it reads “...Heather, Tom and Brian agreed...”

On page 5, in the last sentence of the first paragraph strike “reusable tableware.”

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

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

~~**A. District**~~

~~**B. Board**~~

**VI. DISTRICT REPORTS**

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

**B. Superintendent’s Report** – See Discussion & Action Items.

~~**C. Business Administrator**~~

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

Maeve Hickok provided the following sports updates: The Girls XC Team won State Championships and they will be competing on Saturday 11/4 at the Meet of Champions. Girls Volleyball will also play Saturday in a State Championship game verses Coe Brown at Pinkerton. The ClipperCats football team is 9-0, the first time they’ve

been undefeated since 1971, and they will play in a quarter finals game on Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>. The Cheer team will compete in Championships on Sunday 11/5 and Unified Soccer has a semi-final match tomorrow, Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The Senior Class is hosting a fundraiser at Breaking New Grounds on Friday, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>. 10% of all profits will go to them.

The fall play, *Arsenic & Old Lace*, will be held on Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>.

Maeve shared Principal Noe's dates and reminders:

11/3 End of Quarter 1

11/7 Teacher Workshop Day/No School

11/8 Sports Information Night 6pm (Auditorium)

11/9 Coffee House 6-8 pm (MPR)

11/10 Veteran's Day/No School

11/13 ASVAB Testing & Report Cards

#### ~~E. Finance Committee Report~~

#### ~~F. Superintendent Search Committee~~

#### ~~G. Other:~~

### VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

- Motion to affirm the hiring of the OR District Nurse.

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to approve the Unanimous Consent Agenda as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Matt Bacon. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

### VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

#### FY25 Budget

Dr. Morse summarized the drivers for the FY25 budget, which include the expected costs in staff pay increases and the last bond payment for ORMS, as well as the unexpected costs of a 15.1% increase in health insurance and a \$210k increase in utilities. Other budget drivers include tentative plans for a Mast Way cafeteria expansion and the Tutor Collective Bargaining Agreement which will go before voters as a warrant article. The overall budget increase is projected at a little more than 6.5%.

Dr. Morse also presented options for saving money and decreasing the financial impact on voters. For example, offering retirement incentives, cutting \$305k from the proposed budget, utilizing trust funds, and reallocating funds in the current budget. Stalling projects, such as air conditioner handlers in the high school MPR and expanding Mast Way's cafeteria could also be considered.

Dr. Morse stated that the budget presented adheres to the Board's Strategic Plan, and he encouraged members to ask themselves what services they want and need for children. Supporting mental health has been a topic of importance. A licensed drug and alcohol position was added last year and has been effective in meeting student needs. Adding a mental health behavior specialist is another position that has been discussed, especially since therapists have long wait lists. Although it is a valuable role, it is a pricey consideration for the board.

Also, under consideration to the budget is adding a second full time teacher to the music program. Dr. Morse invited Strings Teacher Andrea von Oeyen, who has been teaching for 10 years, to provide an overview of the program and how it currently operates. Andrea informed the board that she is running the middle and high school orchestra with the help of an assistant teacher. Although the assistant is there most days, their hours are limited, as well as their responsibilities. Andrea receives vital day to day help in the classroom by the assistant, largely with tuning and repairing instruments, which are timely tasks that must be done individually with students. She said it helps immensely in cutting down the amount of class time spent preparing instruments so she can teach. However, the assistant's role does not include planning, grading, and communicating to parents,

which Andrea does single-handedly. She spoke about limitations she faces as the only strings teacher, such as providing differentiation at the high school. While the middle school program is tailored to meet students where they are by grade level, the high school class encompasses grades 9-12. Andrea said it makes choosing music more challenging, especially in finding ways for the varying skill levels to play together. She pointed out that many students began playing a stringed instrument in lessons outside of school, so there is a wide range in abilities.

Denise Day asked Andrea what would be ideal, and her thoughts on a part-time second teacher or replacing the assistant with a full-time teacher. Andrea said in an ideal world the program would have two full-time teachers and an assistant. She said getting rid of the assistant complicates the matter of the everyday instrument help that is vital, while on the other hand, her workload wouldn't be alleviated unless there is a second full-time teacher. She wasn't sure a part-time teacher position would be attractive to candidates and felt it may be difficult to fill. Ultimately, she said if a second teacher was hired, a global discussion would need to occur. Her tentative idea is a new teacher that focused on the younger grades, while she bridged the gap between middle and high school and focused on upper grades. Overall, the numbers for the music program are higher at the middle school, but the department is trying to expand chorus at the high school. She said in hiring a second teacher, it would be important to consider all the music needs and to look at the program globally. Currently, Andrea has a complex workload preparing for and assessing 220 strings students, 160 of which are at the middle school and 60 at the high school.

Dr. Morse invited Child Nutrition Director Meredith St Onge to speak to the board on behalf of costs related to food services. Meredith has been working many roles due to staffing shortages, and Dr. Morse credited her hard work. Meredith spoke about the dramatic increase in food costs due to supply chain issues, which came about during the pandemic and have continued. She said many products are either unavailable, low in quantity, or are considerably more expensive. Overall, participation in meals have increased in both students and staff since the start of the year. The only revenue being generated is sales from a la carte and paid meals. Since the district does not refuse any child food, there is approximately a negative \$800 for unpaid accounts. Meredith is honoring the district's previous agreement to purchase fresh food locally. Apples, grass fed beef, and bulk milk for the middle and high school are still supplied by local farmers, and they are looking to see what else can be purchased locally, such as eggs, cheeses, and fish.

Principals Misty Lowe and David Goldsmith of the elementary schools asked the board to consider hiring a paraeducator that would be exclusive to students with behavior health services. This paraeducator would be managed by counseling to provide students with check in and check out services, regulation work, and breaks to minimize daily stress. It is one of the last pieces of MTSS-B that has been identified but hasn't been implemented.

Principal Rebecca Noe of ORHS confirmed with Dr. Morse there is a need to add a second person to work in the counseling office as the registrar. A school year position would be approximately \$68k while year-round would be \$81k. Currently, one person acts as counseling department secretary and registrar, but over the years the office has seen many pieces of the job grow. The amount of state regulated paperwork has increased, and the student body is up 200 students, therefore a year-round registrar position would be favorable.

Denise Day confirmed with Dr. Morse that a budget with a 4% increase could be possible if they tapped into existing revenues.

Dr. Morse asked board members to send any additional budget questions to him or Wendy.

## ~~IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES~~

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

## **XI. CLOSING ACTIONS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:** November 15, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall  
December 6, 2023 - Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORHS Library  
December 20, 2023 – Regular School Board Meeting @ 7:00 PM – ORMS Recital Hall

**XII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION:** RSA 91-A:3 II (b) – Postponed until next meeting.

- The hiring of any person as a public employee – New Superintendent Salary Range

~~NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A21 {If Needed}~~

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

**Brian Cisneros made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Heather Smith. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Karyn Laird, Records Keeper