

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

December 1, 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, Misty Lowe, David Goldsmith

STAFF PRESENT:

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

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

Ia. PUBLIC HEARING: Policy BHE – School Board Use of Emails

Denise Day moved to open the public hearing at 7:00 PM, 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Denise Day stated that the proposed changes will bring the policy into compliance with the Right to Know Law.

Tom Newkirk moved to close the public hearing at 7:01 PM, 2nd by Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Brian Cisneros moved to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Zoe Selig of Durham, an ORHS junior and member of the DEIJ committee, gave her full support for a DEIJ coordinator. She would like teachers to be supported so they are not worried about going about teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion in a wrong way. She felt it was important that students become well rounded individuals that are educated on social expectations to form relationships with all people. Zoe believed a coordinator could help achieve this.

Lauren Selig of Durham announced it was the week of Hanukah. She shared that it is a very different holiday than Christmas stating it is a story about fighting for justice and standing up against oppression. She said there is misinformation shared about holidays and felt there should be more efficient and effective ways to understand other groups of people.

Bruce Fenton of Durham told the board he didn't feel they would listen to any science or statistics he could offer about mask wearing. He raised the topic of diversity and asked the board to acknowledge that he has different political opinions. He told the board it is not their role or right to tell him how to make health decisions for himself or his son. He stated that in his opinion the mask is a political symbol.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Denise Day moved to approve the November 17, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Tom Newkirk.

Denise Day submitted the following revisions:

On page 2, change the publication to Mouth of the River. On page 4 under Unanimous Consent, it should read that Denise Day abstained and Dan Klein voted in favor of the motion.

Rebecca Noe submitted the following revision:

On page 4 in the sentence “Rebecca Noe clarified that swimming had started...” it should read “alpine skiing would start the 22nd, and all other sports officially start the 29th.”

Michael Williams submitted the following revisions:

At the bottom of page 3, insert “Motion passed” before the report of the vote.

On page 4, the motion should include the word “Sports” in between “Winter” and “Coach”.

On page 4, the motions for ORESPA and ORAA contracts should read “to approve ORESPA contract for 4 years as presented” and “to approve ORAA contract for 4 years as presented”.

On top of page 5 the motion should read “Denise Day moved to schedule a public hearing on December 1, 2021 regarding changes to policy BHE, School Board Use of Email”.

On page 5 add “Brian Cisneros arrived” before section VI. District Reports.

Yusi Turell had the following correction:

On page 2 the spelling should be “Jon” instead of “John”.

Brian Cisneros submitted the following revision:

On page 6 the sentence change “Brian Cisneros” to “Al Howland” so it reads “Al Howland stated the most conservative route would be no budget shifts, no yellow sheets, and waiting until spring”.

Vote on motion to approve the November 17, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes with corrections passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

David Goldsmith of Moharimet provided a Year of the Artist update stating in September a school-wide bulletin board led to a conversation about how expansive art is, in October a community art project led to all students creating feathers for a collaborative art display and in November they explored how art can make change in the world. Students will participate in a December bookmaking project to learn about different styles of books and in the spring, they will use them to communicate about their learning. David credited the teachers for providing enriching art connections throughout the students’ entire day.

Misty Lowe of Mast Way publicly thanked parent Mr. Hale for his interest in a school playground gaga pit which led to a creation of one, in which Jim Rozycki went above and beyond to provide. She spoke about “We Deliver” a new school-wide mail system created to enhance communication and connection across the building. Misty thanked speech pathologist Amy Leone for her hard work in creating the school-wide directory and Amy’s father for his craftsmanship in building a traditional style mailbox. She also shared that 4th grade students are giving speeches and holding elections to be a part of the Student Leadership group, a means for students to make a positive impact on the school.

Jay Richard of ORMS announced that the middle school has also started the tradition of Bobcat of the Week that began at the high school this year. Staff members Caroline Hird, Laurene Ramsdell and Joe Dunn received recognition and a premium parking spot at the school, and three ORMS students were highlighted. Regarding the school playground fundraiser, Jay told the listening audience that any donation is appreciated. While plaques are \$250, a smaller donation in any amount is welcomed. The countdown continues with 89 days left until the new ORMS opens!

Rebecca Noe of ORHS shared that the Student Athletic Leadership Team is working hard on planning Winterfest, which will be another opportunity for students to come together as a community. It will be held outside similar to the Pep Rally Day held at the beginning of the year, and will provide a variety of fun activities for students to participate in.

B. Board

Tom Newkirk congratulated Catherine Plourde for being selected as a finalist for Special Education Administrator of the Year. He praised her tremendous support and extraordinary efforts to the school district. Tom announced he is not running for the At-Large seat in March. He has enjoyed serving on the board for the past 10 years and is happy to talk to anyone interested in the position.

Al Howland stated his 1-year fill-in on the board will be over in March and the open seat will return to a 3-year experience.

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

Suzanne Filippone announced that a presentation on Student Growth will take place at the next school board meeting as the first of a 3-part series. A focus will be made on academics and social emotional learning.

COVID Metric

Catherine Plourde shared metrics for the past two weeks citing an increase in cases from last week to this week. Strafford county is in substantial level with 897.2 new cases per 100,000 and a percent positive rate of 11.5%. Data for transmission rate is currently not reliable. She stated that staffing capacity continues to be inefficient since the sub pool has not increased and there have been only a few new hires of paraeducators.

Catherine explained that contact tracing proves to be inefficient because of the time it is taking. She said parents are delaying the reporting of symptoms and asked for parents to please inform the school as soon as a child has symptoms. While the Fox Run Mall testing site is a good option, it is currently experiencing a post-holiday influx and delays in results. She stressed to parents if they can't get a test or are waiting too long for results, they should call the school nurses to schedule a test. Catherine stated the goal is to keep as many students in school as possible and waiting at home for four or more days to receive test results is not good.

SASS/Adult COVID Testing

Catherine stated the SASS testing returned this week and there are plenty of PCR tests available from UNH. The state already ran out of home test kits they were providing, so she said to reach out to the district for support.

Denise Day asked if the vaccine clinic had happened to which Catherine responded yes, on November 20th which 331 vaccinations were given to ages 5-11. She thanked Chris Lemeline from McGregor for helping to streamline the event. It was fast, there was no waiting, and it was a great success. The second shot will be given on December 11th and if you missed the first clinic you can still attend to get the first shot. If you are in quarantine but want the shot, a team will go out to your car to administer it. Catherine said it will be interesting to see the impact of fully vaccinated students after the winter break.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Morse commended Catherine and Suzanne for their steadfast work and communication while he was away.

Dr. Morse explained factors for whether a classroom, team or section of the school goes remote, primarily looking at whether there is staff healthy enough to educate. He stated there is no magic number or standard metric since every situation presents unique circumstances at the building levels. Dr. Morse said he must analyze situations as they occur, look at staffing capacity, and how significant the number is of students out. He said to expect an uptick in positive cases over the next few weeks coming out of Thanksgiving and again after winter break. Currently there are more positive cases and more quarantines since the beginning of school and COVID. He attributes it to people wanting to be social and expects this increase to be a national, state, and local trend. Dr. Morse reiterated it is not an easy decision to decide when to go remote and he plans to use every resource available to keep schools open and if schools should go remote, he will inform the board and the community. Regarding current students being home sick or quarantining, the schools will provide work based on the building, such as providing schoolwork at the elementary level or accessing Schoology for middle and high

school. While some services may be provided remotely, there will not be live education. Dr. Morse thanked all the district's nurses, especially Cheryl and Mike at the middle school.

The board raised questions about vaccinations, quarantining and the protocol for number of days out for positive Covid tests and exposure. Regarding quarantining, Catherine stated that fully vaccinated students do not have to quarantine after exposure. Unvaccinated students with no symptoms may quarantine for up to 20 days, and unvaccinated who develop symptoms, who then become positive then quarantine for 10 days. All positive COVID cases will quarantine for 10 days.

Brian Cisneros asked if there is any violation from the DOE if a whole team is sent home. Dr. Morse stated if the vast majority is still in school, they are meeting the state standard. If the any school does go remote, there is a schedule already prepared to pivot and get the necessary school hours in.

C. Business Administrator: Sue Caswell – No report given

D. Student Representative Report

Olivia Gass shared that a lot is being planned by the various groups and committees at the high school. Currently the Student Senate is holding a food drive and the Student Athletic Leadership Team is working on the details of the winter event.

E. Finance Committee Report – No report given

F. Other: None

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA – None

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

2022-2023 School Calendar Draft for First Review

Dr. Morse explained in the draft of the School District Calendar the February break is not at the end of the month because we are aligning with school vocational centers where 70 of our students attend. He will be meeting with administrators for further discussion and will be advocating to go back to the traditional week taken off. However, he is very uncomfortable with holding a break when CTE students would have to miss 5 days of their program. Dr. Morse stated it is still a work in progress.

Denise Day referenced a letter written by Zoe Selig that offered different tips for being sensitive to other holidays. She wondered about the district recognizing a holiday from each major religion of Jewish, Islam and Hindu. It was concluded that a list of other holidays and remembrances will be acknowledged on the back of the calendar, and Dr. Morse will distribute Zoe's letter to the board and the community.

Finalize 2022-23 School Year Budget

Michael Williams referred to handouts created by Al Howland and himself outlining the final budget options. Al explained on his handout that all four options come in at the targeted 4.1% cap. Dr. Morse noted that \$50,000 came out of the contracted services account since those contracted services will not be needed the following year.

Brian Cisneros asked if contracted services will be going up in the next few years to which Catherine responded that Strafford Learning Center won't go up more than 3% and it meets most of the district's needs.

Brian asked in terms of DEI work if there was a correlation with services. Catherine replied that DEI work compliments special education, specifically regarding social/emotional learning. There is an overlap between disability and mental health and understanding the diversity of our student population. DEI work is important to help foster connections and relationships for students who feel they don't identify with others due to their academic and/or social disabilities.

Brian Cisneros commented that a writing interventionist will provide measurable results of student progress but wondered if DEI work can provide similar measurable results. Catherine responded yes, it is measurable, and they have baseline data for both mental health issues and students facing issues with inclusiveness, diversity, and equity.

Tom Newkirk stated he is in support for a DEIJ coordinator/director but felt the authority the person would have is murky. He felt the range of skill set being asked for is diverse and it is not clear what the primary need for the position is nor what they want the person to do.

Dan Klein stated he shares Brian's concerns and appreciated Tom's clarity on the need to better define the position. He stated that the DEIJ work is going on, teachers are taking it on voluntarily in the morning and after school, and he worries about the burden and strain it has on them. Dan felt that if we didn't address this need in a formal way than the taxing on teachers will increase.

Denise Day stated her appreciation for Michael's work on the budget table and felt that a 50% DEIJ coordinator with delayed hiring until mid-year was a good compromise. It would allow time to define parts and talk to faculty and parents while still acknowledging the importance of the issue.

Michael Williams agreed with Tom and Dan about the job description not being done. He felt more work is needed on the job description at the board level.

Yusi Turell questioned the value of hiring a DEIJ coordinator mid-year stating there is a clear need to put one in place immediately. She felt they could tighten the job description but not delay the process.

Al Howland pointed out that the community forum hasn't happened yet to provide the information about where we are and where we are going.

Brian Cisneros thanked Michael for the options, and stated he'd like to take less money out of the emergency funding, and for that reason is happy with plan B. He stated he can't support a DEIJ coordinator this year, especially considering inflation.

Dr. Morse stated a DEIJ position is desperately needed pointing out that people are tirelessly working to support the district's strategic plan. Since DEIJ work is in the strategic plan, he felt there needs to be someone to guide it. He stressed that teachers need support and help since they are volunteering their time before and after school for this cause.

Michael Williams explained the positions proposed and why the district would or would not benefit from them.

Denise Day moved to approve option D as presented, 2nd by Al Howland.

Olivia Gass asked if the relationship with NH Listens would continue for the first 6 months prior to the DEIJ coordinator beginning, to which Dr. Morse confirmed yes.

Vote on motion to approve option D as presented failed, 3-4 with Dan Klein, Yusi Turell, Michael Williams and Brian Cisneros voting in the negative.

Michael Williams announced a 5-minute recess at 9:05 PM at which time student representative Olivia Gass left for the evening. The meeting resumed at 9:10 PM.

The board returned and continued discussion of the DEIJ coordinator position. Dan Klein stated that this has been one of the toughest budgets, and to not start a DEIJ coordinator at the beginning of the year troubles him. He believed the next progression in the support of teachers is to not only invest in the work they've done, but also alleviate the burden of the work.

Michael Williams shared that the eloquent and passionate testimony from students affects his stance.

Tom clarified with Sue Caswell that the projected \$900,000 spent from emergency funds is more likely to be \$400,000-500,000.

Yusi Turell moved to approve option C as presented, 2nd by Dan Klein. Motion passed 6-1 with Brian Cisneros voting in the negative. [Budget Options - MW](#) [Budget Options - AH](#)

Michael Williams moved to approve the 2022-23 School Year Budget as presented, 2nd by Al Howland. Motion passed 7-0.

FY23 Default Budget

Sue Caswell stated the budget primarily included changes due to retirement and salary changes that occur yearly.

Brian moved to approve the FY23 Default Budget, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 7-0.

Draft 2022 Budget Warrant Articles

There were no questions or comments.

Denise Day moved to approve the 2022 Warrant Articles as presented 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 7-0.

List of Policies for First Read: BHE – School Board Use of Emails, IB Academic Freedom, GBI Staff Participation in Political Activities

Denise Day made a motion to approve the list of policies for first read: BHE – School Board Use of Emails, IB – Academic Freedom, GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities for first read, 2nd by Tom Newkirk.

Discussion:

Yusi Turell questioned the history of Policy IB, to which Denise Day stated there is no significant change rather it is to bring it up to date.

Vote on motion to approve the List of Policies for first read: BHE – School Board Use of Emails, IB – Academic Freedom, GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities passed with a vote of 7-0.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest #11 Total is \$1,467,282.12

Vendor Manifest #12 Total is \$2,310,999.24

Al Howland shared that the Sustainability Committee met, and it was Maggie Morrison’s last meeting. They discussed the operational and curricular sides moving forward. He commended Maggie and the stakeholders of the community for doing a great job.

Dr. Morse asked for board approval to compose a well-deserved appreciation letter to Maggie.

Al Howland moved to approve an appreciation letter to Maggie Morrison, 2nd by Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0.

Denise Day announced the Policy Committee will meet next week and will be looking at discipline policies that have significant law changes.

Al Howland stated the Negotiation Committee met yesterday and will meet next week.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

- A. Future Meeting Dates:**
- December 15, 2021 Regular Board Meeting – ORHS Library 7:00 PM
 - December 29, 2021 Manifest – SAU Conference Room 3:30 PM
 - January 5, 2022 Regular Board Meeting – ORHS Library 7:00 PM

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

NON-MEETING SESSION: RSA 91-A2 I (a) {Not Needed}

- Strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Tom Newkirk moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:36 pm, 2nd Brian Cisneros. Motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karyn Laird, Records Keeper