

Oyster River Cooperative School Board

Regular Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2021

DRAFT

SCHOOL BOARD PRESENT: Michael Williams, Denise Day, Tom Newkirk, Al Howland, Yusi Turell, Dan Klein, Brian Cisneros (arrived at 7:36)

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Oliva Gass

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT: Jim Morse, Suzanne Filippone, Sue Caswell, Catherine Plourde, Jay Richard, Rebecca Noe, David Goldsmith

STAFF PRESENT:

GUEST PRESENT:

ABSENT:

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

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Denise Day moved to approve the agenda as written, 2nd by Dan Klein.

There will not be a non-meeting session at the end of tonight's meeting.

Vote on motion to approve the agenda as written passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bruce Fenton of Durham read a quote from the book Animal Farm to address his point on mask wearing. He referred to a political meeting where some democratic representatives were not wearing masks, including Jean Shaheen. He stated that at a UNH football game in Durham, Brian Cisneros did not have on a mask, and at the SAU there was an employee seen not wearing a mask. Bruce asked the chair if he removed his Covid mask, would he have him removed by force.

Daren Keller of Lee gave personal testimony of his own experiences with cultural immersion citing family immigration, traveling to other countries and his Spanish teacher who taught not only the language, but culture. He favored similar meaningful immersion over a DEIJ coordinator. Daren urged the board to reconsider the position and invest in world language rather than a path of public opinion.

Allison Jumper of Durham felt a DEIJ coordinator would be a valuable addition but asked the board to not leave out people with disabilities in the role. She requested that the board not take \$50,000 from special education to fund the position. She worried about a result in fewer services for students and the long-term impact this could have. She urged the board to fund the DEIJ position but not in a way that takes funding from special education.

Kristen Forselius of Lee expressed her full support of a DEIJ coordinator. She does work around equity issues and believed there needs to be a professional who can help the district teachers navigate laws, especially the new HB2 Law. Kristen hopes the position is full time and passes.

Anita Mathur of Durham emailed her public comment applauding the school board for voting to hire a full time DEIJ Director. It is her hope that part of the role will be to help facilitate the implementation of a World Language program at the elementary schools.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tom Newkirk moved to approve the December 1, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Denise Day.

Denise Day submitted the following revision:

On page 1 under Ia. Public Hearing change “compliance” to “alignment”.

Vote on motion to approve the December 1, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes with correction passed 6-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

A. District

Jay Richard of ORMS stated that they are actively working to schedule in March the new ORMS open houses for the parents and community. He’s also working to set up final opportunities for staff and previous alumni to walk the halls of old ORMS prior to it being torn down. The countdown to the opening of the new middle school is 75 calendar days and 35 school days.

Rebecca Noe of ORHS spoke about her recent participation in a sociology class. She said students and educational leadership held discussions about educational policies and had a question-and-answer session with interesting dialogue. Teachers are turning in proposals for different class offerings and the district wide Coding & Cocoa event was a huge success. She credited the technology team in the district for their great job. Rebecca was extremely impressed with the musicians in Monday night’s virtual music concert. She was pleasantly surprised to hear singing in addition to the instruments and commended the entire music department for their wonderful performance.

B. Board

Denise Day shared that she witnessed the second half of the music concert and really enjoyed listening to the orchestra. She looks forward to when concerts will be in-person again, perhaps in the new auditorium.

Tom Newkirk shared with the board the proposal for the new HB1255 Law and his feeling that it is incredibly unclear of what it prohibits. He said it is something they will want to keep their eye on.

Michael Williams thanked the parents and teachers for keeping the school district open in the peak of the pandemic. He stated that all the efforts being made are really remarkable and deserves recognition.

VI. DISTRICT REPORTS

A. Superintendent’s Report

Dr. Morse announced that Catherine Plourde was selected as Special Education Director for the state. He remarked that Catherine has done a tremendous amount of work training staff on legal paperwork, resulting in zero-point loss for the past four years upon annual state review. Dr. Morse said it says a lot when a leader is nominated by their own staff and pointed out that Catherine received powerful testimony of support from parents. He acknowledged that excellent teachers deserve excellent leadership and stated Catherine is excellent leadership.

On Saturday the district held its clinic for the 2nd vaccinations for students aged 5-11. Dr. Morse stated that nearly 900 students showed up and over 4,000 immunizations, which included booster shots, were administered. He credited Catherine Plourde, Suzanne Filippone, and Todd Allen for all their hard work in organizing these clinics. Catherine Plourde said they are waiting on state orders and the appropriate paperwork for providing boosters to 16, 17, and 18-year-olds. She gave tons of kudos to Chris Lemelin who agreed to have them available before break. The clinic will be run by McGregor EMS and there will be digital consent, so parents don’t have to be present. She will be providing the details to the community as soon as they are available.

COVID Metric

Regarding metrics, Catherine stated they look horrible, and that we’re in the substantial range. The metrics indicate that ICU capacity is stretched, the staffing capacity is insufficient at all buildings due to quarantining and a small sub pool, and the transmission rate, although not always reliable, is up. Catherine thanked the parents for being patient and flexible and thanked the nurses as they continue to work tirelessly caring for students & staff.

Catherine stressed that Dr. Megan Harvey recommends vaccinations, mask wearing and rapid testing before entering large groups.

SASS/Adult COVID Testing

The SASS program continues to offer rapid and PCR tests as needed. Catherine stated that across the district they are testing students and staff quite a bit to keep them in school.

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

Assessing and Monitoring Student Growth – Part 1 of 3

Suzanne Filippone presented on the first of a three-part series, focusing tonight on assessing and monitoring student growth. She explained that the 2020-2021 instructional time was impacted by COVID and remote learning. She emphasized that standardized testing was not “standard” during this time. Also, a result of the pandemic came an increased focus on the “whole child” and a stronger need for social/emotional learning. She reminded everyone that we are still teaching during a pandemic.

To assess student academics, quantitative data was collected by means of STAR, PSAT and other internal assessments. Suzanne said that while tests only tell us a part of student learning and knowledge, it does provide points of data to guide classroom learning and to identify supports and interventions. The focus of STAR assessment is to understand where students are to dive deeper into data to pull out information by grade. The MTSS team uses the scores to identify students and provide more testing, such as Acadience and ALEKS, to help identify specific areas of struggle. Suzanne stated that it is also important to gather classroom teacher perspectives to provide the appropriate interventions.

(7:36 Brian Cisneros arrived)

Suzanne said that in looking at the scores for 2020-2021, one focus will be on 2nd grade where more students need interventions in reading and math. Second graders were in kindergarten when they left school due to the pandemic, which accounts for lower scores. At the high school level, juniors voluntarily participated in the PSAT and despite remote learning, scores still came in above the NH average. Dr. Morse contributed this to a very robust remote learning model that sacrificed electives to focus on core curriculum. He also said it speaks to the interventions of staff and special educators. Dr. Morse thanked the school board for their support for extra tutors, specifically at the middle school where students that didn’t qualify for extra services will receive support.

A question was raised about pulling data out and challenging students who score at the top. Suzanne explained that the focus has been on SEL and remediation, but they do pull data out and challenge kids at the top, primarily in the classroom with teachers increasing the level of the reading and providing more challenging assignments.

Suzanne explained that while one goal is looking at individual student’s growth rate over time, another focus is looking into the “whole” student to identify other factors that could be prohibiting student performance, such as attendance and social/emotional issues. Part 2 of this series will be held in January and will focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

Community Survey

Michael Williams stated that the community survey results have been received, which includes 44 pages of comments. He’s asked Dr. Andy Smith to join in the January 5th meeting to be a part of the discussion.

C. Business Administrator

Sue Caswell updated the board with the current financial report and stated she has no concerns.

Michael Williams clarified that the \$673,466 HealthTrust figure is part of the district operating expense, which accounts for its large number.

D. Student Representative Report

Olivia Gass shared that she and the rest of the National Honor Society got the opportunity to help during the Coding & Cocoa event and that it went very well. She took pictures and has an album to share if anyone is interested. On Wednesday, there was another round of Barrington tours and Olivia said she spoke about why she chose ORHS and why she loves going to school there. This time Barrington students had the option of attending the event remotely. Olivia reported that the Student Athletic Leadership Team and Senior Class Government are helping to create the upcoming Winterfest activities. The school will participate in a Bobcat schedule the first half of the day and in the second half they will have events to choose from, such as cookie decorating, watching a volleyball game, and snowshoeing if there is snow. Students will be encouraged to dress up next week for the following themes: Bundle Up Day on Monday, Winter Hat and Sweater Day on Tuesday, and Pajama Day on Wednesday. Olivia spoke about the sociology class discussions that occurred with administration and some school board members, and thanked Mr. McGrath for setting it up and providing the opportunity. She especially enjoyed the small group Q&A session. Auditions were recently held for the spring musical, *Charlie Brown*, and a variety of food-drives & fund-raisers are being sponsored by School Senate, NHS, and a school-wide door decorating contest.

A. Finance Committee Report - No report given

B. Other: None

VII. UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGENDA

ORMS Maternity Leave of Absence for March 2022 through the end of the 2021 – 22 school year

ORMS Activity Stipend Nomination for Jazz Band

ORHS Winter Coach Nomination for Diving

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

Dan Klein asked Michael Williams to pull out the coaching nomination from the unanimous consent agenda.

Michael Williams made a motion to approve the unanimous consent items of ORMS Maternity Leave of Absence for March 2022 through the end of the 2021-22 school year, ORMS Jazz Band Activity Stipend Nomination and the list of policies for second read/adoption: BHE – School Board Use of Emails, IB – Academic Freedom, GBI – Staff Participation in Political Activities, 2nd by Denise Day. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

ORHS Winter Coach Nomination for Diving

Denise Day made a motion to approve ORHS Winter Coach Nomination for Diving, 2nd by Tom Newkirk. Motion passed 5-0-2 with the student representative voting in the affirmative and Michael Williams and Dan Klein abstaining.

VIII. DISCUSSION & ACTION ITEMS

2022-2023 School Calendar Draft for Second Review

In reviewing the draft of the 2022-2023 school calendar, Dr. Morse stated the goal is not to interrupt the work of students. Holding February break on the 27th-3rd, after Maine and Massachusetts, would directly impact 70+/- upcoming CTE students participating in Rochester, Somersworth, or Dover programs. Dr. Morse shared that he faces a lot of community unrest and did reach out to the other schools to reconsider, but they won't. Rochester said they have a lot of Maine workers and therefore will follow that break. For the opening of the school year, administrators are advocating for 3 workshop days and students would start after Labor Day. Dr. Morse stated that he still working on the calendar but wanted the board to be updated and given the opportunity to provide feedback.

Denise Day shared that her suggestion for celebrating a Hindu, Islam and Jewish holiday will be a good idea for the DEIJ coordinator to look into for another year.

Yusi Turell felt that although the community would like us to align with the rest of New Hampshire and not Maine, we can't change those district's decisions and those 70 students come first. She wondered if we should get a sense of what those particular families would want. Yusi suggested asking the current CTE families for their thoughts on February break.

The board discussed how many days the CTE program would be missed throughout the year by the proposed draft. A suggestion for those students to still attend on some vacation or teacher workshop days was made to reduce the number of days they'd miss. Some board members felt this would be more of a paper solution than a real solution since teenagers would want to be with their peers on vacation days.

Dr. Morse concluded that two times out of every ten years our district is in non-alignment with New Hampshire's February break. He stated the next calendar after 2022-2023 would be back in alignment. As far as the calendar, Mr. Morse stressed the February break is the controversy, and he has received a lot of verbal and email complaints over not wanting to align vacation with Maine and Massachusetts. He's going to continue using December as a processing time and make a decision in January.

ORPaSS Negotiated Agreement

Dr. Morse stated that ORPaSS has not had the opportunity to ratify and will be brought back to the board in January.

IX. SCHOOL BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Manifest Committee met and completed the following manifests.

Payroll Manifest #12 Total is \$984,928.33

Vendor Manifest #13 Total is \$250,903.34

Denise Day stated that the Policy Committee met and looked at JICD & R- Student Discipline and Due Process and JIC – Student Conduct. The committee provided suggestions for Suzanne Filippone and will review her revisions in January before bringing them to the board.

Tom Newkirk announced the Sabbatical Committee met last week and established the timeline. There is currently one applicant and he let the faculty know that there is still time to apply before the deadline, which is after break.

Yusi Turell provided dates set by the DEIJ Committee for two virtual events to be held in January:

January 13 - 6:00-7:30pm – Round-table small group facilitated discussions on Microsoft Teams.

January 22 - 6:00-7:30pm - Faculty & administration presenting on how DEIJ topics may be presented in schools.

X. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Daren Keller of Lee stated that taxpayers should be concerned about the board's lack of scope and job description for a DEIJ coordinator. He does not believe that racism is a systematic issue in our district and favors a Drug and Alcohol Counselor instead. Daren stated he'd be voting "no" on the budget and urged the board to reverse course on the DEIJ position.

Jon Bromley, ORHS teacher and CTE Coordinator, told the board he's very grateful to them for keeping schools open and for their thoughtful work around DEIJ and sustainability. He is also grateful to Maggie Morrison and is sad to see her go. As for the district calendar, he is a parent, community member and parent of a CTE student and is interested to see what other parents think about February break. While 11 days lost to the program would be significant, he said it's also about the health and well-being of kids and families.

XI. CLOSING ACTIONS

- A. Future Meeting Dates:** December 29, 2021 Manifest – SAU Conference Room 3:30 PM
January 5, 2022 Regular Board Meeting – ORHS Library 7:00 PM
January 11, 2022 Public Budget Hearing – ORHS Auditorium

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:

Brian Cisneros moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:41: pm, 2nd Yusi Turell. Motion passed 7-0 with the student representative voting in the affirmative.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karyn Laird, Records Keeper