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Trustee News

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THETFORD ACADEMY

A Sense of Community - A Source of Challenge

Trustee News - September 2008

In the past year, Thetford Academy's trustees have put a tremendous amount of energy into two major initiatives.

First, the **building project** has moved through the regulatory and planning process at a deliberate pace this past spring and summer. We are now looking forward to completing the very lengthy Act 250 process and beginning construction.

Second, trustees have made strides in **re-orienting the board** in pursuit of greater efficiency and focused action.

While both initiatives remain works in progress, in the coming year we will turn our attention to two additional critical opportunities: **the creation of a new strategic plan** for the Academy and **preparation for the transition to a new Head of School**.

Every three years the Academy undertakes a detailed strategic planning process. That process will commence with this new school year and is targeted for completion next June. Led by a task force of trustees, the process incorporates contributions from faculty members, students, the school administration, and residents of our partner towns.

The current strategic plan lays out six broad goals for the Academy:

- Revise curriculum and instruction to ensure that all students actively demonstrate essential skills and knowledge in order to earn their diploma
- Foster curricular and co-curricular enrichment and innovation
- Support continuous improvement for faculty as individual learners and a collaborative group
- Promote continuous improvement in the leadership of Thetford Academy
- Engage in continuous improvement of campus facilities
- Strengthen TA's fiscal position

The degree to which these goals have been achieved, or remain outstanding in the coming year, will shape the new strategic plan.

Closely linked to that process will be the trustees' preparation for a transition in our Head of School leadership.

Five years ago, Martha committed to guiding Thetford Academy through the 2009-10 school year. Benefitting from two decades of

transformative leadership under Martha, the Academy's transition to a new Head of School will be the biggest change for TA in a generation.



The prospect of such change presents a challenge and an opportunity for the Head Transition Task Force. This group of trustees will consider both the

form and function of the leadership we will need to address the opportunities before the Academy in the coming decade.

Preparing for the Head of School transition will go beyond the crafting of a job description. It will involve an examination of the Academy's administrative structure, its evolving strategic plan and aspirations for the coming decade, and the creation of a focused strategy for finding the best candidate to serve those ends.

Thetford Academy's trustees remain committed to continuous improvement in all its forms at TA – organizational leadership, student performance, teaching quality, and facilities – all with the goal of best preparing our students for the next steps in their lives.

Tim Briglin, President
Thetford Academy Board of Trustees



BUILDING

BLOCKS

Building Project Update

The Thetford Academy Board of Trustees reports the following progress in moving forward with the building project to improve science, physical education, arts, and food service facilities for our students:



The **Thetford Development Review Board (DRB)** carefully reviewed TA's building project. After much hard work and valuable input from several Thetford citizens and Academy neighbors, the DRB voted unanimously on June 3 to issue a conditional use permit for the project. The DRB considered and ruled on many aspects of the project including several exterior design elements, work hours, landscaping, and ways to mitigate construction noise. The Trustees sincerely appreciate the DRB's hard work and the opportunity to work with our neighbors on some challenging issues. The result of this input and work has been an improved building project.



Following interviews with three different managers, **Trumbull-Nelson Construction Company, Inc.** was chosen as the construction manager for the project. They have prepared invitation-to-bid documents. Bids from subcontractors should be received by early October. Decisions will be made on subcontractors by the end of October. At that point we will have a firm cost for the project.



The **Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA)** approved TA's bond financing proposal. VEDA will be working with our lender Mascoma Savings Bank on our loan with the benefit of providing Thetford Academy more attractive financing.



The **Vermont Department of Public Safety** has issued a conditional construction permit based on their review of these buildings' compliance with Vermont fire and building safety codes applicable to public structures.

Three permits and one report are needed to complete the **Act 250 application** that began in June. TA and its agents have submitted all the information that the four state agencies require to issue the water quality permit, waste water permit, storm water permit and Historical Preservation report. We are waiting for their issuance and submission to the Act 250 Commission.

When the Act 250 office receives these four documents they will deem our application complete. Within thirty days the commission will issue a decision on TA's application. Once the decision has been written, there will be a thirty day period for appeals to be filed.



With the complexity of these work items including regulatory review, construction management, and financing coming together in the next few weeks, we are committed to moving forward on the building project as quickly as possible. We will hold a public meeting to update our partnership communities on the building project as soon as we have a date set for groundbreaking.

Board of Trustees Restructuring

After a successful and informative board retreat in February, the TA trustees decided to change the structure and function of the board to make the work of its many volunteers more effective and constructive for our students.

Summary of the changes to the Board structure:

- **Board size:** The size of the Board of Trustees has been reduced from a maximum of twenty-four to a maximum of twenty-one members. This number includes the representatives from towns with which we have a partnership agreement (currently Lyme, Strafford and Thetford), and our Alumni Association Representative.
- **Meeting frequency:** The full Board of Trustees' public meetings will now occur monthly, instead of quarterly. This year's meeting schedule is as follows:

| | |
|--|---|
| October 9 - TA Library - 7:00pm | November 6 - Lyme Elementary School - 7:00pm |
| December 11 - TA Library - 7:00pm | January 8 - TA Library - 7:00pm |
| February 12 - Thetford Community Center - 7:00pm | March 12 - Barrett Hall in South Strafford - 7:00pm |
| April 9 - TA Library - 7:00pm | May 14 - TA Library - 7:00pm |
| June 4 - TA Library - 7:00pm | |
- **Committee structure:** The number of standing Board Committees has been reduced from eleven to the following six:
 - Advancement:** Oversees development and fundraising, public relations and community affairs, student recruitment
 - Board Management:** Manages trustee recruitment, training and orientation; Head and Board evaluations; policy management
 - Buildings & Grounds:** Advises the Administrative Team on facilities matters; oversees capital improvements to the campus
 - Personnel:** Participates in faculty, staff and Administrative Team contract negotiations
 - Resources:** Responsible for finances and endowment management
 - Audit:** Evaluates financial information, operating policies and reviews independent auditor recommendations

Some work that was previously done by trustee committees is being elevated to the full Board of Trustees. In addition, task forces will be established when necessary to work on a single project or address a single topic.

At our June 26 meeting, the Thetford Academy Trustees approved this new structure. The goal of these changes is to allow and encourage the Board to better focus on our primary responsibilities – including strategic planning, fiduciary responsibility, goal setting, and evaluation.

We are looking forward to conducting our work this fall under the new board structure.