

**THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**Thursday, September 14, 2017**  
**Thetford Academy Library**

**MINUTES**

Cameron Cudhea (President) convened the meeting at 7:01 p.m. In attendance were the following:

Trustees: Cameron Cudhea, Giovanni Bosco, Ann Bumpus, Melody Burkins, Bob Christensen, Shannon Darrah, Karl Furstenberg, Kate Hesser (telephonically), Zoe Keller, Lindsey Klecan, Suzanna Liepmann, Hilary Linehan, Therese Linehan, Jonathan Stableford, Donna Steinberg, Susie Weider, Carrie Wells, Ben Williams, Jim Wilson

Administration: Bill Bugg (Head of School), Linda Lanteigne-Magoon (CFO), Marc Chabot (Dean of Academics & Science Teacher)

Other: Mark Weigel (Physical Education Teacher)

Absent: Peter Boyd

**1. Approval of August 17, 2017, Meeting Minutes**

Motion: Accept the minutes of August 17, 2017.

Moved: Carrie Wells

Seconded: Giovanni Bosco

Abstained: Hilary Linehan, Jonathan Stableford, Donna Steinberg, Ben Williams  
The motion passed.

**2. Public Comment Period**

Cameron shared the contents of an email received from Stephen Page. In his email, Mr. Page requested that the link to Board minutes, which is posted on the listserv, be a direct link to the actual minutes rather than to the Board of Trustees webpage. Mr. Page also suggested that the Trustee page on the website have greater visibility — possibly its own tab, rather than being included under the Community section. He also asked that an email address be provided allowing community members to contact the Board. In a subsequent email, Mr. Page noted the time and energy the Board has given in discussion to the Barrett property, but encouraged the Board to give consideration to moving forward with "Phase 2" of the building plan developed when the gym was expanded and science and other classrooms upgraded.

**3. Faculty Presentation: Marc Chabot and the Academic Council**

Marc Chabot (Dean of Academics & Science Teacher), assisted by Mark Weigel (Physical Education Teacher), gave a presentation to the Board about the history and current work of the Academic Council. The Board was given a document that described the purpose of the Academic Council and listed new elective courses offered at TA since 2012.

Marc provided an overview of the history of the Academic Council since Bill Bugg became Head of School. Bill's goal was for the Academic Council to have a more substantial role in

terms of decisionmaking. It has taken several years and a considerable amount of restructuring and rescheduling in order to achieve a fully-functioning Council that has good representation across all departments, that is balanced in terms of gender and experience, and that convenes at a time when there can be full attendance. Marc reported that the Council is now working very well.

Current members of the Academic Council, in addition to Marc and Mark, are Deb Sanders-Dame (Director of Special Education Services), Rebecca Walter-Proulx (School Counselor), Dana Brettell (Spanish Teacher), Stacy Barton (Social Studies), Melissa Thaxton (English), Dawn Deibler (Mathematics), and Chris Schmidt (Design Technology & Outdoor Education); Bill Bugg also attends some meetings.

Marc provided examples of things the Academic Council is currently working on:

- Some students are absent an unusually-large number of days, and the number of such students has increased over time. The Academic Council has been working to examine the data, understand what is driving it, and figure out a plan for addressing the issue.
- This is a NEASC accreditation year, and the Academic Council is working with school committees to fulfill the NEASC requirements.
- The Academic Council has also been engaging in self-evaluation: It has collected all decisions it has recently made and considered what still needs attention, how well the decisions were communicated to faculty, and whether the decisions have been implemented by faculty.

Board members asked questions of Marc and Mark:

- Karl asked about the stature of the Council — i.e., how it is viewed in terms of its impact and clout by faculty who are not on the Council. Marc replied that the stature of the Council has been increasing over time. Joe Deffner (English Teacher), who was attending the Board meeting as a member of the audience, concurred with this assessment. Bill added that there are two parallel committees at the school — Academic Council (for academic matters) and Student Life (for non-academic matters) — that provide important leadership opportunities. Faculty receive stipends for their service.
- Zoe asked what are the top five challenges for the Council this year. Marc listed issues such as the student information system (Web2School) and how to replace it; how best to communicate student achievement to parents in the digital age; and whether to change how TA tries to reach students who have an excessive amount of absenteeism. Other important projects for the year are overseeing the NEASC accreditation process, and reflecting on the major changes (school schedule, Power Hour, etc.) that have been put in place this year. Mark W. recommended limiting the number of "irons in the fire" at once — i.e., focusing instead on a few things and doing them really well.
- Cameron asked Mark W. how the flow of information works to/from the Council, so that all faculty feel as though they have a voice. Mark replied that information flows through departments via the department meetings. Mark serves as the liaison between the Academic Council and the Physical Education department. Bill added that the minutes of the Academic Council meetings are available "live" to teachers as the minutes are being taken.
- Jon asked whether there is a plan for term limits, continuity, etc. Marc replied that there are sort of three-year terms, but that the Council should probably think more about how best to rotate service on the Council.

- Therese asked whether the Council has any idea about how people feel about the new schedule. Marc said that there are naturally still some kinks being worked out, and Mark agreed that it is too soon to judge. Cameron suggested the possibility of having the Academic Council return to the Board later in the school year to give an update.

Cameron expressed his sincere thanks to Marc and Mark, on behalf of the Board. Marc and Mark left the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

#### **4. Head of School: Enrollment and Recruitment**

Bill provided a brief history of TA's enrollment in the twenty-first century. There is a small number of students in this geographic area and a lot of schools competing for those students. The high point of TA's enrollment was 399 in 2007-2008, then a decline to around 295 for several years, followed by a slow climb to 338 last year, which was the highest enrollment in the past seven years. This year's enrollment is 319, which is seven fewer full tuitions than budgeted, due to five juniors doing a semester away and more students than expected opting for the River Bend Career & Technical Center program. As a result, TA currently is looking at a budget deficit for FY 2018.

Bill provided several handouts containing current and historical enrollment data for both TA and area elementary schools and making projections for future enrollment at TA. Bill also provided information about TA's marketing efforts: This year, TA hit its target number of students from both Thetford and Waits River, but did not meet its goals in some other markets. The Waits River market is now bigger than both Lyme and Strafford combined. Recruiting from Sharon is also going very well, even though TA has not expended much effort on recruiting there, and TA is now running a school bus to/from Sharon. Chelsea and Woodsville may be new market possibilities if they lose their high schools. Time will tell whether the current drop in international student applications is a short-term aberration or the new normal.

Karl asked about the budgetary impact of these enrollment numbers. Bill explained that the demographic trends show that the "pie" of available students is shrinking, and therefore enrollment is projected to decline further unless TA can obtain a bigger slice of the pie. Bill asked the Board for permission to spend \$25,000 this year on marketing — in order to seek high-level marketing advice, engage in targeting and re-targeting campaigns (online), create short video segments for the website, etc. The Board had previously authorized this amount of money to be spent from the endowment, but it was not spent last year. Bill noted in particular that TA is at a disadvantage in recruiting international students without any videos. He also emphasized that time is of the essence, because the admissions season is already underway.

Board members had a number of questions and comments:

- Kate expressed concern that the money had not been spent last year.
- Jim noted that if this investment attracted 1.5 more students, it would pay for itself.
- Zoe asked whether this would be a one-time or recurring expense. Bill replied that the Board should probably expect the need to spend at least \$15,000 on marketing each year.

- Ann suggested that in the future it might be possible to bring costs down (e.g., with the videos) by enlisting student help, and that students might in fact know best what would appeal to other students.
- Ben emphasized the importance of getting hard data to know whether the investment is really making a difference.
- Melody suggested that making a personal connection with students could be an even more effective way of increasing the yield from recruiting.
- Karl seconded Melody's comment about making it personal, and wondered whether marketing should become a focus of the Advancement Committee.
- Bob pointed out that TA's marketing firm offers help with more than just online marketing.
- Donna asked whether the marketing firm would contact students who chose not to attend TA and ask why not. Bill replied in the affirmative.
- Zoe noted that the videos could be repurposed for different audiences, and not used only for admissions.
- Karl suggested tapping into professional expertise in TA's parent population, because parents have a vested interest in TA.

The Board agreed to allow Bill to put the aforementioned sum toward marketing efforts this year, given that it was previously approved to be expended from the endowment, and knowing that in future years the Board will have to figure out how marketing expenditures will fit into the budget.

## **5. Budget Update**

Linda distributed a "Financial Statement Overview." The intent of this document is to serve as an ongoing resource for trustees when they are reading through TA's financial statements and to help orient new trustees. Linda briefly went over the document and requested that the Board read it before the next Board meeting and offer any feedback about how to improve it in order to make it as useful as possible.

Suzanna went over the Statements of Financial Position and Statement of Activities (Unrestricted). She noted in particular that the funds that were advanced out of the endowment to start up the international program have all been paid back now. She also pointed out that TA has two funds set aside for particular purposes (the Slafter Reserve and Maintenance Reserve Funds).

Linda responded to questions from the Board:

- Gio asked about the "Scholarships" line on the statements. Linda explained that there are donor-restricted scholarships that are given out each year.
- Therese asked what will happen to future surpluses from the international program. Linda replied that there are no particular plans; a surplus just goes to "unrestricted."
- Ann asked about the Food Service program, because it still lost money despite changes being made to the program. Gio asked whether we should just accept that there will be a loss in Food Service every year. Linda explained that all schools typically lose money on their food service, unless they bring in an outside contractor who runs it as a business. TA made additional changes to Food Service this year which hopefully will yield lower losses, but it is too early to tell.

Suzanna provided copies of the Operating Budget Report for FY 2017, which had been used to determine this year's tuition rate. She then went over the revised Operating Budget for FY 2018, which shows a deficit for the reasons previously explained by Bill. Suzanna noted that it is hard to make up a budget shortfall after school has started because it is difficult to cut any programs, but IT and Buildings & Grounds expenses will be scrutinized going forward. TA will probably have to make up most of the loss from prior-year surplus.

Karl asked about the impact of contract negotiations on the budget. Linda said that there have been some modest savings overall, due to small savings in benefits but more costs in salaries. Ben asked about the appropriate time to approve the budget in future years. Linda noted that most schools wait to vote on a budget until the fall when the enrollment numbers are in.

Motion: Accept the revised budget for FY 2018 as presented.

Moved: Suzanna Liepmann

Seconded: Therese Linehan

Ayes: Bosco, Bumpus, Burkins, Christensen, Cudhea, Darrah, Furstenberg, Hesser, Keller, Klecan, Liepmann, T. Linehan, Stableford, Steinberg, Weider, Wells, Williams, Wilson

Nays: H. Linehan

The motion passed.

The Board took a ten-minute break and then reconvened.

Cameron announced that Mountain Day was postponed until Monday due to the weather forecast.

## **6. Board Management: Updates, Lyme Partnership Agreement, and Board Policies**

### Update on Duties of President and Vice-President

Kate reported the results of a conversation among herself, Therese, and Cameron about shifting some responsibilities from the President to the Vice-President. The goals are to provide a better balance of responsibilities for both of these officers, and to provide better access to Board leadership for committee chairs and other Board members. Partnership Agreements now will fall under the Vice-President's duties, along with monitoring of the Strategic Plan. Oversight of the Head of School contract now will be the responsibility of the Resources Committee. These changes will help free up Cameron's time for other duties that should rightly fall to the President.

### Update on Board Policies

Donna reported that over the past year thirteen Board policies were revised and adopted. Four additional policies were looked at, but were held up for a lawyer's review. The Board Management Committee will re-deliver these four policies to the Board in advance of the next meeting and seek a vote on them at the meeting. The policies are Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace, Drug and Alcohol Testing of Transportation Employees, Prevention of Employee Harassment, and Responsible Computer, Network & Internet Use.

### Lyme Partnership Agreement

Donna explained the backstory of why the Board received several different documents in advance of the meeting. The task force assigned to work on the Lyme Partnership Agreement met and compromised on the terms to be included, but some members were not completely comfortable with having a special agreement only for Lyme, given that there are other towns that send at least as many students to TA but don't get special treatment. The group united behind the concept of offering a partnership agreement to all sending towns — thereby ensuring that all towns are treated equitably, but also having a system where towns such as Lyme can opt to partner with TA in exchange for enrollment priority for their students.

The task force distributed a Partnership Agreement template that has the same elements as the Lyme Partnership Agreement but that works for any town. Donna asked whether the Board was comfortable leaving behind the old form of the Lyme Partnership Agreement and focusing on the new template, and the Board indicated its agreement.

### Policy on Admission of Day Students

The task force also distributed a revised draft of the Board policy on Admission of Day Students (formerly called "Student Admissions"). This policy is incorporated as a reference in the Partnership Agreement template, and it needed to be revised at the same time as the Partnership Agreement because the two documents are inter-related.

Lindsey explained edits that had been made to the Admission policy in the days since the Board had received an emailed version. Board members had several questions and comments, which resulted in a decision to make the following changes to the document:

- Add page numbers.
- Fix awkward language referencing the policy.
- Clarify that designating towns also have partnership agreements with TA, separate from "designation."
- Expand the categories of students who are guaranteed enrollment, to include students from any town with a partnership agreement.

Motion: Adopt the policy on Admission of Day Students as modified this evening.

Moved: Donna Steinberg

Seconded: Therese Linehan

The motion passed unanimously.

There was some additional discussion of the Partnership Agreement template. Karl noted that the term length of the agreement is left unspecified. The consensus of the Board was that the term length can be negotiated with individual towns. The Partnership Agreement template received the approval of the Board, pending an upcoming meeting between representatives of TA and of the Lyme School District. The Board will vote at its October meeting on the Partnership Agreement with Lyme.

### Interim Policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Cameron brought this policy before the Board for a vote.

Motion: Adopt the interim policy on Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect.

Moved: Giovanni Bosco

Seconded: Jon Stableford

The motion passed unanimously.

Bill left the meeting at 10:35 p.m.

## **7. Executive Session: Head of School Compensation**

At 10:37 p.m., the Board chose to go into executive session.

Motion: Move into Executive Session to discuss the Head of School's compensation.

Moved: Cameron Cudhea

Seconded: Jon Stableford

The motion passed unanimously.

Out of executive session at 10:43 p.m.

Motion: Approve a percentage increase in the Head of School's salary that is equal to the percentage increase in salary of other TA administrators.

Moved: Cameron Cudhea

Seconded: Suzanna Liepmann

The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Adjourn the meeting at 10:44 p.m.

Moved: Jon Stableford

Seconded: Ben Williams

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lindsey Klecan (Clerk)