

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Thursday, September 15, 2016
Thetford Academy Library

DRAFT MINUTES

Cameron Cudhea convened the meeting at 7:02pm. In attendance were the following:

Trustees: Cameron Cudhea (President), Kate Hesser, Peter Boyd, Ann Bumpus, Bob Christensen, Shannon Darrah, Karl Furstenberg, Zoe Keller (telephonically), Lindsey Klecan, Suzanna Liepmann, Hilary Linehan, Therese Linehan, Jonathan Stableford, Andy Welch, Carrie Wells, Susie Weider, Ben Williams, Jim Wils on

Administration: Bill Bugg (Head of School), Linda Lanteigne-Magoon (CFO)

Absent: Giovanni Bosco, Donna Steinberg

1. Approval of August 18, 2016, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Accept the minutes of August 18, 2016.

Moved: Andy Welch

Seconded: Shannon Darrah

Abstained: Kate Hesser, Jonathan Stableford

The motion passed.

2. Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

3. Head's Report

Bill reported that there has been a good start to the school year.

- The Upper Valley Educators Institute is working with TA faculty on "differentiated instruction," to help TA become as good as possible at meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom. A \$10,000 federal grant is funding this. The first session was on Monday (Sept. 12), and this collaboration will continue throughout the year.
- Mountain Day is tomorrow (Sept. 16).

Update from the State

Bill reported that the State Board of Education is considering rewriting rules governing Independent schools. Going forward, in order to receive state dollars, independent schools would have to follow all of the rules that public schools must follow (in particular, they would have to offer a full slate of special-education services). This is being challenged by the Vermont Independent Schools Association. There are forums for public comment upcoming. TA is one of only six independent schools currently qualified to meet all 14 areas of special education.

Admissions

Bill presented data on special-education enrollment by grade, town, and type (504 Plan vs. IEP).

- The current percentage of student receiving IEP and 504 services is at 34.9%.
- Many new TA students receive special education services
- For students on an IEP, there is a shortfall of approximately \$2,500 per student between the actual reimbursement from their respective towns and the cost of services per year.
- TA has added staff to its special education department.

Enrollment is above the goal for this year. However, class sizes are also up a bit as additional faculty was not added.

Student Retention

All good news: The retention rate was 96.3% from last school year to this school year. Of the students who left TA, all but one were nonpreventable departures for various reasons. Only one student left due to dissatisfaction.

Enrollment Study: Town of Thetford

Bill shared the results of an enrollment study, which showed a big difference in average enrollment per grade between TA and Thetford Elementary School (35.8 vs. 27.3).

Shannon (Thetford Town Representative) reported that TES has talked about doing exit interviews with families who decide to leave the school. It is harder to discover the reasons why families choose to homeschool instead of using TES.

Bill explained that we don't know if the gap in average enrollment between TA and TES is due to demographics, or people sitting out elementary school and coming to TA later, or lack of affordable homes in Thetford for young families, etc. This year, nine additional students from Thetford – who didn't go to TES and whom TA didn't know about beforehand – enrolled at TA.

Karl asked what, in particular, drives TA's concern about enrollment. Bill explained that there is downward pressure from the state on TA's tuition. Our tuition has stayed virtually steady over the past five years. The student population has increased by 43. The healthy enrollment growth has allowed TA to provide its faculty step and cost-of-living increases without a tuition increase.

Recruitment Targets

Bill commented that the next step in the cycle is the budget and that this presents a "formidable challenge."

- The anticipated enrollment for 2017-18, prior to any addition of non-TES students, is 284. [The number 284 is derived as follows: 338 (current enrollment) minus 71 (number of seniors this year) minus 10 (likely attrition based on last year's data) plus 27 (number of 6th graders currently enrolled at TES).]
- The budgeted enrollment for 2016-17 was 323.

- To maintain the status quo for 2017-18, enrollment will need to be 333. Therefore, TA must recruit 49 non-TEs students for next school year – i.e., we must double our recruitment success from this school year (23 non-TEs students). TA has reached the point where it may not be able to accommodate an increase in the percentage of students needing special education services.

Carrie reported that this growth in special education numbers is the trend in most communities due to better identification of students who would need services, and more mental-health problems. Hilary Linehan (Strafford Town Representative) shared that the numbers are high at The Newton School also.

Andy asked whether this issue is something that should be considered in the partnership agreements with towns. Cameron will look at partnership agreements between TA and Lyme and Strafford and bring them before the Board for review in the October meeting.

4. Financial Report

Suzanna reported that the independent audit starts next week, and that the Resources Committee will be revising how it brings information to the Board.

Linda presented the Financial Summary Report.

- Capital-improvement projects came in on budget.
- Food service had a predicted net loss.
- The international-student program has a positive net margin. The original investment six years ago has now been recouped.
- Withdrawals from the endowment went to scholarships, the Barrett mortgage, and annual operating expenses.

Linda reported that the auditors will provide draft reports to the Resources Committee at the end of October and a presentation to the full Board toward the end of the year.

Karl suggested including withdrawals in the endowment summary numbers so that the Board can see the growth better.

Cameron reported that Linda will bring in the school's insurance-company representatives this year to give a presentation to the Board. Linda suggested this be done in the spring, when it's time to talk about renewal of TA's policies.

5. Board Management

Therese distributed forms for Trustees to sign regarding the code of conduct and conflicts of interest.

Therese reported that the Board Management Committee hopes to complete revisions on approximately two policies per month going forward, in order to bring them to the full Board for approval.

6. Buildings and Grounds

Peter reported that Johnathan Brown, the new Director of Buildings and Grounds, is off to a good start. TA will be upgrading technology and scheduling long-term planning for repairs, etc.

Capital-Improvement Funds

Peter explained that Buildings and Grounds has established three capital-improvement funds, where previously there was only one fund:

- The "Capital Maintenance Fund" is for the Director of B&G, Bill, and Linda to determine how to spend, thereby allowing the administration to make more decisions. The funds will roll over if not spent in a given year, or TA can borrow from a future year if needed, which allows for more flexibility.
- The "Capital Improvement Fund" is intended for new additions to campus or major improvements. The intention is to let it accumulate over a number of years and then use it for a significant project
- The "Slafter Fund" is for maintaining Slafter Hall where the Bugg Family lives.

Peter reported that the Buildings and Grounds Committee is working on a policy which will be based on giving more rein to the administration and defining more clearly the roles of Board vs. administration with regard to B&G.

Barrett Property

This property consists of 10.4 acres and a house next door to TA. Bill briefly described two options for this property that are being considered:

- Save the house: We have preliminary drawings from an architect for turning the house into three multi-purpose classrooms and the headquarters of the outdoor initiative. It would cost a maximum of \$95,000 to tie the house into a water supply and TA's existing septic system. The full report from the architect will arrive next month.
- Tear down the house and rebuild

TA has been given a \$125,000 gift by a local foundation, of which \$100,000 is dedicated to the Barrett property. A study of the options is being funded by a \$12,000 grant from the same foundation.

7. Other Business/Announcements

- Cameron explained that the rest of the evening would be devoted to breaking into subcommittees allowing committees to collaborate on topics as needed.
- Bill informed the Board that he had looked at a property with the idea of it becoming a dorm. The International Program is constrained by a lack of additional homestay families. This house could accommodate ten students.

Motion: Adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm.

Moved: Jonathan Stableford

Seconded: Jim Wilson

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lindsey Klecan (Clerk)