

THETFORD ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Thursday, October 17, 2019
Thetford Academy Library

MINUTES

Ann Bumpus (President) convened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. In attendance were the following:

Trustees: Ann Bumpus, Giovanni Bosco, Shannon Darrah, Kate Hesser, Robin Junker-Boyce, Lindsey Klecan, Donna Steinberg, Carrie Wells, Ben Williams, Jeff Solssa

Administration: Carrie Brennan (Head of School); Linda Lanteigne-Magoon (CFO)

Absent: Melody Burkins, Karl Furstenberg, John Ziegler

1. Public Comment Period

Kate recommended we thank Dan Grossman for his contributions for the 7th grade fundraiser. Every year, he donates time and expertise with his photography skills and helps the students raise a significant amount of money.

Karen Heinzman thanked the many trustees who were able to make it to the Woods Trail Run.

2. Approval of September Minutes

Motion: Accept the minutes of September 12, 2019, with no edits.

Moved: Carrie Wells

Seconded: Ben Williams

Abstained: Kate Hesser and Jeff Solssa

The motion passed unanimously.

3. President's Report

Ann highlighted the recent coverage in the Valley News. One article was about Newton School students enjoying their new opportunity to attend TA. A second article described the amazing sportsmanship at the Woods Trail Run, and a third one mentions The Mountain Bike Trail, which is opening soon. Robin added that another news outlet mentioned the Climate Rally coverage and TA was featured positively there as well.

4. Head of School's Report

Carrie used a Power Point presentation, and covered the following topics:

Teaching and Learning

Carrie has been in 26 faculty classrooms, making 29 short visits, during the period between October 1 and October 17. She used a form she created in another setting, which includes the four following sections:

What I see

What I wonder

Warm Feedback

Tips to Consider

She made one copy for the teacher and kept a copy for her records.

Carrie shared one observed assignment, Life Journey Map, from Mr. Chapin's class, saying it is a great example of the best practices for middle school students. She called it rigorous, personal, and hands on, and said it connects students to themselves, each other, and the broader community. The projects are lined up on public display, another best practice, and the roads literally connect from poster to poster.

Partnerships

Carrie gave an update on our partnership with TES, with particular focus on the Buildings and Grounds, who have already processed 52 TES work requests. We have had lots of positive feedback from stakeholders about the quality and quantity of work John Brown has been able to do for TES.

There are current longer-term projects, such as assisting with safety and security improvements, and organizing the locking and keying systems.

Next steps will involve developing maintenance plans.

Enrollment

Carrie, her Admissions administrative team, and the Advancement committee are all focused on recruitment. TA had a solid turn out for the October 10th Open House. Our on line materials have been heavily updated.

The team is working on plans for additional approaches of reaching out to potential students.

Carrie created graphs and tables to illustrate the enrollment benchmarks from the last four years, some with rolling averages and some broken down by year. These tables and graphs give us a sense of where enrollment will be in the future and how our recruitment efforts are working.

Community Engagement

Global Climate Strike event in Montpelier on 9/20/19 was a good example of collaboration with our locals organizers in Thetford and statewide. The TA students involved were invited to speak at community meetings.

The fall potluck for International Students was on 9/29/19, and in addition to our students, featured a mix of Thetford residents who have had international experiences.

The Woods Trail Run was on 10/5/19, and Carrie remarked that the Thetford residents seem to love this event. Student volunteering was exemplary. Carrie remarked that Karen Heinzman, who organizes all the students and helps them pass the knowledge from one group to the next, should receive special appreciation for these efforts.

TA Strategic Plan

Carrie is proposing some revisions of the Strategic Plan and she plans to discuss the details of her suggestions with Melody Burkins and other appropriate people at a later date.

Mountain Bike Trail Grand Opening is on the 19th.

Ann wanted us to remember to include TES in the outreach to other schools and Shannon and Carrie reassured that this is already happening.

5. Committee and Task Force Reports

Resources

Lindsey said that John Brown and Linda met with the Resources committee and shared detailed Buildings and Grounds priorities for the next five years, and then five more years after that. Slafter Hall, the fields, and arts building all need expensive repairs/renovations within the next decade. In their meeting, they discussed potential ways to generate the funds for these projects. Carrie and John will work together to come up with a plan for the priorities of Slafter. Lindsey described it as a fruitful discussion. Representatives from Resources will go to a TES Board meeting to discuss and coordinate.

Robin had questions about how best to invest in our people while also investing in our facility. We should be attuned to how we fund our projects. We can be clear in that some types of money can only be geared to facilities. Ann suggested that resources and personnel coordinate a meeting so to enhance transparency and clarity about our funding decisions.

Advancement

The Advancement committee continues with strategic thinking about enrollment and fundraising. For example, Patty is setting up a roundtable breakfast event, with Cathy

Clement, for donors on Monday, November 18, 2019. Carrie has met with a number of community donors who have great ideas about increasing giving and impact.

There are a number of new Advancement committee members, who are not also trustees. Emily Adler Boren, Admissions Director from the Mountain School, and Marissa _____ from the Aloha Foundation, have contributed their skills and time to the advancement committee. Chris Overtree, director of the Aloha Foundation, invited Carrie to an event and they are both eager to talk about possibilities for partnership.

Board Management

Donna reviewed the basic idea behind a Consent Agenda. Gio asked if it was just trustees who can move a grouped item from the Consent Agenda to the main Agenda. We discussed making sure we keep transparency, and not give the appearance of “pushing an item through.” The agenda would state what was in the Consent Agenda section. The consensus was to create policy and keep discussing use of this idea.

BMC was charged with answering, “Who posts the minutes and the agenda?” and “Where do they post it?” We discussed briefly and the following plan was solidified:

Patty posts the minutes on line, and in Town Clerks Office. Patty will also post the agenda on the listservs of the sending towns. Gloria posts the agenda in the front office and in the Town Offices. Gloria can have the minutes available in the front office, too. Ann has been posting the agenda on the listserve, but now Patty will take this on. The agenda should be posted physically in three places according to Open Meeting Law, but we agreed that posting in two places was more than adequate for ensuring transparency for our organization.

Personnel

Kate said that there is a contract just about ready for signing. There will be one more review of it. The last meeting with the faculty went really well, and the group worked through a lot of complex questions. She said that everyone around the table expressed appreciation for the collaborative progress on the contracts. Faculty negotiators are interested in updating the language used in the agreement so that evaluations will match the vision Carrie has set forth with her review process. The group is working towards a multi-year contract, which will free up time to be able to work on other things that are important to the faculty/staff. There is a State negotiated health care package that is in an impasse, so there is an unknown moving forward for now. Kate recommends that the whole contract be reworked holistically. It was added onto so many times that it does not work well as a whole, and even has internal contradictions.

7. Town Reports

Lyme

Karl is in Switzerland and will report next month.

Strafford

Jeff Solssa said that the school year is going a lot more smoothly than the end of last year (where morale was poor). There are new staff, a new principal, new art teacher, and they are all melding well with the school. The 7th and 8th graders are “having a blast” coming to TA every day. He said that they are getting a lot of positive feedback. However, one issue yet to be worked out is that when students ride a bus back to Strafford, they do not have a ride home from the Newton School. Carrie said that 50% of the middle school students are sticking around for sports. Concerns about how students will get home from Strafford will intensify when the weather gets colder. There is talk about buying a passenger van to get the students home at 3:20 p.m. after the Newton School buses have left the school.

Partnership agreement with TA was read for the second time at the last meeting. Ann encouraged sending questions soon so that Strafford can address at the next meeting.

The playground needs replacing and is a big expenditure. Hopefully, they will come up with the money to do so.

Thetford

Sharron said the TES Strategic Plan committee has kicked off and has begun working together. Robin and Donna are the TA Trustee representatives, working in tandem with each other.

Principal, Chance Lindsley, is on leave right now and it is not known for how long he will be out. The OESU’s Assistant Superintendent is acting as principal for now.

The partnership agreement with Buildings and Grounds is going really well from TES’s perspective, too. The parking lot is almost done and is working well.

8. New Business

Policy

F40 Statement of Investment Policy

Lindsey presented the policy and described major changes. She said that the policy combined two different accounts (Capital Maintenance for Slafter, and CM Reserved for TA in general), and it did not make sense to keep them separate. Now the policy has a CMR for all TA projects. Process for selecting review manager and that person’s performance. Linda shared that now the policy says “with” and “without” donar restriction to update the terms to current practices. Linda also noted that there were minor adjustments to be in alignment with current practices. Gio presented the history behind creating a Slafter pot of money.

Discussed about priorities and the many capital projects, and why one big one (TA) and one small one (Slafter). We also have Barrett to pay attention to. The committee members also noted that they did discuss in depth the various names of the pots. “Socially responsible” investments can be vague but this is a common phrase in these types of documents. The real estate investment section does not mean that we cannot buy new properties.

Motion: Adopt the Statement of Investment Policy, F40.

Moved: Donna Steinberg

Seconded: Kate Hesser

The motion passed unanimously.

Ballots tallied for Jeff Solssa, who was voted in as the Strafford Representative Trustee.

Committee Job Descriptions

Lindsey spoke about the revisions to the Committee Job Descriptions. The Committee descriptions were clarified, and the Buildings and Grounds committee was subsumed by the Resources Committee. There was discussion about specifics and given the nature of the concerns, we decided to review this one again at a later date.

By Laws of Thetford Academy

The changes to this document were created so that the Treasurer now can sign for sale and purchases. In the absence of the Treasurer, the President can function as the Treasurer. The Audit committee responsibilities were moved to the Resources section and the audit section was deleted. There was some discussion of these changes today, and because all of the issues brought up could not be solved satisfactorily in the meeting, but we need the powers of the treasurer to be enacted as soon as possible, there was a motion to adopt the revisions of the By Laws related to the treasurer.

Motion: Adopt the Revisions of Articles IV and V of the By Laws

Moved: Kate Hesser

Seconded: Gio Bosco

The motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Adjourn the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Moved: Donna Steinberg

Seconded: Gio Bosco

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Steinberg (Recording Clerk)