

THETFORD TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

September 12, 2023

Thetford Elementary School and Zoom

Draft Minutes

PRESENT:

School board: Nic Cook, Greta Marchesi, Megan Snider, Mary Chin, Jeff Jamele

Principal: Bernice Mills

OESU: Randy Gawel

Community: Angela McCanna, Nolan Reigler (arrived at 6:20p, departed 7:00p)

Staff: Kate Hill

Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Snider at 6:00 pm.

Board Business

Agenda Review/Approval-

Add a quick discussion about the September 20 forum next week.

Approve Minutes- [08/10/23](#) | [8/25/23 Special Meeting](#)

Motion to approve minutes of 8/10/23. (Jamele/Chin) Unanimous.

Motion to approve minutes of 8/25/23 (Jamele/Chin). Unanimous.

Review Orders-

All orders are as expected. No unanticipated or irregular expenses.

Correspondence-

a) Resignations-

- Megan Thurston- Paraeducator
- Sabrina Dicks- Paraeducator
- Kayla Woodman- Paraeducator

At present, TES is using the building-based sub and circulating paras throughout the day to maintain coverage, but this is not a sustainable long term strategy. Principal Mills is working to fill the positions.

Hill suggested putting vacancies as well as the Spanish position on the list serve.

Public Comment

None

Reports

A. Principal's Report - Mills

a) Student Enrollment

We opened the school year with 170 students enrolled across all grade levels.

Total students by grade level

- K - 23
- 1/2 - 45
- 3/4 - 55
- 5/6 - 47

b) Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers in grades K-4 participated in the Bridge to Reading professional development prior to the start of school.

c) Parent and Community Engagement

Mr. McLaughlin and Mrs. Rogers hosted their popsicle social on August 23 and the Open House for grades 1-6 was held on August 24, 2023. Both events were well attended.

d) Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to our dedicated staff, parents, and students for their cooperation and commitment to a successful start to the school year.

TESCIA held a "Back to School" Family Picnic Night on September 7, from 5:00 -7:00.

Strategic Plan update - Mills

The first meeting of the school year is going to be held September 19th, at 3:30 pm. Phyl Macomber will be the facilitator. The committee has been working on a framework to serve as a foundation for the final plan.

Facilities Update- Mills 9/11/23

Summer Projects Update

- Over the summer, several projects and improvements were made. Most notable was the upgrade from fluorescent to LED lighting in most of the building. Unfortunately, not all of the classrooms could be upgraded. The lower-end classrooms were slated to have the fluorescent tubes switched with LED tubes. Upon starting this work, we discovered that the existing ballasts were not compatible with the new LED tubes. We were able to salvage some newer ballasts from fixtures that were removed from other areas but we ran out of time to get it completed before school started. As of now, only two of the six classrooms have been upgraded.
- The main lobby also saw improvements. The old, slippery, old tile was removed and new rubber tile was installed along with new paint on the walls.
- In the gymnasium, all equipment was inspected. Backboards, climbing ropes,

and bleachers were all visually inspected, adjusted as needed and all nuts and bolts were torqued.

Domestic Water System

- Last fall, coliform was detected in the water system. Though not harmful to humans, it is an indicator that conditions may exist for other harmful bacteria such as E. coli to form. This triggered a level 1 assessment required by the state. The system operator, Patricia Beavers, Vermont Rural Water, and myself investigated the cause. Through camera inspection of the wells, we discovered that surface water entering the well casing was the most likely cause. Heavy rains prior to the sampling were likely the cause.
- In August of this year, quarterly sampling once again indicated the presence of coliform in the system. Because this is within one year of the previous detection, a level 2 assessment is required. This time, the State provided the assistance of an engineer. Their assessment was similar to our original and found that excess rain from the summer had cause surface water to enter the well casing on Well #1. Moving forward, we will be sampling for bacteria monthly through at least early winter. We have also shut down well #1 and are drawing from well #2 only. Because of excess rainfall, we feel that the one well can keep up with demand. We are monitoring cistern levels regularly. If we find that we can't keep up with demand, we will put well #1 back online and chlorinate the system.

Public comment- Facilities

- Hill brought up the gym floor which was assessed five years ago as needing improvements. Discussion moved to the cracking on the basketball court despite its recent repaving.
- McCann asked about a previously planned replacement of the fence near the basketball court and repair of two broken windows facing Route 113.
- Mills will follow up with an update as soon as she has one. Mills is going to meet with Brown and Ratel and discuss things going forward.

TA Report and Updates- Jamele

Our new TA rep Jamele was glad to learn that TA has a DEI coordinator.

Jamele reported that TA is experiencing budgetary constraints due to a 5 ½ student decrease in enrollment.

He will be attending the TA board retreat on the 28th and will share insights from that event with the board.

Energy Update- Marchesi/Nolan Reigler

Nolan Reigler: with updates about the charger, and the solar array.

- EV Charger. The Thetford energy committee is applying for funds from Green Mountain Power to install several Level 2 chargers in town. The school is one of the proposed locations, being both the largest employer in town and also our town emergency site. The other proposed location is Town Hall. It would be located near the entryway of the

parking lot on the left. Principal Mills expressed concern about campus safety if members of the public were charging during the day. Marchesi clarified that the chargers would require a code for use during designated hours that only school employees would be issued. Thetford could choose to make it available to the public on weekends or in the evening. The charging would be faster than a regular outlet but would still require many hours plugged in for a full charge, so it would only really be useful for people parked for longer periods of time, namely TES employees. Reigler will ask Jeff if it is possible to take it off the apps during school hours so people don't think there is one available. Well worded signs would also help head off confusion on the part of the public. The plan is to apply for a grant to install a Level 3 charger, which charges very quickly, down at Huggett's. That charger would be the one that members of the public driving through town would most likely prefer to use. Further discussion ensued.

- Application for the solar array- Discussion to increase the array started with Norwich Solar in 2022. There is enough room near our current array to expand significantly from 130 to around 500 KW. Having gone through the application process, the PUC then wanted to have a hearing, which was in February. At that time, an outside utility intervened, the result of that is that they have yet to hear from the PUC about the results of the hearing. This has to do with the rates- utilities want to pay the current rate for the power generated by the array instead of the rate locked in when the array was originally installed. Fifteen cents was the old rate and the current rate is 8 cents. The original rate is good for 10 years according to our old contract. The original plan was to retire all the renewable credits generated by the array rather than put them on the renewable energy exchange. The school is not to make money on the array as the original. The hope had been to sell power beyond that which the school uses to low and moderate income Thetford residents at an affordable rate. The new rates would make it difficult to pass savings onto income-qualifying Thetford residents. Marchesi asked if there is a payment rate below which it doesn't make sense to go through with the expansion? According to the original contract, we could offer a 12-15 cent/KWh rate decrease to residents using the power. If the PUC decides the current rate is what applies, then it is closer to 7 cents per dollar, which is less of an incentive to develop the array. Further discussion ensued. Riegler will keep us informed of any PUC decisions as they emerge.

Community Engagement and Vision Policy- Cook

Cook brought the Community Engagement and Vision policy for the board to review. The policy was put forth and approved several years ago in response to the TES strategic planning process but left some key parts of the policy blank. Some of the language in the policy is unclear to the present board in relation to the TTSD relationship with the TES strategic plan. It is also unclear what role community engagement plays in the policy as written. The board agrees with the general values in the policy but members felt that as written the policy may not be the best structure to move those values forward.

Gawel suggested that there are other ways to maintain accountability to the strategic plan and community engagement and that perhaps the board should establish other policies to achieve those goals. The board discussed scheduling regular reports on key aspects of the plan (e.g.- facilities, academic achievement, student support and accommodations, etc.) throughout the year.

Cook will put the document on the agenda for our next meeting.

Public Forum- Sept 20th, 6-7:30p Food at 5:30p

The board discussed logistics for the upcoming community forum on September 20. Glen Herriot of Fresco catering has generously offered to donate food for the event. Snider will organize child care for families that RSVP. Mills, Rep. Rebecca Holcolmbe, and TA Head of school will all give brief updates on the state of education in their area. The plan is then to turn the forum over to our facilitator Debbie Singiser to lead activities to hear people's hopes and dreams for our district moving forward. Katy Bean will need to warn the meeting.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn-

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 pm (Jamele/Chin). Unanimous.

Minutes Prepared By:

Ginni Balch, Board Clerk

Future Meetings:

Regular School Board Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month during the school year.

10/10/23 Thetford Town School District Board Meeting 6:00 p.m.

These minutes are not official until approved by the School Board.