

Orange Southwest School District (OSSD)
Regular Board Meeting on Wednesday February 12, 2025
Randolph Union High School
6pm
MINUTES

[Click Here](#) to view a video recording of the meeting

I. Opening (6:00 - 6:05)

- Board Attendance: *Ensuring a quorum*

Board members: Hannah Arias, Sam Hooper, Ryan Anderson, Aimil Parmelee, Rachel Gaidys, Rachel Fish, Anne Kaplan with Sarah Haupt virtually. Other attendees: Michael Clark, Nika Oakes, Clayton Squires, ORCA Media, Kyle Southworth, Rep. Larry Satcowitz, Rep. Jay Hooper. Virtually: Nathaniel Schwartz, Megan Currier, Lisa Floyd, Kyle Obenauer, Lisa Becker, Senator Ann Cummings, Senator Anne Watson, Heather Lawler, Bev Taft and Senator Andrew Perchlik

- Meeting Purpose: Legislative Updates, RTCC Update, Budget Info Mtgs
- Review and Accept Agenda

Agenda is accepted with no edits or additions

II. Ownership Linkage (6:05 - 6:45)

- Public Comment for items not listed on agenda: *Board welcomes comment but is not able to take any action. Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker.*

Kyle Obenauer, Brookfield – Appreciates the high level view offered by the superintendent's letter, nervous about the new language as it appears on this year's ballots. The 22% figure may be misinterpreted and over shadow the slightly more than 6% reality. Feels the chance of the budget not passing may be greater than anticipated, urges the board to do more outreach to educate their constituents.

- Update and Q&A with Legislators

The discussion centered around the Governor's vision to restructure the educational system in Vermont, consolidating from 54 to 5 districts. Representative Larry Satcowitz relays constituents are concerned but reminds this is all a process, everyone should pay careful attention to the news and, if they can, testimony in the educational field. Senator Ann Cummings says everyone is waiting for a bill to come through the House for review. 48 other states use foundation formulas and healthcare is in as dire straits as education. Sam Hooper asks what the cost savings are if the Brigham decision isn't violated. Ann Cummins says the Governor predicts \$180M savings. Various proposals are being discussed, but they anticipate that after discussion and editing, there will end up being more than 5 districts, and underline that feedback from the community is crucial. Ryan Anderson asks for clarification of "48 other states use a foundational formula." Ann Cummings responds that Vermont, Wisconsin and Hawaii are among those who fund differently, and each state that does use foundation formula, does it differently. Looking at the money, Vermont is unique in size with off-the-chart small schools and class sizes. Vermont is also the highest in adult-to-student ratio. Senator Andrew Perchlik notes they are waiting for things to move through the system, and they won't have an immediate effect. In attempting to buy the tax rate down to 0%, they are looking at carrying excess receipts over, getting rid of universal meals among other things. It will take time to generate a budget. Hannah Arias responds that in some families, the meals the students get at school are the most quality things they eat. Rachel Fish is concerned that if universal meals are discontinued, students who qualify will be stigmatized. Aimil Parmelee points out the connection between children who are chronically hungry and high uses of medical and mental health services. In some cases, this is the only food these kids get. Representative Jay Hooper is noticing a culture shift with Democrats and Republicans sitting at the same table. This is just the start of the conversation, and they urge all to stay at the table, this is going to be hard. There is constant tension between the current and future states of education, it's important to not allow this to boil into a partisan issue, and Montpelier needs input from the public and education communities. They state "We're all on the same side. Children and their interests should be top of mind all the time." Senator Anne Watson is interested in using carryover revenue to buy down property taxes and explore some level of consolidation but are concerned the Governor's vision of a single state-wide curriculum may hamper the ingenuity of teachers, if it were too stringent. Interested in exploring but not in violating the Brigham decision (shared responsibility for education funding). Anne Kaplan asks if the Governor gave a timeline for this work to be completed, but there is too much work to do. Larry Satcowitz responds that while some things may be

quick and easy to implement, the larger scale projects will take more time, and everything doesn't have to be done at once. Hannah Arias says the board is a precarious position, Rachel Fish is concerned about potential loss of local democratic processes, Larry Satcowitz agrees, there is a tipping point between cost savings and loss of local control. Jay Hooper states he would like to speak to all this at the School District Meeting Monday, March 3 at 6 p.m. Anne Kaplan will reach out to Kelly Green, District Moderator.

- RTCC Presentation from Director Nika Oakes

Nika Oakes presented a modified version of what is shown potential RTCC students, explaining RTCC students can be marketable professionals with industry certifications in one year – Career in a Year. Students have the option of doing a single year at RTCC, or doing two years in the same or companion programs, or two years in completely different areas of interest. PreTech was also discussed, a program where sophomores from RUMHS and sending schools attend the technical center, spending a couple weeks in each of the available programs while also attending Core Classes at the Center. This allows them to develop a sense of their interest. An over-view of each program was provided, with information about certifications that could be earned. Nika Oakes discussed a potential collaboration with Gifford Medical Center that would allow health careers students to become LNA certified and do co-op at Gifford Medical or Menig. Clayton Squires points out that working with Gifford could also allow students to access VSAC funds for certifications and further education. Hannah Arias asks who would pay the Gifford instructor for the Health Careers program? Nika Oakes replied the instructor fee would be paid through tuition for each student enrolled.

Nika Oakes and Clayton Squires both spoke of the social opportunities that are also available at RTCC, rounding out a program that can produce marketable graduates who are workforce and college-ready, and valuable to the community and potential employers.

The new RTCC Program of Studies is available on the OSSD website -- <https://rtcc.orangesouthwest.org/>

- Budget Information Meeting

Conversation around various ways to engage the community in discussion surrounding the upcoming budget vote. The Information Meeting is Thursday, Feb 27 at 6 pm in the RUMHS Auditorium, and the French Club and Marine Ecology Class are preparing a free Community Dinner prior to the meeting. That dinner will be held in the RUMHS cafeteria at 5 pm, all are welcome, and the meal is funded through the Stronger Connections Grant.

- Discussion of Presidential Executive Orders

Brief introduction by Michael Clark clarifying that currently the Executive Orders that are being addressed are those regarding LGBTQIA+ students and students who may have an immigrant status. Hannah Arias found Michael Clark's letter clear and concise, this is echoed by several members. The board discusses the value of having their own letter to the community out there, considering the benefit of multiple messages supporting each other. Aimil Parmelee asks what is the responsibility of ownership linkage? Rachel Fish reads a statement she drafted before she read Michael Clark's letter, Hannah Arias questions if the Board should have a voice separate from the Superintendent's as they have a broader population and were voted into their positions? Anne Kaplan states the Board needs to have conversations to educate the community that the school district has to follow State law, it's important to communicate to avoid polarization. Discussion about how the two statements differ, and the importance of not speaking emotionally or politically, but delivering information. Ryan Anderson says he feels the Board is best served if it works as a non-political entity, and Michael Clark's statement doesn't alienate any student, staff or community members. Sam Hooper says he believes in solidarity as well but is concerned that increased attention may be unwelcome. Rachel Gaidys remembers several years ago when the Board was silent and doesn't want to repeat that error. Does the Board want to issue a statement, perhaps they could co-sign a letter with the superintendent? Michael Clark wants to underline that he, his administrators, teachers and staff support every student in every school. Every kid, all buildings. The Board asks Michael Clark if he would craft a letter to the community that would be signed by the superintendent and all board members.

VOTE: Aimil Parmelee moves to approve a public communication from the Board and Superintendent to be signed by all board members. Rachel Fish seconds the motion, the motion passes unanimously.

IV. Board Process (6:45 – 6:50)

- Update on Negotiation Process

Updates included that the meetings are scheduled, and the ground rules have been set. The most recent meeting all parties exchanged language and the next meeting will be financial.

IV. Board Education (6:50 – 7:00)

- Excelerator Module 3 (PG Training)

Comments by the Board that the Executive Order discussion actually provided them the opportunity to put each component of the training module into practice.

V. Monitoring the Organization (7:00 – 7:10)

- Review, Discuss, and possible Vote to Approve Executive Limitation 2.7 (3.4) – 1st read

Board has no comments on this first read.

VI. Policy Decisions for District Governance

- None

VII. Monitoring the Board (7:10 – 7:20)

- Board Self-Evaluation: GP 4.4 (enclosed)

Brief board discussion regarding performance evaluation of the chair. All agreed the position is being handled very well.

VIII. Consent Agenda (7:20 – 7:25)

- Approve minutes from January 8 and 15 board meetings

VOTE: Motion to approve minutes with no edits made by Anne Kaplan, seconded by Sarah Haupt. Motion passes unanimously.

IX. Closing/Incidental Information (7:25 – 7:40)

- Superintendent's Report

Michael Clark briefly discusses the latest financial reports, both the OSSD and RTCC budgets are on track. Parts of the Superintendent's report were previously discussed during the Executive Order conversation, and Michael Clark talks about the new monthly Community Google Meet to be held the third Wednesday of each month. The first is scheduled for next Wednesday, Feb 19th at 6:00 pm and the Google link is below --

meet.google.com/bco-dimc-wrf

Phone Numbers

(US)+1 507-690-2140

PIN: 827 128 394#

Conversation around how the Board can educate their constituents on the many issues that this year's vote addresses. Ryan Anderson and Sam Hooper are concerned the language on the ballot may not accurately communicate the proposed budget. Further discussion about working to raise community awareness around the budget informational meeting on Thursday, Feb 27th at 6 p.m. (preceded by a free Community Dinner).

VOTE: Rachel Gaidys moves to delegate to Hannah Arias the task of communicating via Front Porch Forum and other School Board social platforms about upcoming meetings, the monthly community Google meet, the budget information meeting and dinner and the Annual meeting Monday March 3. Aimil seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

- Resignation/New Hire Updates

Rachel Gaidys asks if any resignations are retirees? Michael Clark confirms that one is.

- School Newsletters/Principal Reports
- Action Item Recap

X. Executive Session

VOTE: Sarah Haupt moves that the Board enter Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations, Aimil Parmelee seconds. Motion passes unanimously; Board enters executive session at 8:45 pm.

- Title 1 Section 313: Contract Negotiations (non-union contracts)

Future Meetings

- Agenda Planning Meeting: Wednesday March 5, 2025 @ remote, 6pm
- Regular Board Meeting: Wednesday March 12, 2025, 6pm @ Brookfield Elementary

Respectfully submitted:

Kyle M Southworth

2/14/2025

Executive Session Minutes, OSSD Board, 2/12/2025

Continuation of minutes provided by Ryan B. Anderson

Executive Session:

A motion was made by Sarah Haupt and seconded by Aimil Parmelee to enter Executive Session to discuss standardizing benefits with the superintendent present. Motion passes unanimously; Board enters executive session at 8:45 pm.

The Board exited executive session at 9:21 pm with no action taken.

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Hannah Arias and second by Amil Parmelee to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Ryan Anderson

2/12/2025