

Orange Southwest School District (OSSD)
Regular Board Meeting on Wednesday March 12, 2025
Brookfield Elementary 6pm

MINUTES

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

Superintendent Michael Clark called meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

- Board Attendance: *Ensuring a quorum*
Board members present were Hannah Arias, Anne Kaplan, Aimil Parmelee, Sam Hooper, Ryan Anderson, Rachel Gaidys, Rachel Fish and Martha Hafner. Administrators present were Michael Clark and Heather Lawler with Bob Worley, Cara Houston, ORCA Media & Kyle Southworth. Virtually attending was Joe Bent, public present were Amy Ingrassia and Jack.
- Meeting Purpose: Board Reorganization, Facilities Monitoring Report
- Review and Accept Agenda

II. Ownership Linkage (6:05 - 6:35)

- 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.*

No comments from public

- Introduce Board Members
Board members go around the table and introduce themselves by name and town they represent.
- Discuss & Reorganize Board & Committees
 - Elect Chair (currently Arias)
Motion: Rachel Gaidys moves to re-elect Hannah Arias as Board Chair. Motion is seconded by Aimil Parmelee and Ryan Anderson and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Elect Vice-Chair (currently Kaplan)
Motion: Ryan Anderson moves to re-elect Anne Kaplan as Vice-Chair. Motion is seconded by Martha Hafner and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Elect Clerk (currently Anderson)
Motion: Ryan Anderson moves to elect Martha Hafner as Board Clerk. Motion is seconded by Sam Hooper and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Approve schedule for regular meetings (currently 2nd Wed of each month, enclosed)
Motion: Aimil Parmelee moves to approve schedule for regular meetings as presented. Motion is seconded by Rachel Gaidys and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Assign member to sign official documents in absence of the Chair (currently Kaplan)
Motion: Rachel Gaidys moves to assign Anne Kaplan to sign official documents in the absence of the Chair. Motion is seconded by Aimil Parmelee and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Appoint RTCC representative (currently Kaplan)
Motion: Aimil Parmelee moves to appoint Anne Kaplan as the RTCC representative. Motion is seconded by Sam Hooper and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Appoint Teacher contract negotiating committee (currently Arias, Parmelee, and 1 vacancy)
Motion: Sam Hooper moves to appoint Sam Hooper to the teacher contract negotiating committee. Motion is seconded by Aimil Parmelee and passes unanimously by voice vote.
 - Appoint Support Staff contract negotiation committee (currently Kaplan, Gaidys & Anderson)
Motion: Hannah Arias moves to appoint Rachel Gaidys, Anne Kaplan and Ryan Anderson to the Support Staff negotiation committee. Motion is seconded by Rachel Fish and fails to pass unanimously by voice vote.

Rachel Gaidys moves to keep the standing members on the Support Staff contract negotiation committee and add Martha Hafner. Motion is seconded by Aimil Parmelee and passes unanimously by voice vote.

- Report on Town Meetings/Votes

Chair Hannah Arias thanked communities for passing the school budget at last week's Town Meetings, acknowledging it was a tough vote and hard work on the parts of the Superintendent, cabinet, the voters and community, faculty and staff members who partook in budget meetings over the winter. Superintendent Clark echoed those sentiments, the

- Brookfield Elementary Presentation from Principal Cara Houston

Cara Houston welcomes all to Brookfield School, discusses how traditions foster a sense of communication and collaboration within the school and community. Special events lately have included a visit from an herbalist and a sheep shearer, as well as a Thanksgiving feast and celebration of holidays. Brookfield has re-started spelling bee participation and has a 6th grader competing in the state spelling bee on March 24th. The I Love to Read program is still engaging students and the school staff are adjusting to changes in the evolving needs of students with targeted interventions. The logistics of moving the After School Program to Randolph Elementary School has required adjustment. NECAP testing should be completed before Spring Break. The school club has seen increased membership with events both in and out of school. Fund-raising events this school year have included Halloween movie night, a bonfire and sledding, selling baked goods at a local Christmas tree farm as well as chili and cornbread at Town Meeting. The school community is looking forward to an auction, community talent show with BINGO, bridge building competition for the 5th and 6th grade and an artist-in-residence who will be sharing contra dance. Members of the board ask if behavioral issues are still trending up, and the role of the behavioral response team and receive the information that an interventionist trained in CPI, a guidance counselor and Principal Cara Houston are working to help students work through a greater number of issues than they saw last year.

IV. Board Process (6:35 – 6:45)

- Review of Board Expectations, Rules & Orientation

Hannah Arias comments that the board evaluates themselves, and stresses how important it is that members read the packets and be prepared for meetings. Other things noted were becoming familiar with policies and speaking with one voice once a decision or policy has been made by the board. Anne Kaplan points out that members' board binders contain policies, rules and procedures that can assist new board members, and it is important to make a "board buddy" to help clarify concepts as needed. Michael Clark reminds that written and public communications could be subject to the Freedom of Information act and counsels that members keep their board communications secure and limited to their OSSD laptops and emails accounts. Open meeting law is reviewed to ensure members understand, among other things, that conversations between board members outside of meetings must adhere to those laws. Martha Hafner asks if all school boards operate under the policy governance model and is answered that policy governance is recommended by the VSBA but not required.

IV. Board Education (6:45 – 6:55)

- Excelerator Module 4 (PG Training)

Board members discuss how the Excelerator module training program works, Anne Kaplan points out that the OSSD is using the program in a unique manner, taking a module a month. Aimil Parmelee says taking the modules in a slower manner allows for better absorption of the content. A trainer could potentially have a virtual meeting with the board to review training if requested. Hannah Arias suggests using the optional July board meeting as a retreat for the board to review and discuss all modules of the program as it will be complete by then. Perhaps that would be the best time to invite a trainer.

V. Monitoring the Organization (6:55 – 7:10)

- Review, Discuss, and possible Vote to Approve Executive Limitation 2.7 (3.4) – 2nd read

The board and superintendent discuss how each might define the term "materially deviate" as that is the language that keeps this EL from being compliant. The board has a conversation about how this would be deliberate work to bring salaries into market conditions over a period of time, bringing union and non-union into compliance.

Rachel Gaidys and Anne Kaplan discuss at what point the district would be in compliance, and does the board accept as reasonable that the issue will take time, and the superintendent has a plan? Michael Clark points out that the Executive Limitations are how the board evaluates each month, so non-compliance really forces a conversation and allows the board and superintendent to fine-tune their relationship. Members discuss how this could deviate every year, and what their expectation of compliance might be.

Motion: Rachel Gaidys moves to approve Executive Limitation 2.7 (3.4). Motion is seconded by Anne Kaplan and passes unanimously by voice vote.

- Quarterly Facilities Monitoring Report

Bob Worley requests questions from the board and discussion turns to the 67-year-old transformer(s) at RUMHS. The typical lifespan for a transformer is 30 years. Martha Hafner asked what other challenges our buildings faced and was directed to the feasibility report from the Nov 2024 board meeting. Ryan Anderson confirms that the feasibility report is in fact complete as the line is still not closed on the report. Bob Worley responds he is keeping that open in case a third-party review is needed. Anne Kaplan questioned the renovation of the media center and auditorium as noted in the report, questions if the renovation would open those projects up to bring the entire reno up to code. Bob Worley answers that he would suggest the renovations not be undertaken until decisions have been made about which way the district will move forward.

VI. Policy Decisions for District Governance

- None

VII. Monitoring the Board (7:10 – 7:15)

- Board Self-Evaluation: BMD 3.0 (enclosed)

Board discusses communication with the Superintendent and OSSD staff, noting that an individual may ask a question of Michael Clark but if there is to be a directive, it must come from a quorum of the board. And Michael Clark will direct staff as needed, those directions would not come from the board itself. Martha Hafner asks for an example, Michael Clark responds this hasn't been an issue.

VIII. Consent Agenda (7:15 – 7:20)

- Approve minutes from February 12 board meeting
- Approve minutes from March 3 annual meeting
- Approve New Hires

Motion: Aimil Parmelee moves to accept the consent agenda items as presented. Motion is seconded by Anne Kaplan and passes unanimously by voice vote.

IX. Closing/Incidental Information (7:20 – 7:35)

- Superintendent's Report

Michael Clark addresses the latest news since the Superintendent's Report was written -- the Federal Gov't is doing something with the Department of Education. The effects of these newest changes are not yet known but Michael Clark warns that this could affect 13 grant-funded positions and programs, in addition to existing RIF notices. While the district still expects the money to come through, an allocation has not yet been received. Heather Lawler says that typically comes in April, and they expect that the forward funded grants will come through for the '25-26 school year. Programs that are reliant on federal funds include intervention, STEM, Physical Education and social work as well as Farm to School, Robotics, Artist in Residence, Family Engagement and Global Music. Heather Lawler and Michael Clark agree that the funds being discussed total more than \$1 million dollars. Michael Clark had hoped to come to the board with a work-around but with the funding level being so uncertain, there aren't any assurances. It is noted that RIFs can't be issued with assurances until the big picture is clarified. Michael Clark confirms that no paras will receive a RIF notice and all 4 of the cut positions are currently open. They have been working with the Association, Robin Pembroke and Heather Lawler as contracts are due to be out in roughly a month.

- Resignation Updates (included with new hires)
- School Newsletters/Principal Reports

- Action Item Recap

Hannah Arias makes a motion to have the board, Michael Clark and Heather Lawler enter into Executive Session per Title 1 Section 313 to discuss contract negotiations. Aimil Parmelee seconds the motion and the board moves into Executive Session at 7:53 pm.

X. Executive Session

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

Future Meetings

- Agenda Planning Meeting: Monday March 31, 2025 @ remote, 6pm
- Regular Board Meeting: Wednesday April 9, 2025, 6pm @ Braintree Elementary

Respectfully submitted:

Kyle Southworth

District Clerk

3/13/2025

Name of Board: OSSD

Date of Meeting: 3/12/25

Continuation of Minutes by: Martha Hafner

Executive Session

7:52 A motion was made by Michael Clark and seconded by Rachel Fish to enter Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations (with the superintendent present*).

Passed unanimously (or vote x yes; no; abs.).

8:42 The board exited the Executive Session.

As a result of the executive session:

No action was taken.

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by _____ and seconded by _____ to adjourn the meeting at 8:44pm

Respectfully submitted,

Martha S.K. Hafner