ONTEORA
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOICEVILLE, NEW YORK 12412

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING
5:00 p.m.
TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2025
BENNETT SCHOOL

1. Opening Items

1.01 Call to Order 5:00

1.02 Tobacco Policy Statement

1.03 Pledge of Allegiance

1.04 Roll Call: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

2. Proposed Executive Session

2.01 Enter Executive Session (duration 1 hour)

Recommended Action: Motion to enter into executive session to discuss tenure for specific employees and ONTEA negotiations

Motioned: Trustee Hemingway Lynch
Seconded: Trustee Goodrich
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

2.02 Exit Executive Session

Recommended Action: Motion to exit executive session and return to public session

Motioned: Trustee Knutsen
Seconded: Trustee Hemingway Lynch
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

3. Welcome

3.01 Bennett Principal, Gabriel Buono will welcome the Board (duration 10 min)

- Mr. Buono started his welcome by informing the Board of the events happening within the Bennett School. He also wanted to recognize the Bennett PTA for adding to the richness and magic of the school.
- Ms. Corsitto, math liaison, discussed information surrounding state tests and how the staff are preparing the students for these tests.

- Based on review, geometry and fractions are the core subjects that need improvements
    - The staff are working hard to incorporate skills earlier on and in a way that doesn't feel so rushed

- Ms. Kovac, ELA liaison, also discussed state assessment tests, and the areas they are working on
    - Building stamina
    - Hope to build academic language
    - Continue to build partnerships
        - PTA, faculty, parents and students
- Ms. Kovac also mentioned that Bennett's first annual Math Literacy Fair will be held on March 6, 2025 at 5:30pm. The theme is math, and anyone is welcome to attend the event.

4. Acceptance of Minutes

4.01 Acceptance of Minutes

Recommended Action: The Board of Education hereby accepts minutes of the February 18, 2025 meeting.

Motioned: Trustee Knutsen
Seconded: Trustee Reimondo
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

5. Superintendent District News

5.01 The Superintendent will report District News

- Athletic News
  Cole Matteson was the Section 9, 190 lb winner. He advanced to the NYSPHSAA championship this past weekend, finishing up a great career here at Onteora.
  Rylan Reynolds competed last week in the NYSPHSAA skiing championship, and showed a strong representation, she to also finished up her career here at Onteora.
  Waylon Brown was an alternate at the NYSPHSAA skiing championship, also a senior.
  Both Girls and Boys Basketball teams are competing in the Section 9 Semi-Finals tonight. Girls are at James I. Oneil for a 5:00 start, and the Boys are Home tonight vs. James I Oneil for a 6:00 tip off.
  If both win, they will play this Thursday for the Section 9 championship at Mount St. Mary College, Boys will play at 5:00 and Girls will play at 7:00.

- Snow Day Count
  We have used three of our seven snow days and although Mother Nature does surprise us often, I'm beginning to feel confident that we will end the season with an excess of days. I don't think we can count on having all four left over for the year yet because we have had emergency weather days in March and at least once in April, but to be in this position on March 4th is a positive. Just as a reminder, if we do not use any additional snow days, the giveback days for students and ten-month staff are: May 23, May 27, April 21, May 22. So that would extend the Memorial Day weekend and add a day to Spring Break.

- Community Forum
  We held our final community forum last week and I'm so grateful to all of the people who have dedicated their time to join us and participate in this process. At the conclusion of the session last week, we asked individuals to fill our a thought catcher. We have since also shared the thought catchers with our Principals and asked for faculty to complete them. The thought catchers asked which components of the bond they view as most important, whether the respondent would vote yes, no, or would be undecided if they vote were today, and what additional information or clarity would be needed to vote with confidence. There were nineteen filled out at the forum. Fourteen indicated they would vote yes, four were undecided, and one did not indicate. There were none that indicated they would vote no.

- Shandaken Town Board Meeting
  Trustee Bishop and I attended the Shandaken Town Board meeting last night to hear the discussion related to the Phoenicia campus. The Town was sharing with the community that if they are provided with the campus for $1, they are then limited in how they can utilize the building. For example, they would not be able to lease space in the building to for-profit entities. In their initial thought process, they had believed that they could create revenue that would support the maintenance and upgrades to the building by leasing space. Only being able to lease to municipalities or not-for-profit entities is a limiting factor. There was discussion related to the District putting the campus on the open market and the Town purchasing it that way so there are no limits on how they use the property, but it was quickly mentioned that in that scenario, the Town may not be the highest bidder and the District would not be able to pick who to sell it to, but would be required to sell to the highest bidder.
  The Town Supervisor also noted that he had been in contact with the Board of Elections and had discussed putting the sale of the property on the ballot in November if they are not ready for us to put it on our May ballot. I shared that I don't believe that is an acceptable plan because it has to be approved by all of our district voters on a school ballot. The Supervisor indicated he would follow up with the Board of Elections.
  It is my opinion that the Town will not be ready to commit to us in time to have a proposition included on the May ballot, but we are waiting to hear more from the Town Board.

- Meet, Greet, and Eat will take place on April 7th from 5:30 - 7:30.
- Superintendent's Conference Day is next week on March 12th. Topics will include: Co-teaching, assessments, MTSS, and safety team work.

6. Board District News

6.01 The Board will report District News

- Trustee Knutsen wanted to report that the Trivia Bowl will be held tomorrow night, March 5, 2025, in the MS/HS cafeteria from 3pm – 5pm and urged the community to attend
- Trustee Jerome happily reported that the Communications Committee demoed a communication tool called ParentSquare
    - This platform could be available to parents in the district.
    - It integrates all marketing channels and news channels , in addition to allowing parents to have the availability to communicate with teachers directly from the tool

7. Student Representative Report

7.01 The Student Representative on the Board, Olivia McHugh, will give a report

- This week there are many exciting events! Tomorrow evening there will be Trivia Bowl from 3pm to 5pm in the High School Cafeteria. Thursday will be the high school Powder Buff game where boys play volleyball and girls will coach.
- This past weekend, the middle school science olympiad traveled to compete in a tournament.
- Additionally, Onteora High School athletes participated in the track and field state qualifier at the armory, competed in the NY State Wrestling tournament, and skiers competed in the NY State Championships. This weekend Onteora swimmers will be competing at the state championships. And tonight, Onteora's Girls and Boys basketball teams are playing in their sectional semi-final games.

8. Presentations

8.01 Presentation on the Structure of the Capital Improvement Project (duration 30 min)

9. Acknowledge Public Be Heard Comments

9.01 The Board will acknowledge the public be heard comments from the last meeting

Daniel Souweine
Jillian Kahn Urrutia
Jessica Wisneski

10. Public and Student Comment

10.01 Public and Students may comment on any agenda or non-agenda item

- Faedra Dagirmanjian
- Tansy Michaud
- Stephanie Bryant
- Sierra Smith
- Pam Parker

11. Discussion and Possible Action

11.01 Continued Discussion on the Structure of the Capital Improvement Proposition (s) for the May 20, 2025, Vote (duration 45 min)

- During the board discussion, Trustees Bishop, Jerome, Knutsen, Reimondo, Goodrich, and Hemingway Lynch all expressed their support for one proposition. While Trustee Mitchell-Marell shared some concerns about having only one proposition, she indicated that she would support it if that was the consensus of the board.
- Additionally, both Trustee Bishop and Trustee Reimondo prepared statements, which they read during the meeting. These statements are enclosed for reference.

  "I want to reiterate that no one here takes this decision lightly, and it's important to recognize that this has been an ongoing process and discussion over many years. Since we began the process of district consolidation, our responsibilities have included assessing the need for change, engaging with the community and stakeholders, and creating a clear plan for implementation. This has involved numerous presentations, forums, and discussions focused on managing financial resources, addressing transportation and staffing needs, and maintaining educational Equity and Quality for all of our students. Throughout, the board has prioritized transparent, consistent, and thoughtful communication, which has helped guide those who have engaged with the process, leading us to this point.

  We have, and will continue to consider the impacts on students and staff and understand the importance of supporting people through transitions that we acknowledge are difficult and emotional.

  We've learned valuable lessons from past experiences, such as integrating Phoenicia students and staff into Bennett and moving 6th graders to the Middle School. Those moments taught us what worked well and where we can improve going forward.

  We are at a pivotal moment in Onteora's history, and it's important to remember that this district isn't just one town. As board members, we are entrusted with making decisions that impact everyone we serve. Children from Shandaken, Olive, Woodstock, Hurley, Marbletown, and Lexington comprise our student body. Our role is to make decisions based on the best interests of all our stakeholders, not just for today but to ensure that Onteora Central School District thrives for future generations to come.

I fully support one proposition that creates a unified 21st century, student first, staff forward, fiscally responsible, community minded central campus that has zero tax impact on our taxpayers." – Trustee Meghann Reimondo

"For those of you who don't know me well, I served as Director of PPS in Onteora for several years, till my retirement in June of 2021. The next day, I became a school board trustee. As a Pupil Personnel Services administrator in Onteora serving for a period of almost 10 years, I supervised all special education programming and staff. That included OT, PT, Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Speech-Language Pathologists, School Psychologists and Social Workers, all English as a New Language staff and all Academic Intervention Services staff. Year after year, I was faced with juggling staff and programs, especially self-contained special education classes, to meet the ever-shifting enrollment in our two K-3 buildings. There were times when special classes mandated by State Ed to have no more than 12 students would have as few as 3 or 4 students enrolled. For entire years, handfuls of students would spend each school day receiving the most restrictive programming I had ever experienced because we were forced to maintain 2 K-3 buildings.

We had full time special ed teachers and related service staff driving midday from one school to another where their student caseload could be as low as two or three students per grade level.

Our students with special needs were bussed all over the district, often having to change schools mid-year when their programming needs changed.

We bussed all of our K-3 ENL students, who lived all over the district, to Phoenicia to conserve staffing and balance enrollment.

With the exception of our ENL program, much of what I just described still happens because of our current elementary configuration.

The first Kindergarten class I supported in Onteora is graduating from high school this year. It is a large class by our standards, with 108 students enrolled. This year's kindergarten class is 72 students. A Cornell University study predicts that NY State's population could drop over 13% by 2050 due to low fertility rates and aging.

These are facts: All of our schools hold a fraction of the students they once held. Our schools are old, built in the 1950s and 60s, and need upgrading. To provide the necessary support and services and offer excellent programming to all of our students, we maintain two full elementary faculties and staff in two buildings separated by 12 miles. Many of our elementary staff still travel between two buildings to support their students, losing precious instructional time, just like they did in the 2011-12 school year when I began my tenure here. Our current elementary student to staff ratio is 5.5 to 1. That's a ratio of 5.5 students for every

1 professional staff member. Woodstock Day Schools' website states that their current private school student to staff ratio is 14 to 1.

This model is unsustainable. It does not provide our students with the educational experience they deserve. We have a great opportunity to bring all of our students together on one campus which will be enhanced by our community's shared vision. From new and improved classrooms to a new K-12 gym, enhanced music rooms and improvements to our MS/HS auditorium, and incredible improvements to our current football field and track. We can do all of this at no additional expense to our tax payers, by incorporating the savings made by closing the Phoenicia and Woodstock schools into our budgets over the life of our bond.

I am not willing to gamble, at our elementary student's expense, on how drastically or exactly when NY State Foundation Aid will be reduced or cut from our district. I take my role as school board trustee in a public-school district very seriously. I was elected to serve all the students in all the towns and villages and all of the taxpayers, district wide. I believe in careful fiscal planning and providing the best possible programming in a sustainable and inclusive school setting.

For all the reasons I have stated here, I support one proposition that includes improvements to a beautiful, sustainable, and unified K-12 central campus." – Trustee Cindy Bishop

- Trustee Knutsen referenced *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt during the discussion, highlighting a section of the book that emphasizes the importance of encouraging children to engage in outdoor play rather than spending excessive time on electronic devices.

Recommended Action: The Onteora Board of Education hereby approves adding one proposition(s) to the May 20, 2025, ballot

Motioned: Trustee Reimondo
Seconded: Trustee Goodrich
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

11.02 Discuss Nomination for Ulster BOCES Board Seat

11.03 Discuss 2025-2026 School Calendar

12. **Break**

12.01 The Board will take a 5-minute break if needed

13. Consent Agenda

13.01 Approve Consent Agenda

Recommended Action: The Board hereby approves item numbers 13:02 -13.09

Motioned: Trustee Reimondo
Seconded: Trustee Knutsen
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

13.02 Approve Overnight Trip

Recommended Action: The Board of Education hereby approves the overnight trip for Liam Young to compete at the NYSPHSAA Boys Swim Championships at Ithaca College, 953 Danby Road, Ithaca, NY on March 6 - 8, 2025, and pay all necessary fees.

13.03 Cell Phone Assignments

Recommended Action: The Board of Education hereby approved the following update the cell phone assignments as below: (update in bold)

Cell Phone Assignments 2024/2025
MIFI Access Point –Lance Edelman
Victoria McLaren
Lance Edelman
James DiDonna
Gabriel Buono
Scott Richards
Dieter Schimmelpfennig
Nicole Sommer
Kyle Harjes
Thomas Sharon - SRO
Jonnah O'Donnell
Elizabeth Fallo
Carol Grima
Stephanie Laffin
Amanda Allison
Raymond Clinton
Rosalie Mernin
Corey Halwick - SRO

13.04 Personnel Agenda

EXTRA DUTY STIPENDS

NAME	POSITION	AMOUNT
Funck, Brianna	Track-Spring-Assistant Coach (volunteer)	-$0.00-
Spada, Derek*	Baseball-Modified- Head Coach	$2,300.00
Steiner, Bryan*	Math Club	$2,000.00
VanEtten, Kelsey	Track-Modified-Head Coach (boys)	$2,850.00

pending pre-employment processing

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: NON-INSTRUCTIONAL

EMPLOYEE NUMBER	EFFECTIVE DATE FROM -TO	REASON
3282	02/20/25 – 03/10/25	FMLA Paid
3328	03/18/25 – 04/01/25*	FMLA Paid
4322	04/18/25 – 05/07/25*	Paid Medical Leave of Absence
4322	05/08/25 – 05/30/25*	Unpaid Medical Leave of Absence
3986	02/18/25 – 06/30/25	Intermittent FMLA (Paid until time is exhausted)

anticipated dates

TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT: INSTRUCTIONAL

NAME	POSITION/SCHOOL	EFFECTIVE DATE FROM-TO	REMARKS
Iapoce, Judith	Elementary Teacher/Bennett	04/07/25 – 06/30/25	MA Step 1

SUBSTITUTE

NAME	POSITION	RATE
Greenhall, Liam*	Teacher (certified)	$150.00/day
Heller, Lee*	Teacher (uncertified)	$115.00/day
Heller, Lee*	Teaching Assistant (certified)	$115.00/day

pending pre-employment processing

RESIGNATIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL

NAME	POSITION/SCHOOL	EFFECTIVE DATE	REMARKS
Ahouse, Melanie	Teaching Assistant/High School	06/30/25	Retirement

The following named NON-INSTRUCTIONAL personnel have served a probationary status and are recommended to a PERMANENT STATUS consistent with the applicable laws and regulations of the State of New York:

NAME	POSITION	PROBATIONARY DATES	PERMANENT DATE
Gates, Amanda	Employee Benefits Specialist (Schools)	11/13/24 – 02/12/25	02/13/25
Lemmens, Joris	Network Support Specialist II	From provisional to permanent HELP Program	12/27/24

13.05 Donations

Recommended Action: The Superintendent recommends acceptance of a donation totaling $717.94 CASH, from Upstate Images LTD to be used to support the Woodstock Elementary Owl Store. The Superintendent recommends approval to increase the 2024-2025 budget per the following donations: Upstate Images LTD A2110.431-07 Supplemental $717.94

13.06 Financial Report

Recommended Action: The Board has reviewed and hereby accepts the Financial report from January 2025

13.07 Stipulation of Settlement

Recommended Action: BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education hereby approves the disciplinary settlement agreement with respect to Employee # 03042025, and the Superintendent of Schools or their designee is hereby authorized to execute the agreement on the District's behalf.

13.08 Surplus Items

Recommended Action: BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, on recommendation by the Superintendent of Schools that the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District declare the attached list of items as surplus and authorizes the sale, public auction and/or disposal of these items.

13.09 Schedule U-The Committee on Special Education (CSE) and Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE) Recommendations

Recommended Action: The Board hereby approves the Instruction - Schedule U-The Committee on Special Education (CSE) and Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE) Recommendations, Schedule U, #03/25, Confidential, as reviewed by Trustee Reimondo

14. Contracts and Independent Contractor Retainers

14.01 Approve all Contracts and Independent Contractor Retainers

Recommended Action: The Board of Education hereby approves item numbers 14.02 -14.06

Motioned: Trustee Reimondo
Seconded: Trustee Goodrich
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop

14.02 Accept BIDS for the Security Vestibule and Site Work-Phase 3B

Recommended Action: The Board of Education hereby accepts the following:
•Kingston Equipment Rentals, Inc. of West Hurley, New York should be awarded Contract 1 - Site Construction in the total amount of One Million One Hundred Ten Thousand Three Hundred and Forty Dollars, $1,110,340.00; a copy of their bid and bid bond is attached.
•Transitional Builders, Inc. of Staatsburg, New York should be awarded Contract 2 - General Construction in the total amount of Five Hundred Sixteen Thousand Three Hundred and Seventy Five Dollars, $516,375.00; a copy of their bid and bid bond is attached.
•Ashley Mechanical, Inc. of Kingston, New York should be awarded Contract 3 - Mechanical Construction in the total amount of One Hundred Twenty-Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Dollars, $127,900.00; a copy of their bid and bid bond is attached.
•Stone Creek Electric LLC of South Cairo, New York should be awarded Contract 4 - Electrical Construction in the total amount of One Hundred Fifty-One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty Dollars, $151,180.00; a copy of their bid and bid bond is attached.

14.03 New Paltz CSD Health and Welfare Services Contract

Recommended Action: BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the New Paltz Central School District establishes the rate of $1,561.34 per pupil for the school year 2024-2025 for Health Services provided for Onteora resident pupils attending nonpublic schools in the New Paltz Central School District.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board President and Clerk of the Board of Education be authorized to sign contracts for health services for the 2024-2025 school year.

14.04 Taconic Hills CSD Health and Welfare Services

Recommended Action: BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Taconic Hills Central School District establishes the rate of $823.96 per pupil for the school year 2024-2025 for Health Services provided for Onteora resident pupils attending nonpublic schools in the Taconic Hills Central School District.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board President and Clerk of the Board

of Education be authorized to sign contracts for health services for the 2024-2025 school year.

14.05 ICR- S. Sheth

Recommended Action: BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED on recommendation by the Superintendent of Schools that the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District approve the Independent Contractor Retainer between the Onteora Central School District and Snehal R Sheth MD retained as Child & Adolescent Psychiatry effective March 5, 2025 to June 30, 2025 at a rate of $400 per hour to a maximum of $8,000.00 and authorizes the Superintendent to sign such an agreement

14.06 ICR- Solution Tree, Inc

Recommended Action: BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED on recommendation by the Superintendent of Schools that the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District approve the Independent Contractor Retainer between the Onteora Central School District and Solution Tree, Inc. retained as Trainer effective March 5, 2025 to June 30, 2025 at a maximum rate of $8,000.00 with no fringe benefits or deductions and authorizes the Superintendent to sign such an agreement.

15. Committee Reports

15.01 Audit Committee

- Nothing to report

15.02 Communications Committee

- Trustee Hemingway Lynch expressed her enthusiasm for the ParentSquare communication tool and inquired about the next steps for its implementation.
    - In response, Superintendent McLaren explained that she is currently awaiting a price quote and details on the implementation process. She also mentioned the possibility of setting up a sandbox environment to allow the board to review the product before making a final purchase decision.

15.03 Facilities Committee

- Nothing to report

15.04 Legislative Action Committee

- Nothing to report

15.05 Policy Committee

- Nothing to report

16. Old Business

16.01 The Board will discuss Old Business

- Nothing to discuss

17. New Business

17.01 The Board will discuss New Business

- Trustee Knutsen requested clarification regarding how the Board should respond to public emails addressed to the Board of Education.
    - Superintendent McLaren recommended reaching out to the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) for guidance

- Trustee Mitchell-Marell suggested adding a dedicated tab to the Onteora website homepage, allowing prospective parents to easily access information and sign up for school tours.

18. Request for Information

18.01 Board Members will Request Information of the Superintendent

- Nothing to request

19. Adjournment

19.01 Adjourn the Meeting. Next meeting is March 18, 2025, at the Middle/High School

Recommended Action: Motion to adjourn meeting at 9:42 pm

Motioned: Trustee Reimondo
Seconded: Trustee Jerome
Result: Unanimous
Yea: Trustee Knutsen, Trustee Jerome, Trustee Mitchell-Marell, Trustee Goodrich, Trustee Hemingway Lynch, Trustee Reimondo, Trustee Bishop