

Orange Southwest School District (OSSD)
Regular Board Meeting on Wednesday December 10, 2025
Braintree Elementary School
6pm

[Click Here](#) for a video replay of part 1 of the meeting.

[Click Here](#) for a video replay of part 2 of the meeting.

I. Opening (6:00 pm) Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Board Chair Anne Kaplan

- **Board Attendance:** *Ensuring a quorum* – Rachel Gaidys, Beverly Lauchner, Ryan Anderson, Anne Kaplan, Martha Hafner in person with Sam Hooper, Aimil Parmelee and Rachel Fish remotely. Administration: Michael Clark and ORCA media in person, Robin Pembroke and Kyle Southworth remotely.
All attending public was remote: Joe Bent, Amy Ferris, Molly Mullen, Abi McFadyen, Tracy Gardner, Todd Lewis, Lisa Floyd, Dan Morrison, Beth Osha, Kathryn Fredericks, Lauren Futtner, Herb Perez
- **Meeting Purpose:** Initiation of Budget Process
- **Review and Accept Agenda:** *Meeting purpose? Are these the right agenda items? Is the right amount of time allotted?*

II. Ownership Linkage (6:05)

- **Public Comment:** Please hold comments on the budget until the second public comment. *The Board welcomes comment but is not able to take any action. Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker.*
No comments
- **Review Updated Budget Numbers and Preliminary Data**
Michael Clark spoke, discussing the level service draft budget presented to the board last month. The board requested the leadership team come back with another plan to keep the budget under the excess cost threshold – this new plan includes retiring the associate principal position at the high school, the assistant director of special education position, and removing the unfilled (but budgeted) interventionist position as well as replacing teacher PC laptops and MacBooks with high-end Chromebooks. These current cuts will not reduce faculty or support staff, and will not impact students but Michael Clark warns that the next level of reductions (if required) would. The board questions if the administration reductions will cause the district to lose federal funds, and what mechanisms are in place to re-distribute the work load? Michael Clark responds that federal funding for the retired positions would be repurposed elsewhere, and replacing the assistant director of special education with an inclusion specialist position would allow the district to maintain students within the OSSD so they wouldn't have to be tuitioned out.
The board asks if there is any federal funding expected for the increased special education expenses? Michael Clark responds that expense above \$67,000 per student is reimbursed through federal funds at 90%. This is considered in the budget – with tuition as an expense and the reimbursement as revenue.

Lisa Floyd responds to the re-distribution of responsibilities by explaining the plan to take the position apart and have other staff take on portions of the work that are aligned with what they already do.

More questions about timelines for getting the remainder of the data from the state (weighted average should be available mid-December, yield is set by the legislature, probably coming in January). Conversation of what the yield is and how it affects tax rates. The data relies heavily on the Dec. 1, 2025 tax letter which projects the Equalized Homestead Tax Rate to be \$1.8362, up .61 of a penny from last year's \$1.8301. The Tax Department has projected CLA rates for the three towns with Braintree remaining level, Randolph increasing by 8 cents (per \$100) and Brookfield 12 cents (per \$100). Michael Clark stresses that tax rate projections are very preliminary and the only thing he can guarantee is that the numbers will not be the same as the actual end result.

- **Public Comment:** specific to the *updated budget information*. *The Board welcomes comment but is not able to take any action. Comments limited to 3 minutes per speaker.*

No comments.

- **Board Discussion:** Does the Board believe this is supportable by the taxpayers?

Hearing no public input, board members are prepared to support the budget as presented.

- **Next steps and Budget Timeline reviewed**

With all of the data available from the state in time for January's meeting, the board is anticipating the warning and ballot with the finalized figures.

- **Up for Learning Update**

The last meeting of the series was held Tuesday, Dec 9 at the VTSU campus center in Randolph Center. Secretary Saunders, Aaron Davis and the Assistant Director of the VPA attended student presentations. Michael Clark suggests the board consider inviting the RUMHS Up For Learning students to attend the January board meeting and share their vision. Districts involved in this are OSSD, WRV and Montpelier. The students are looking forward to presenting to the House Education Committee. Michael Clark clarifies this is the students' vision of what education in Vermont could look like, not a problem solving exercise or roadmap to how the state can solve any current education issues. The board requests the Up For Learning presentation be added to January's agenda.

III. Board Process (7:30)

- **Support Staff Negotiations (Pick a date for committee)**

The Staff Negotiation Committee is comprised of Anne Kaplan, Rachel Gaidys, Ryan Anderson and Martha Hafner. Typically the meetings with the Association are 5-7 pm. The board discusses what days might work best, Thursdays appear to be the best fit for all (with the exception of the second Thursday of each month). Michael Clark will send out the ground rules and reach out to the Association to arrange the initial meeting.

- **Sabbatical Request: Accept/Reject Sabbatical Request**

Brief discussion of the process of Sabbatical Requests in general. Rachel Fish would like to continue researching how these requests are handled in other districts (multiple requests, etc.) The board encourages further research.

VOTE: Martha Hafner moves to accept the sabbatical request of Amy Churchill Ferris for the 26-27 school year. Beverly Lauchner seconds and the motion passes unanimously.

- **Review Draft of Annual Report from the Board**

Anne Kaplan presents the letter to the board, short discussion outlining what the board thinks is important. Anne Kaplan will update with suggestions and forward to Ben Merrill for inclusion in the Annual Report.

- **Discussion around meeting with Legislators**

The board typically meets with Legislators at the February regular board meeting. Discussion that the meeting runs longer because of the dense content, does the board want to schedule a special meeting in March or April for just the Legislative discussion or continue to have it in the regular meeting? Members of the board agree that February works best given that March is potentially given over to the on-boarding of new members. Sam Hooper offers to reach out to lawmakers to invite them to the regular February 11, 2026 meeting at the RUMHS Media Center. They have traditionally filled this role.

VOTE: Rachel Gaidys moves that the board meet with Legislators in February and requests that Sam Hooper coordinate communication and invitations. Ryan Anderson seconds the motion which passes unanimously.

IV. Board Education (7:45)

- Reminder of Policy Governance Virtual Training January 22, 2026

V. Monitoring the Organization (7:50).

- Review EL 2.4 & 2.5 (BMD 3.4.5) 1st Read

Michael Clarks reports more work needs to be done on 2.5 Emergency Superintendent Succession. Last year there was an assistant superintendent that could assure the district would operate efficiently if superintendent services were suddenly lost, but that position has been resigned. Michael Clark reports that while a good mechanism for this eventuality is not yet in place, one is in the works. He will offer an interim report on EL 2.5 at the January regular meeting and finalize it in February.

- Financials (EL 2.3 Financial Conditions)

VI. Policy Decisions for District Governance (8:00)

- None for this month

VII. Monitoring the Board (8:10)

- Board Self-Evaluation: Monitoring compliance with Board Governance Process and Board Management Delegation Policies.

Board discusses.

- GP 4.5 Governance Investment – Self Evaluation

Board discovers and discusses that the policy was incorrectly named on the agenda. Agreement that the conversation should be tabled until next month when the discussion is properly titled.

VOTE: Anne Kaplan moves to table discussion of 4.5 until the January regular meeting and review both 4.5 and 4.6 at that time. Beverly Lauchner seconds, the motion passes unanimously.

VIII. Consent Agenda (8:20)

- Vote on acceptance of Consent Agenda: *Items that the Board has previously delegated to the Superintendent, but that an external authority requires the Board to approve. The entire Consent Agenda is adopted by one motion, without discussion. However, an item can be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion with a majority vote GP 4.3.4.*
- Approve Minutes from November 12, 2025
- New Hires

VOTE: Aimil Parmelee moves to accept consent agenda as presented, seconded by Rachel Fish. The motion passes unanimously.

IX. Closing/Incidental Information (8:25)

- Superintendent's Report
 - Up for Learning Project
 - Ends Snapshot

Michael Clark draws attention to the December ENDS snapshot that immediately follows the Superintendent's Report in the board packet this month.

- Action Item Recap

The board reviews assignments

X. Executive Session

VOTE: Aimil Parmelee moves to find that premature general knowledge regarding the superintendent's contract clearly places the board at a substantial disadvantage because the board risks disclosing its negotiation strategy if it discusses the superintendent's contract in public. Motion is seconded by Ryan Anderson, and passes unanimously.

VOTE: Aimil Parmelee moves to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the superintendent's contract under Title 1, Section 131 (a)(1). Sam Hooper seconds, the motion passes unanimously.

The board goes into executive session at 7:55 p.m. with Michael Clark attending for the first few minutes to offer information, then exiting.

Future Meetings

- Agenda Planning Meeting: Monday January 5 at 6 pm
- Regular Board Meeting: 6pm January 14, 2026 at Randolph Elementary

Respectfully submitted:

Kyle M. Southworth

Administrative Assistant, 12/12/25

Executive Session Minutes Form

Name of Board : Orange Southwest School District

Date of Meeting: 12/10/25

Continuation of minutes provided by: Martha Hafner

Executive Session

7:53 p.m. A motion was made by Ryan Anderson and seconded by
Aimil Parmelee to enter Executive Session to discuss

with/~~without~~ the Superintendent present.

Vote Passed/Failed _____ - _____

8:10 p.m. The board exited Executive Session.

As a result of the Executive Session:

8:56 a motion was made by Rachel Gaidys for Anne Kaplan to contact Pedro to arrange a special meeting on Mon, Jan 5 or Tues Jan 6 at 5 pm for a meeting to include an executive session to arrange contract wording. Aimile seconded. It was unanimously approved.

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Ryan Anderson and seconded by

Aimil Parmelee to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Martha S. K. Hafner