

Orwell Village School Board
Regular Meeting
December 15, 2009

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Peter W. Ochs, Glen Cousineau, Judy Fyles, John Tester

Administration: Penny Lienhardt, Sue DeCarolis, Laura Jakubowski

Others: Andrea Ochs, Beth Eddy-Montello

John Tester called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Judy moved the Board into executive session at 7:03 p.m., seconded by Glen and passed.

Out of executive session at 7:06 p.m., no action taken.

Glen moved the Board to approve the minutes of November 17, 2009, seconded by Judy and passed. Glen moved the Board to approve the minutes of December 1, 2009, seconded by Peter and passed.

Public Comment: Andrea Ochs inquired as to when a meeting was going to be scheduled regarding the combined classroom. Sue responded that she will be sending out a letter. It will be January 12th.

Correspondence: John read a letter of resignation from Herb Schulte dated December 15, 2009. Judy moved the Board to accept the resignation with regret, seconded by Glen and passed.

Principal's Report: The school has brought the 7th and 8th grade students together for English and writing using a writing workshop model. Students in 7th and 8th grade share the same grade expectations and the heterogeneity of the group insures good models for all students. A writing workshop emphasizes students conferring and collaborating around individual writing assignments. In this type of setting students serve as "teachers" as well to one another. The three teachers working in this setting jointly plan lessons and report lessons being richer and more creative as result of collaboration.

Another feature of the writing workshop is that many of the grammar lessons are a result of what is seen in student writing. Experience has shown that students are more engaged when lessons stem from their own writing.

Students are assessing their own writing and conferencing with one another incorporating ideas suggested by other writers.

Sue also reported that Googledocs is being used by students in 6th through 8th grades. Googledocs provides access to a complement of applications including Word, Publisher, Excel, etc. from home via internet access. This allows students to work at home and continue the work

at school. Students can invite other classmates and their teacher to look at their writing. Those invited can share feedback on the document sent eliminating multiple copies of the same document. It has been the experience of many teachers that students are more willing to revise when making use of the computer rather than rewriting assignments by hand. Judy commented that if a student isn't strong in the writing area they may be hesitant to read their work. Sue will address this and get back to her. Judy thought it was more of an anxiety issue. Sue stated that no kid would be force into that situation.

Sue also shared the Marcie Hoenes has worked hard to develop an alternative program for some of the students here a Orwell who learn better through a hands-on, multidisciplinary approach. This life skills-oriented program has been developed in cooperation with the life skills program at the high school insuring a smoother transition. These students dedicated time to reclaiming the garden on the south side of the school. In addition to saving plants that will be transplanted in the spring, they have also restarted a composting program making soil that will enrich this once beautiful garden.

Plans include erecting a greenhouse in the spring, making a picnic table or bench where people can sit and enjoy the surroundings. These students are rightfully proud of the work they have accomplished.

Other - Sue stated that 38 children attended the H1N1 flu clinic; 68 out of 112 kids have been immunized. It was well worth it, went smoothly.

Sue informed the Board that Andrea Ochs has volunteered her services on January 13th to train staff in CPR from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. She is also going to be working in health class training 7th and 8th graders over four weeks.

Judy inquired if the girls' basketball home games are here or in Benson. Sue replied Benson, she will have an answer tomorrow. Judy took some boys to Middlebury and ran into a referee who wasn't aware that the home games may be played in Benson, it's hard to get Janelle. Sue will call her and have her get in touch with him. They have hired a CSC student to coach the 5th grade.

John gave everyone the Board's report to read over and see if there's any comment/ changes, they can email Sue with any comments. John commented that the 2009 SAT results were outstanding, and there is a comment in there about that. Sue said that it's important to make sure our kids are meeting the standards of the test.

HVAC Upgrade Review/Recommendations – Penny distributed some notes on the project and went over them. Laura stated that there is a qualified construction bond which allows us to have a zero percent interest rate and pay the principal back at the end, installments are in a reserve fund. Orwell has always used the local bank. She asked Mark Young to hold the bond. He is going to look into it. It's going to require a lot of work. We could have the sinking fund in his bank. As we approach March and try to sell the bond, we will keep him in the loop.

Laura suggested rolling the envelope part of the project into stage 1, have the warning incorporate the whole thing, go to \$412,000. We will then have enough money to cover the project if we don't get the grant. We need a motion to go ahead with the project. Glen asked what would

happen if we did get the grant. Laura replied that the issuance will take place after Town meeting, and we won't know if we have the grant or not. If we bond for the higher amount and get the grant at the end of the project, it would go in a fund for payment for the debt service. There was further discussion. Laura stated that the grant is making it more difficult, we don't have all the answers. Ron feels comfortable asking for the higher amount. It's best to have the answer before we go for the bond.

Laura stated that we need to send the application into the State. The Vermont DOE goes through the construction department, we won't know answers until after we get approval and go forward. We have to be careful about incurring expenditures before we get the bond. We may have some short-term borrowing, it's driven by the IRS.

John said that \$17,000 is built into the budget for the envelope of the building. If the voters approve \$462,000 for Phase II and we don't get the grant for Phase I, we will be putting resources on a thin line. Laura suggested the warning be written to allow for building improvements. Sue indicated that there are other things for energy efficiency that are not being covered. Laura suggested doing an informational meeting, can explain to them here are some alternatives. Glen stated that if we have \$45,000 left over the last year we won't have to put in the last year. Judy liked the idea of adding the \$45,000 to the bond, wants to use the grant money first. There was further discussion.

Judy moved the Board to go forward with the HVAC efficiency upgrade bond for the Town Hall building and the school building at an estimated cost of \$410,000, seconded by Glen and passed.

Judy moved the Board to set the tuition rate at \$11,000 for elementary and \$9,500 for secondary, seconded by Glen and passed.

Laura passed out a copy of the proposed 2010-2011 expenditure budget. Judy inquired about raises for non-teaching staff. There was a handout regarding this at the special budget meeting. John stated that 2 ½ percent was included in the budget for bus drivers, paras, secretaries and non-union staff. In January they will decide on pay raises for individuals. Sue went over the OT related services on page 5.

Glen moved the Board to approve the expenditure budget for FY 2011 in the amount of \$1,730,235, seconded by Judy and passed.

Judy moved the Board to approve the warning which includes a \$15,000 article for the bus reserve fund, seconded by Glen and passed.

Judy suggested changing the Board Report in the beginning to "police officers" and "firefighters." John will make the changes and send to Central Office. Peter moved the Board to accept the Board report with corrections, seconded by Judy and passed. Laura indicated that it will have to be redone and resigned after Herb's name is removed from the document.

Laura presented the Board with a final copy of the June 30, 2009 audit. On pages 44-45 there is a letter with the accountant's findings. One thing listed is an accounts receivable which has been on the books for 4 to 5 years. It went back to the Select Board in Orwell regarding appraisals.

The Select Board held back an amount. Laura stated that it needs to be written off, she doesn't like having a receivable for more than 90 days.

Judy moved the Board to accept the FY 2009 financial audit as presented, seconded by Glen and passed.

Old Business – Penny stated that Ron is still waiting word from legal counsel on the ball field. It's still being researched.

New Business – Now have a Board vacancy, need to advertise for it, put it in the newsletter. Sue will put handbills around town and post immediately on the website. Andrea Ochs stated that the deadline to be put on the Town ballot is January 25th.

Peter asked that the time of the Board meetings be changed to 7:00 p.m. on the website. Sue will change it.

John stated that he is opposed to the school district consolidation, you lose control. We need to make sure our legislators here from us about how we feel about it.

John stated that Cathy Alger's technology report was very good. We currently have 77 networked computers and getting another mobile lab. Technology is going to be an important topic. Judy volunteered to be the Board technology contact. There was some technology discussion.

Last year the School Board got lunch for teachers for the holidays. John thought they should do something for teachers and staff. Sue stated that what impressed the staff was that the Board members each signed their name to the card. The food was nice.

Judy moved the Board to approve an expenditure for lunch and flowers for the staff, seconded by Peter and passed. John suggested that Board members stop by.

In looking at the bills, Glen questioned the price of oil. Pyrofax billed \$2.47 per gallon and it should be \$1.98 per gallon. Laura stated that it's wrong; she will have it corrected and get a credit. Glen would like this included as an agenda item for next month.

Glen moved the Board to approve December bills in the amount of \$74,094.78, seconded by Judy and passed.

Judy moved the Board to adjourn at 8:57 p.m., seconded by Glen and passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Flood