

THOMPSON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 13, 2023

In attendance: Absent:
Kathleen Herbert Danielle Carlson
Thomas Angelo
Matthew Polsky
Valentine Iamartino
William Witkowski
Jessica Bolte
Linda Jarmolowicz
Heather Santos

Also in attendance: Melinda A. Smith, Michelle Giammarinaro, Nathaniel Mayo, Kim Granato, Laurence Prentiss, William Steglitz, William Birch, Heather Burns, Shannon Grauer

I. **Call to Order**

Chairman Kathleen Herbert called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Chairman Update**

Kathleen Herbert stated that she had so much fun at the cereal challenge last week. It was a spectacular event and thanked Mrs. Tupaj, the leadership team, volunteers, and donors who made this event happen. She sent a special shout out to Geoff Bolte for taking the video. Mrs. Herbert reminded everyone that the Board of Finance workshops have started. They are held every Thursday at 7:00pm in the Town Hall Seney Room.

IV. **Citizens' Comments**

None.

V. **Student Spotlight/TMHS Liaison Report**

Tara Heffernan introduced Jacob Perry as Student Spotlight for the month of February.

TMHS Current Events:

- 3/1: TMHS Pops Concert
- 3/6: Student Council meeting 7pm
- 3/7: Cereal Box Challenge
 - TMHS Library Presents: *Hidden Figures* 2:15-4:30
 - Parent/Player Spring Sports Meeting 6:00
- 3/8: TMHS Pride Day
- 3/9: SEARC presents an informational session on vaping from 6-7pm in the Library
- 3/10: TMHS Midnight Madness Returns! 6:00-Midnight
- 3/15: PSAT's 7:25-11:15
- 3/17: Professional Development Day
 - Jordyn Butler and Eric Levesque present at the CAS Retreat in Norwich about the work of the ECC Diversity Council
- 3/22: SAT Test for all Juniors 7:25-11:15
- 3/24-3/26: TPS Presents: *Mary Poppins Jr.*

Student Voice:

- There was a student voice form written by a student that was concerned about the portion sizes of school lunches. The student was concerned that students were not getting enough food to eat. Student Council members noted that the lunch staff must follow dietary guidelines set by the state and federal governments. Members also pointed out that students are welcomed to take additional items of fruits and vegetables if they wish.
- One member of the Student Council also expressed the hope that cafeteria seating could once again be arranged to allow for students to sit together in small groups while maintaining security in the lunchroom.

Evan Antonson and Tara Heffernan read “thank you” cards that students and teachers wrote for Board of Education Appreciation Month.

Mary R. Fisher Elementary 4th grade student, Grace Roy, read a letter she wrote to the Board for Appreciation Month.

Thompson Middle School students, Ella Sousa and Jorden Burns, also read letters of appreciation to the Board members.

VI. Girl Scout Presentation

Jessica Bolte introduced Girl Scout Troop 61193. The troop recently made 40 emergency bags (pads/tampons/wipes/deodorant/toothpaste/toothbrushes/soap/shampoo/conditioner) and presented them to the school.

VII. Approval of Minutes

- a. February 7, 2023 Special Meeting
- b. February 9, 2023 Special Meeting
- c. February 13, 2023 Regular Meeting
- d. February 16, 2023 Special Meeting
- e. February 23, 2023 Special Meeting

Motion by Jessica Bolte, seconded by Linda Jarmolowicz – to accept all the minutes with specific amendments as discussed.

Motion – Passes. Unanimous.

VIII. Sub-Committee Update

Kathleen Herbert stated that there will be a Communications Sub-Committee meeting on March 27th. Matthew Polsky stated that a Policy Sub-Committee meeting will be scheduled soon.

IX. Superintendent Report

- a. *Enrollment Report* - The total enrollment for the month of March is at 892 students.
- b. *Bullying Report* – Melinda Smith stated that there have been three confirmed allegations of bullying in the school district since the beginning of the school year, all at the middle school level.
- c. *2023-2024 School Calendar* - The Board members received three different versions of the school calendar for FY24. Discussion was held.

Motion by William Witkowski, seconded by Linda Jarmolowicz, to approve the Option Number 1 for the 2023-2024 school calendar as presented.

Motion – Passes. Unanimous.

- d. *Response to Grading Update* – Melinda Smith stated that they are taking the students’ comments and concerns about the 70/30 grading change seriously. The administration is going to talk to the

students about raising the rigor of standard-based instruction and what that means to them. Mrs. Smith also learned in this process that in the teachers' grade books, not all of the teachers are assessing the same point values for summative, formative, projects, and presentations. The faculty and staff need to have a more aligned type of grading process in place to assign those points and weights. The curriculum leaders would like to work with each department to get better aligned.

- e. *Cursive Writing Update* – Melinda Smith stated that Laura Stefanski, ELA Curriculum Leader, did some research on the topic. Twenty-one states in the U.S. require cursive writing, and twenty-nine do not – Connecticut being one that does not require cursive writing. Mrs. Stefanski is going to meet with the teachers to determine which teachers are or are not teaching penmanship and cursive writing. The teachers will decide if they are going to integrate these into the curriculum, at which grade levels, and what programs to use.

X. Administrator Reports

The administrators and directors gave updates on events happening in their schools or departments.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

Valentine Iamartino thanked Melinda Smith, Danielle Pederson, Bill Birch, and the security team for setting up the dinner for the Day Kimball Women's Board meeting. There were about sixty women who were impressed with the school property and the museums on the second floor.

XIII. Correspondence

XIV. Citizens' Comments

Thomas Angelo stated that the budget that the Board of Education put forth was a sound budget and it is a shame that the Board of Finance members, except for one, attended all the BOE meetings, and understood where and how the budget was created. He also thinks it is premature that the BOF have a pre-set number in mind for a mil rate, before the mil rate has even been established.

Kathleen Herbert stated that the Board of Finance have received several letters from concerned citizens and they need to be inundated with letters. At least one of the BOF members does respond to those letters. Mrs. Herbert stated that we need to get people out to the meetings, write letters, be on zoom.

Heather Santos asked about the town survey. Melinda Smith stated that the survey closes on March 23rd, and the results can be downloaded with graphs. Amy St. Onge, and Kathleen Herbert, may choose to show the results at a BOF meeting. Survey reminders are being sent out as much as possible.

More discussion was held regarding the Board of Finance.

XV. Adjournment

Motion by Linda Jarmolowicz, seconded by Jessica Bolte, to adjourn the meeting at 8:37pm.

Motion – Passes. Unanimous.

Minutes provided by: Danielle M. Pederson, Recording Secretary