

## **SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC) MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2026**

Present: Jack Bast, Barb Booth, Bruce McPherson, and Josh Patchett in person; Peter Carney, Linda Fusco, Mike Galow, and John Zamrock via Zoom.

Guests: Dave Martucci, Amanda Peterson

Absent: Beth Barton-Navitsky, Walt Lender, Sandy Smith, and Sally Thurston.

Meeting opened at 10:02 am with the pledge of allegiance.

The Minutes from the March 5 meeting were presented for approval and were approved.

### **Discussion**

#### **Ti Assessments Review**

Dan Vincelette has drafted an additional letter supporting our 02/27/2026 request for an alternative equalization rate based on evidence provided by Peter regarding mill payments to TCSD 2016-2025. The FMV of the mill is not included in the school tax apportionment, and the payments are not included in the tax cap calculations. Dave, Dan and Jack will coordinate to get the new information to State from Dan and from the Town promptly. This is urgent in order to impact the 2026 tax year (September deadline).

Note: Initiation of these actions occurred over the weekend and were not well communicated to the entire Committee. Improvement in this area where significant actions are being taken is warranted.

#### **CHPE PILOT-to-Host Agreement**

Dan thinks we don't have much leverage. Peter differs: The Ticonderoga town attorney says it's fraught with liability for the town. It may just die on its own.

Bruce suggested that we send supportive letters to the holdouts, going through the reasons why the change is a bad idea. We need to be consistent with own Hague Resolution opposing it. Maybe send to all, not just the holdouts, in hopes of withdrawal of support by those who have already voted in favor. A benefit of the change is extra revenue for education (PILOTs are counted as taxes for the tax cap, while host agreements are not), but the drawback is that it's a much weaker legal position.

It was noted that the energy projects have not paid their PILOTs on time. Non-payment is a breach of contract. We aren't sure about late payments.

#### **Academic Performance Improvement (API) mission**

The Hague Chronicle has published Peter's data on TCSD test scores' position in the latest state rankings. Jack has sent the article on to The Sun with the idea of spreading the information to the Ti community.

Barb has yet to contact the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers about their students' outstanding math test scores. Will also reach out to Evan Mack in response to his letter to Linda looking for concrete actions re academic improvement.

Josh suggested that we could look for education grant money for Ti (as Tom Jebb did for all-day pre-k). Linda pointed out that we would need information / cooperation from Ti in order to complete grant applications.

Linda offered various ideas:

NLGF is open to funding gaps in education, as Dr. Catania is doing in Lake Placid.

In Essex County there is a group that helps kids with learning issues. (Families First? "We work to raise awareness and help families who have children with mental health issues.")

Literacy programs need excellent librarians, not just clerks handing out books.

It might be possible to send reading material home in the Backpack Program.

LGV's retiring principal Jim Conway is likely available for consulting.

Mike observed that since TCSD management isn't taking leadership re educational improvement, they might accept "little packages of help" from us, if we offered them something ready to go. Maybe we could find community grants (that wouldn't require the input from the school district as education grants would) or offer specific volunteers to do a specific thing.

It would model that solutions exist.

It would demonstrate that Hague is serious about education.

It would be hard to turn down.

Linda added that we may be able to learn something useful from Dr. Catania, who has a community program in place.

We don't know what process / requirements are in place for volunteers to Ti schools.

Jack said that John MacDonald, a past Superintendent, is back in the area, and Jack will ask him about how to gain entrée.

Josh observed that while Nephew, Russell, and Leerkes are very defensive, Wotton and Jebb are interested in improvement, and maybe others are reachable. Linda will follow up with Dr. Catania and Kathleen of NLGF.

More ideas:

Is "taxpayer rights" a tool we can use to demand more from the schools?

We need to be on social media, influencing public opinion.

Maybe the Rural Schools Association can help more.

We should invite the community to talk about their needs.

We should request a budget presentation in Hague from the TCSD, and keep inviting the Superintendent even though he turns us down. Peter thinks Hague would support going over the tax cap if the benefits were made clear.

Run candidates for the school board.

Josh has heard about 60 new apartments and 30 new single-family residences to be built. Barb heard (at the last school board meeting) about 200 new jobs related to the mill, explicitly connected to the idea that good schools make the community more attractive for new hires.

#### TCSD School Board of Education (BoE) Meetings

Plan for April 21 BoE meeting:

- Plan for getting to academic goals – are there interim goals? Jack will ask again.

SAC 04-13-2026 Meeting - Minutes

- Invite Budget presentation in Hague

Next meeting Thursday 5/7/26, 10:00 am.

Adjourned 11:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Booth