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Hardwick Signals Support for BLM, Ponders Signs

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK—One week after opening the discussion for a resolution in support of Black Lives Matter, the Hardwick Select Board reconvened for further discussion and signed a resolution. A new policy was drafted to address public placement of signs.

The resolution as drafted stated the select board “endorse[s] Black Lives Matter” as a matter of duty.

“It is the duty of the Hardwick Select Board to consider the well-being of all people living and working in our town,” the document states. “[T]he Town of Hardwick strives to be a welcoming, inclusive, and safe community, where all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity or expression of sexual orientation, immigration status, religious or political affiliation can feel protected, included, secure, safe, and ensured of equal justice under the law.”

The resolution included acknowledgment of “both recent and past evidence of violence against Black and marginalized people” and that “many forms of discrimination, including physical violence, are being used to support an unfair system of advantage for white people.”

The resolution further detailed the board’s position that it has “seen the intimidation and bullying of marginalized people in our own town.”



A group of people of all ages gathered in front of the Gohl Block in Hardwick for the fourth Saturday in a row to raise awareness of racial injustice. photo by Doug McClure

The use of violence and intimidation “are in direct conflict with basic human rights as well as the ideals of Democracy,” the board found, and concluded “we endorse Black Lives Matter.”

The initial draft called for establishing a committee to

determine what actions to take, but concerns were raised that it would add to the approximately fifteen standing committees already in place and require the board to appoint members.

Board member Lucian Avery questioned what role the committee

would play, as numerous other groups in town have formed similar committees. He further asked whose job it was to enforce the list of goals. Board member Shari Cornish replied that was the exact job description of the select board.

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OSUED Has Budget Surplus, Consolidates Food Services

by Emmett Avery

HARDWICK—The Orleans Southwest Union Elementary District (OSUED) board met for a regular meeting on June 22. Topics included the relocation of surplus funds, food services, the hiring new staff and expansion of existing positions.

Brittany Currie, Director of Finance at Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU), told the board she expects OSUED schools to finish the year with a budget surplus of \$223,323. Currie said she thought the surplus was caused by the district merger – whose first full budget cycle was this fiscal year – and not

by anything related to the coronavirus. The board discussed what to do with the surplus. Currie recommended carrying much of the money forward to help with the fiscal year 2022 budget which, in the words of board chair Katharine Ingram, is projected to be “a doozy.” OSSU superintendent Adam Rosenberg said there are several possibilities for ways to use the money: roll it forward to 2022, add it to a building fund, or use it for current expenditures before the end of the year. He said the principals recommended a hybrid approach, with some money to be spent this year, and the rest carried over to the FY 2022 budget.

One proposed expenditure was the purchase of 150 Chrome Book Computers for pre-K through second grade in Hardwick. Hardwick principal Patrick Penneck said that under normal circumstances the school would not provide such technology to those grade levels, but the pandemic has forced them to consider new options.

The board discussed how much surplus money to roll forward. Ultimately, they voted to allow principals to use \$75,000 of the surplus for technology supplies, school custodial supplies, and outdoor education supplies, as deemed necessary.

Currie reported that the food

service-facilities manager at the Lakeview campus has resigned. She said OSSU plans to consolidate food services across OSUED into the Hardwick Elementary kitchen. Going forward, all food will be prepared in Hardwick and then delivered to the Lakeview and Woodbury campuses. Woodbury’s food was prepared in Hardwick for the past year. Currie said the new arrangement, coupled with the reorganization of the facilities manager position, would result in a district savings of \$68,710.

Penneck told the board he does not expect to provide any reliable information about school reopening protocols until the end of July or beginning of August.