

# The REPORTER

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## OVUU Board meeting ends after Thornton refuses to yield floor

### Equity policy continues to divide board and inflame disagreements

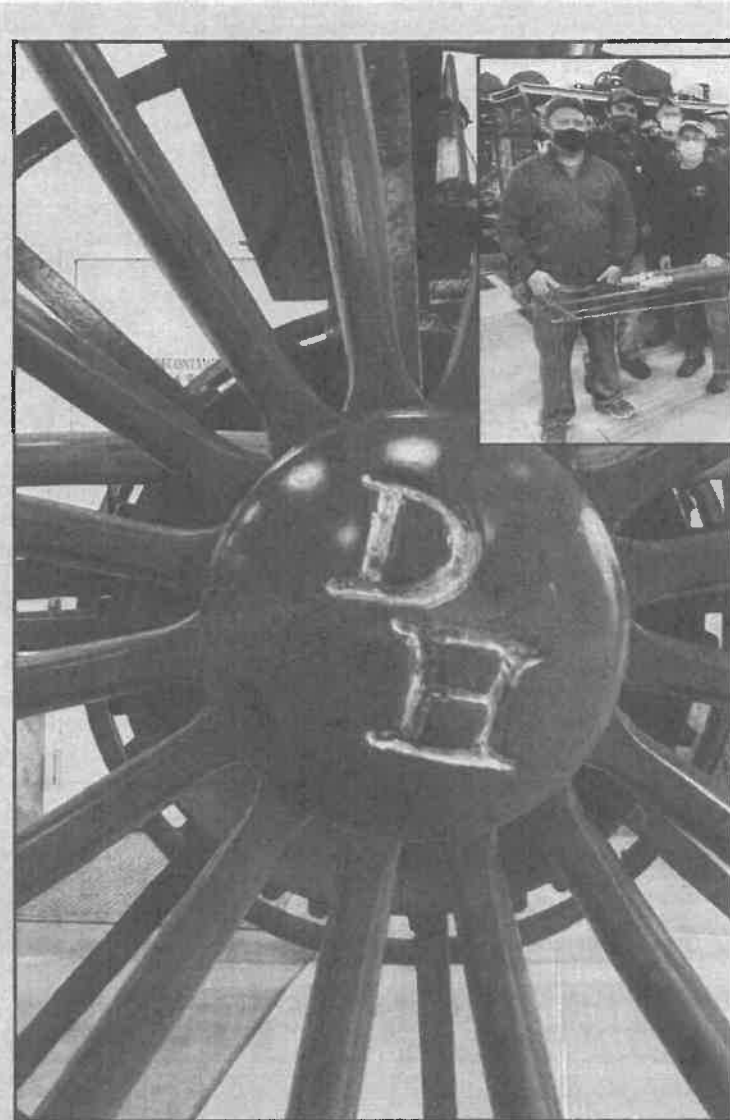
By LEE KAHRS

BRANDON — Disagreement and unrest continue on the local school board regarding a proposed equity policy, causing the last meeting to end prematurely.

One member of the Otter Valley Unified Union School

Board, Kevin Thornton, has come out against the proposed policy, saying there are class differences and biases in the school district that outweigh race issues because there are so

(See Equity policy, Page 3)



## Antique fire hose cart gets

By LEE J. KAHRS

BRANDON — "It's the kind of process, you know what's missing."

Spoken like a true craftsman/machinist. Anyone who knows Dick Shortsleeves knows only

to spend on his other interests, like restoring antique cars. He's got two 1926 Model T's and a 1924.

So, when he found out that the Brandon Fire Department had a 1850s



SEN. PATRICK LEAHY, D-Vt. and his wife Marcelle, walked the newly refurbished Robert Frost Interpretive Trail in Ripton last week stopping to read some of Frost's most famous poems. Sen. Leahy spoke to around 50 people at the trail's dedication, stressing the many benefits of outdoor recreation and the fact that the Frost trail was now universally accessible throughout the entire 1.2 miles.

Addison Independent photo/Steve James

## Sen. Leahy dedicates Robert Frost Trail

RIPTON — While walking a formidable career as an attorney in

# Equity policy

(Continued from page 1)

few students of color, and that (economic class differences) should be the focus of the policy. He also said that the proposed policy amounts to "indoctrination" of students by telling them

*"I'm not giving up the floor. Go ahead and end it, Laurie, I'm not giving up the floor. I am getting to the policy... I'm saying that these policies are profoundly hostile to the idea of education itself."*

Kevin Thornton  
OVUU Board member

how to think instead of letting them think for themselves.

School district officials in favor of the policy hope it will create a school climate more sensitive to bias and prejudice against marginalized groups in general, including students of color, LGBTQ youth, low-income students, foster kids, and the differently-abled. If the policy is adopted, there would be expected behavior standards among students and staff alike that everyone would be expected to conform to, and current curriculum will be examined to excise insensitive policy and educational practices.

Thornton read a prepared statement at the May 5 OVUU Board meeting regarding the backlash and his position on the issue. Roughly one minute into his remarks during the equity policy agenda item 2.9, OVUU Board Chair Laurie Bertrand interrupted Thornton and asked him to get to the policy point. Thornton refused. They proceeded to talk over each other at length.

"I'm going to finish, Laurie, sorry," he said.

"I will end the meeting because here's the thing — you're not talking about the policy," Bertrand said.

"I'm not giving up the floor," Thornton replied. "Go ahead and end it, Laurie, I'm not giving up the floor. I am getting to the policy."

"Then you need to get to the

policy," she replied.

"Don't interrupt, there's a line of argument here that's important to get through," Thornton said, "and I'm going to get through it or you're going to have to end the meeting."

"Well then, I guess we're ending the meeting, so thank you everybody for your time," Bertrand said. "I told you to get to your point and the point is 2.9."

"You told me to get to the point and you interrupted me last time and then you let people speak over us and interrupt and it's really important that we get these arguments out there," Thornton replied.

"Yes, but I want to talk about 2.9," Bertrand said. "I understand your frustration, but what I want to talk about is what's important to our kids, and 2.9 might be important to our kids. I'm not sure how our kids feel about that, so I would like to hear your thoughts on 2.9."

"You're hearing it from me and I'm saying that these policies are profoundly hostile to the idea of education itself," Thornton said.

"OK," Bertrand responded. "So that's what you think, so can I move on to what other people think?"

"I'm sorry, Laurie, I'm not done yet," Thornton said. "I'm sorry, so you either have to end the meeting or you have to let me continue."

Again, Bertrand said she would be forced to end the meeting, and Thornton said he was submitting his statement for the minutes.

"That's fine, you have it your way," Bertrand told Thornton. "I'm the chair and I told you (that) you needed to pull it to-

gether and you don't want to."

"I'm a paragraph away from talking about the specifics of the policy," he said.

"So, talk about the specifics of the policy, please," Bertrand said.

Thornton proceeded to continue with his statement, and spoke about his detractors and those who have accused him of being racist.

"So what's the purpose of education in their minds?" he asked. "The truth is that they're really not interested in education. They're absolutely not interested in teaching kids to think for themselves. They're interested instead in indoctrination, which

*"I understand your frustration, but what I want to talk about is what's important to our kids, and 2.9 might be important to our kids."*

Laurie Bertrand  
OVUU Board Chair

is exactly what this policy will give us. You could drive a truck through how open this policy is to abuse."

Bertrand interjected.

"OK, you're done," she said. "Goodnight everyone."

And with that, the May 5 OVUU Board meeting was adjourned.

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# Equity policy

(Continued from page 3)

Bertrand and Thornton have declined to comment further on the May 5 meeting.

Earlier in the same meeting, Thornton asked that the minutes be changed to reflect what he felt was a more accurate description of what happened when Brandon resident Claire Astone made comments critical of Thornton at the meeting.

Thornton proposed language to add to the minutes that stated Astone interrupted him without being recognized by the chair and "screamed" at him that he was the "personification of white privilege and that white males had no right to speak on these matters but must confine

themselves to listening." He later offered to change "screamed" to "expressed," and made a motion to change the minutes to reflect his addition.

Before the vote, board member Barbara Ebling read her own statement about the minutes regarding the professionalism and accuracy of longtime local recording secretary Charlene Bryant. She said, in part:

"I wish to commend Charlene Bryant for keeping her recording stable, even, fair, and objective. She betrays no bias, she highlights no individual weaknesses, she humiliates no one. I have attended many meetings in my time on the board where tempers have flared, emotions have

risen, and interruptions have occurred. These colorful yet incidental details are not pertinent to the recorded minutes and are excluded. I respectfully recommend that we take no action, and allow the minutes of the April 7 board meeting to stand as approved at the April 21 meeting."

The board voted and the motion failed by a vote of 6-4.

The next OVUU Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 19 at 6 p.m., online or phone. Visit [www.rnesu.org](http://www.rnesu.org) and click on the May 19 meeting under Meeting and Events. The login and call in information to participate in the meeting is listed under "More details."

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