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MSAD #17 Advancing Modernization Efforts with Financial Operational Assessment

Board engages BerryDunn to work with Interim Superintendent Jonathan Ross, the district finance team, and stakeholders to conduct an assessment of the district's payroll and financial operations

South Paris, Maine – The Oxford Hills School Board is tasking interim Superintendent Jonathan Ross with leading a financial operational assessment of the district and has engaged BerryDunn, [a top 100 national accounting firm](#), to support the work.

BerryDunn came highly recommended in the search that Acting Superintendent Steve Ciembroniewicz led for an accounting firm qualified to conduct the administrative review. The Board [unanimously approved a proposal](#) not to exceed \$125,500 for the first phase of the work at its August 17 meeting.

At the same meeting the Board received an update on the work the district is doing [to resolve an IRS Lien](#) expected to be reconciled soon with no cost to the taxpayers.

Next Step in Modernization of the Oxford Hills School District

The assessment and work plan to be developed by BerryDunn is the next step in the district's on-going work to rightsize and modernize the state's 8th largest district by student enrollment. The modernization work has tallied millions in facility and position savings through voter-backed budgets and building decisions over the last two years.

In June voters overwhelmingly approved an [FY 2027 spending plan](#) that was the only large district budget in Maine this year to meet the needs of students and educators with \$0 in new spending.

Insights for New and Future District Leaders

The Oxford Hills School District is in [the midst of a leadership transition](#) that will include the launch of a community-engaged search for a new superintendent later this fall.

The assessment, with initial findings expected in December, will provide the district's new and future leadership team, the Board, and stakeholders with detailed, expert insights into its financial operations. BerryDunn will also develop an implementation work plan for resourcing and improving a unit that oversees a \$54.4 million school budget, payroll and benefits for more than 600 employees, and the district's many contracts and grants.

“Fair and accurate compensation for district employees is essential,” said Kevin Farnum, President of the Oxford Hills Educational Support Personnel Association. “We strongly support the Board’s decision to conduct an assessment and look forward to working closely on the project with Interim Superintendent Ross and the Central Office Team.”

“Recordkeeping must be accurate when it directly affects the wages, benefits, and employment history of our staff,” Jeni Jordan, President of the Oxford Hills Education Association. “Maintaining accurate employment records is critical to ensuring our staff receive the benefits and compensation they have earned.”

“We are modernizing the Oxford Hills School District to get the most out of every dollar our property taxpayers contribute to local education,” said Troy Ripley, Chair of the MSAD #17 School Board. “One of the nation's very best accounting firms is going to help us assess our financial operations and give us a road map for how to improve our stewardship of public dollars and better keep our commitments to our 600 employees.”

“The Board appreciates and values the professionalism of the district’s finance team,” continued Ripley. “We are counting on their contributions as we assess and plan for the future of their department.”

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