

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **Thursday, November 21, 2013**

3
4 **ATTENDANCE**

5
6 Amherst School Board

7 Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, Amy Facey, James Manning, and Paul Prescott

8
9 Administrative Team

10 Peter Warburton, Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Renea Sparks, Nicole Heimarck, Betty
11 Shankel, Janet Davis, Pam Gross

12
13 Minute Taker

14 Beth Penney
15

16 **PUBLIC HEARING**

17 Ms. Bennett called the public hearing to order at 6:33pm.

18 Ms. Shankel stated that this public hearing was to accept revenue, which was included in
19 what was sent to the Department of Revenue for the tax rate setting. This is a share of
20 medical and dental premiums sent back from LCG HealthTrust, in the amount of
21 \$290,684.95.

22 **CALL TO ORDER**

23 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

24 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

25 Principals' reports

26 Mr. Manning asked about the Courage to Care program and the parent partnership meeting
27 this past month.

28 Mr. Dodge discussed the parent partnership meeting about the Courage to Care program.
29 The program is co-authored by UNH professor. This is to fulfill a requirement by law to
30 have a program to discuss bullying. AMS had vetted several over the summer and Courage
31 to Care best fit the NH law and focuses on caring and not bullying. This program focuses
32 on the positive. The health teachers, administration, and counselors have been trained in the
33 program. This program is tied in across the curriculum and discussed with students even
34 in discipline incidents. The focus is in 6th grade, but the program has pieces for the other
35 grades, also.

36 Mr. Manning asked about costs associated with the program.

37 Ms. Sparks stated that the SAU paid for counselors to go to the training and paid for the

38 booklets for each student. Mont Vernon is doing the same program with their 6th grade.

39 Ms. Facey asked about the Family Math Night.

40 Mr. St. Amand stated that the night was held at Wilkins and 85 parents and 25 children
41 attended. The feedback from the night was very positive. There was a combination of
42 elementary and middle school presentations, which were very well received. Parents could
43 participate in two sessions targeted to specific topics and grade levels. This was well worth
44 doing.

45 Mr. Dodge thanked all of the teachers who came to participate.

46 Mr. Manning mentioned that the write up in the Union Leader was great publicity for what
47 the schools are doing.

48 The board and the administration discussed the article and thanked all of the people
49 involved.

50 The board and the administration discussed the success of the Math in Focus program and
51 how other schools have been coming to Amherst to see the program. Mr. Manning and
52 Ms. Heimark spoke about how impressed they are as parents by how much their children
53 know and how they love math.

54 Memorial proposal

55 Mr. St. Amand stated that Clark/Wilkins is interested in putting together memorial project
56 to recognize Martha Wagner. He discussed Ms. Wagner's passions and impact at
57 Clark/Wilkins. He passed around a sketch for the memorial. The project would cost \$3,900
58 and the schools would like to start the fundraiser soon. The funds would come from staff
59 and families and they several people who have already come forward to offer substantial
60 contributions.

61 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the proposal for the memorial for Martha**
62 **Wagner. Ms. Facey seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

63 Mr. Warburton discussed his work with the scout leaders who had addressed the board
64 about putting fliers out to families. There are now links to groups in town on the SAU
65 website under community. One link says Scouting in Amherst and any other club could
66 be on this menu. Mr. Warburton also meet with the PTA, PTSA and the Jr. Women's Club
67 to reinforce that those groups could hand out paper 5 times per year since they do a lot of
68 fundraising for the schools and provide scholarships. All other groups will be allowed a
69 combined flier 2 times a year. The boy scouts sent a flier out in early November and they
70 got great feedback. Mr. Warburton thanked the boy scouts for working with the schools.

71 Mr. Warburton discussed a recent article in the Amherst Citizen discussing board meetings
72 that were not posted previously. The SAU had sent invitations out for a Common Core
73 round table and this was posted as a SAU board meeting. The SAU has always posted
74 every meeting in the required time.

75 M. Warburton stated that if the public is trying to reach board members they should use
76 the member's sprise email account, which is the first letter of the first name and the full
77 last name at sprise.com. If the public has a comment or question for board they should
78 send it to the SAU office 48 hours before a meeting.

79 Mr. Warburton also stated that people should go see high school play, Our Town.

80 Board Commitments

81 Ms. Facey stated that she was giving an update on two initiatives: college and career
82 readiness and teacher and leadership effectiveness.

83 There are articles published by the NH Department of Education about the Common Core
84 which have been posted on the school website. A thorough reading of those documents will
85 provide clarity on a variety of issues including understanding the standards and the
86 difference between standards and curriculum.

87 Ms. Facey discussed the Math in Focus program and the program review committee. There
88 were multiple opportunities for people to get involved including forums, online access,
89 student input, parent input and all of these opportunities are advertised. Currently there are
90 online videos, math nights, and teacher lead programs. This is the 1st year of
91 implementation for the Math in Focus program. She will have an update about Literacy in
92 the next few months

93 Ms. Facey stated that the committee is currently in the Program Review Committee process
94 for Teacher Leader Effectiveness. They have passed standards for teaching with a few
95 revisions based on feedback from teacher forums. The committee is looking at 5
96 observations models and will narrow that to 2 models to pilot next year.

97 Ms. Foulks stated that her committee has begun to discuss defining excellence and
98 indicators of excellence. The committee would like to form a Smart goal and determined
99 performance criteria (standards). The committee discussed involving a third party to design
100 a program. There are many programs to consider looking into that look at how to evaluate
101 the schools. The committee will spend the next several weeks to look at the evaluation
102 groups programs which include: NEASC, BALD, and ASCD.

103 Ms. Bennett stated that the board saw the budget assumptions last month and will see the
104 1st draft tonight. Next week the board will start working with Ways and Means to look at
105 line items and report out to the board. Beth Baker, the director of finance, helped Ms.
106 Bennett to form an outline for the budget process manual and discussed the people they
107 need to interview to fill in the blanks. They will start writing the manual next Thursday.

108 Mr. Manning discussed the strategic planning data gathering that happened last month. He
109 discussed the survey that was sent out. 210 parents completed an online survey, and the
110 information was rich. At the SAU meeting the board had a chance to review the data and
111 some common themes appeared. They also have paper surveys from 1500 – 2000 students
112 and teachers. They are working to find common themes in those surveys. Tuesday Nov.
113 26th a survey will go out in Amherst Citizen and it will be available on Patch also. The

114 committee is ready for the next step, which is to identify issues and core challenges for the
115 SAU. They will look at this topic on Dec. 17th at the next SAU board meeting.

116 Mr. Prescott stated that the technology committee formed the FY15 budget. They
117 conducted two levels of training for staff and Mr. Prescott congratulated Bruce and his
118 team. At the recent committee meeting they discussed I39 training and budget items. They
119 are meeting again in January to look at strategies in I39 for early learning and how to
120 measure technology integration in the schools. They will also discuss the Office 365
121 internal email tool, where students can only email to other students. The administration
122 has to make decisions as to what grade levels that function will be turned on for. This will
123 be determined by Dec. 5th for AMS and Dec. 6th for the Elementary schools. A notice will
124 go out to parents and parents will have a feature to turn this function off if they want opt
125 out. He discussed the goals for the next month's committee, which include defining the
126 next set of milestones, looking at how to ensure all teachers are posting homework to I39,
127 and securing professional development time for I39 training to be able to implement
128 aspects of the program.

129 **PUBLIC TIME**

130 Paula Marie Passen, president of PTA, stated that last weekend at the PTA conference in
131 Concord the 2012/2013 board won a gold seal award. May Balsama gave an inspirational
132 speech about the impact the PTA has on students and schools. Pat Gould from Clark School
133 won the Partnership Award fro her work creating quilts with the students to use as
134 fundraisers for the schools.

135 Mr. Warbruton asked the board to write a letter to the PTA and Pat congratulating them.

136 **CONSENT AGENDA**

137 Ms. Bennett pulled the retirement requests.

138 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the consent agenda containing the Minutes for**
139 **September 18, 2013, October 16, 2013, October 17, 2013, the Treasurer's report for**
140 **September 2013, and the FY14 1st Quarter report. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion**
141 **and the vote was unanimous.**

142
143 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

144 Effective and Inspirational Teaching Extended School Year (ESY)

145 Pam Gross, Janet Davis and Renea Sparks

146 Ms. Sparks stated that Karen Hopper, the director of the extended school year program,
147 was suppose to be here, but could not be at the meeting tonight.

148 Ms. Davis stated that ESY is a mandated program for special education students and
149 students requiring related services beyond the school year. This program is to help them

150 maintain their skills. She discussed the history of ESY program in Amherst since 2002 and
151 the changes in 2008 to address social and emotional curriculum. The program added social
152 skills by using programs at P MEC and in 2012 added direct social skill instruction for some
153 students.

154 Ms. Sparks discussed revisions to the program each year. They looked closer at the
155 program when the district started to work with RTI. This past January they created a vision
156 for ESY including instruction focusing on students' goals, life skills, social interaction,
157 having adults that are part of a collaborative team, and collecting formative and summative
158 assessment for each student. They started the new program this year and had the program
159 at the building the children would attend in the fall. She discussed the criteria of how
160 children qualify for Extended School Year. The schools used learning specialists and case
161 managers to help them determine who qualified. ESY created learning labs, which focused
162 on reading, writing, and math. The goal was to have as many services embedded in the
163 classroom as possible. She discussed the financial savings of having this program and RTI.

164 Ms. Davis stated that for preschool through 4th grade, 42 students attended ESY at Clark.
165 The program was more individualized and data driven. It included daily living skills,
166 applied instruction, used a collaborative learning team (reading, writing and math), and the
167 therapies were in the classroom and not pulled out.

168 Ms. Gross stated that AMS the program was similar to Clark. They are already seeing the
169 success with the integration. The 22 students who attended wanted to be there and were
170 engaged. The program was data driven using a rubric and the related services were
171 integrated.

172 Ms. Sparks discussed and shared a quote about success of the changes in the program. The
173 administration had surveyed the ESY staff about the new program and Ms. Sparks shared
174 the results. The timing of the program was better; giving the students and teachers a break
175 between school and ESY and then after ESY before school started. She discussed the need
176 to improve upon the assessments for next year.

177 Ms. Gross discussed the results of the assessment based on goals for each student in
178 literacy. There was a small amount of regression in skills. About 50% of the students took
179 the assessment.

180 Ms. Gross discussed the results for Math comparing students who attended ESY and of
181 those who did not attend ESY.

182 Ms. Facey asked if they looked at gathering data on whether students meet their particular
183 goals in their IEPs.

184 Ms. Sparks stated that they would look into fine-tuning the recommendation for students
185 who maintained skills without attending ESY.

186 Ms. Davis discussed the assessment results for Clark/ Wilkins for Literacy and Math. Both
187 showed that ESY was successful.

188 Ms. Sparks discussed a note from the preschool teacher Ms. Ballantyne. She stated how
189 wonderful Ms. Ballantyne was preparing those students for when school started. The
190 comments from the staff survey were overwhelmingly positive. The program revision
191 helped to look at the individualized needs of the students, was more cost efficient, targeted
192 skills and deficits in the students and he staff worked more collaboratively. She stated that
193 they would like to survey the students and parents next year.

194 Ms. Bennett and the board discussed their appreciation of the changes made to the program
195 including having goals prior to changing the program. They discussed the consistency of
196 teachers and paraprofessionals from year to year. There are many eager people to teach
197 ESY, so have some changes are made to make it equitable for those who want to participate.

198 FY15 Budget 1st Draft PP

199 Ms. Shankel discussed the budget process and the key budget drivers as shown in the
200 presentation.

201 Ms. Shankel stated that the FY15 budget is a 0.45% decrease, which does not include the
202 AEA agreement, which will be a warrant article. This is a \$108,713 decrease. There are
203 fewer budget challenges this year. The health insurance increase is the lowest it has been
204 in years only a 4.4% increase and NH retirement is flat. NH retirement has had huge
205 increases in the past.

206 Ms. Shankel discussed the predicted enrollment and salary and benefits as in the
207 presentation slides. She discussed the warrant articles including the operating budget, AEA
208 Collective Bargaining Agreement, the need to not put money in the Facility Maintenance
209 Trust and the recommendation to add a Special Education Expendable Trust for when on
210 occasion there is a need for unanticipated expenditures.

211 Ms. Heimareck discussed initiatives with the Math Program Review process including a
212 new resource to support Common Core for 7-12. They are looking to pilot 3 resources for
213 the middle school and at the high school. She discussed the Teacher Leadership Review
214 process and the small financial amount needed to support the field test of two observational
215 tools. She discussed the new standards for Math, Literacy, Science and Social Studies.
216 This year the focus is on literacy and they will look at science next year. The schools are
217 purchasing leveled readers and novels to address the shift in text complexity in the new
218 standards.

219 Ms. Shankel discussed RTI initiatives.

220 Mr. Dodge stated that AMS is a demonstration site for RTI and schools are coming to visit.
221 AMS is also taking many calls. RTI is very important work, which better meets the needs
222 of the children and the services are directed to the specific needs of each student.

223 Mr. St. Amand discussed the expansion of the pre-school and the need for a full time
224 position for next year. The preschool is growing quickly he will be requesting 0.5 position
225 for the 3 y.o. program.

226 Ms. Shankel discussed school accreditation.

227 Mr. St. Amand discussed the budget goals, work on RTI with guidance from AMS, and
228 adding smart boards for every classroom k-4.

229 Mr. St. Amand and Mr. Prescott discussed the use of the Smart Boards. All of the current
230 Smart Boards are being used and many of them heavily. The learning curve is sharp and
231 the board and Ways and Means are welcome to visit the school to see the boards in use.

232 Mr. St. Amand discussed ongoing professional development.

233 Mr. St. Amand discussed enrollment and how it continues to increase. 5 students are being
234 added in the next 2 weeks. Homes in Amherst are starting to sell. Kindergarten had to go
235 over the cap for the morning class. If Amherst offered a full day Kindergarten they would
236 have many more students who are currently attending private Kindergarten.

237 The board and Mr. St. Amand discussed where the students are coming from.

238 Mr. St. Amand discussed the trimester reporting and the work with Mont Vernon to make
239 the progress reports standardized. He also discussed assessments.

240 Mr. St. Amand discussed the increase of 1.0FTE professional staff for the preschool/
241 special education teacher and the reduction of 0.65FTE paraprofessional.

242 Mr. Manning asked to see how RTI is executed in the schools. He would like to see how
243 data is used and how it is applied in the classroom. He would like to see how variable RTI
244 is and how a parent would know it is happening.

245 Mr. Prescott stated that he would like to see the budget saving attributed to RTI and how
246 those dots are connected.

247 Ms. Sparks stated that AMS has a RTI grade level meeting every Thursday to discuss the
248 action piece of RTI.

249 Mr. Dodge stated that Patty and Pam could show the board how RTI works and how data
250 is being used in the best possible way to support instruction.

251 Ms. Bennett asked to have RTI as a presentation I January.

252 Mr. St. Amand stated that Meg Trainor is the RTI coordinator for Clark/ Wilkins.

253 Mr. St. Amand discussed staffing comparisons for the last 2 years and the FY15 for
254 certified and non-certified staffing numbers.

255 Mr. Dodge discussed the focus of the FY15 budget including technology, RTI, 21st century
256 skills, new standards, and the student teacher ratio. He discussed enrollment of 684 students
257 this year and a prediction of 633 students for next year. At AMS the FY15 budget would
258 reduce 2FTE for regular education, 1 FTE special education, 0.3FTE Psychologist, and

259 2.0FTE paraprofessionals

260 Mr. Dodge discussed the comparisons from the last 3 years for certified staffing and non-
261 certified. He stated that class sizes would be a little larger next year especially in grade 6.

262 Ms. Shankel stated that the district has explored full day Kindergarten, future facility needs
263 and SAU 39 strategic planning.

264 Mr. St. Amand stated that he plans to make a proposal for FY16 for full day Kindergarten.
265 There is lots of interest. No one offers full day Kindergarten in districts around Amherst.

266 Ms. Heimarck stated that Nashua has full day Kindergarten in a ew Title One schools, but
267 this is not open to all students.

268 Mr. Prescott discussed the reduction in teachers and the class size in 6th grade. He
269 wondered if reducing too many classroom assistants/paraprofessionals is risky.

270 Mr. Dodge stated that this is just draft 1 of the budget and there are always changes based
271 on the needs of the students. An extra set of hands is always a good thing. If the school
272 gains 10 or 20 children it is hard to add a teacher, because numbers of students are spread
273 out across the grades. He stated that he could look at the numbers more closely.

274 Ms. Sparks stated that they have new information about some people moving to Amherst
275 and draft 2 of the budget may have just a reduction of 1 paraprofessional and not 2.

276 Ms. Shankel discussed the next steps for the budget process.

277 Ms. Shankel discussed the draft of the warrant articles including the Operating Budget,
278 AEA agreement, and the Expendable Trust for Special Education of \$50,000.

279 Jay Cohen spoke to the board after coming from a cub scout round up night. He stated that
280 after the Nov. 15th hard copy handout the girl scouts have 15 new members, the ski trip
281 from Amherst recreation has a full bus, and tonight was the largest cub scout roundup in
282 town of Amherst with 7 new scouts and probably 3 more. It is great that this one hard copy
283 distribution in spring and fall will help the community. He wanted to stop by to say thank
284 you for working with them to find a resolution.

285 **Action Item**

286 **Ms. Facey made a motion to accept the surplus return of LGC premiums in the**
287 **amount of \$209,684.95. Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the vote was**
288 **unanimous.**

289 **Mr. Manning made a motion to go into NON-PUBLIC SESSION under RSA 91-A:3**
290 **II. (a)(b)(c) at 8:46pm. Ms. Foulks seconded the motion and the role call was all yes.**

291