

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **Thursday, November 15, 2012**

3
4 **ATTENDANCE**

5
6 **Amherst School Board**

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

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9 **Administrative Team**

10 Peter Warburton, Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Renea Sparks, Betty Shankel, and
11 Nicole Heimark

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13 **Minute Taker**

14 Beth Penney

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16 **CALL TO ORDER**

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18 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

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20 Mr. Warburton welcomed all of the students presenting tonight. The meeting will not be
21 televised, but the administration will video tape the students presentation and put it on the
22 website.

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25 **PRESENTATIONS/ REPORTS**

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27 **Washington, D.C. Trip**

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29 Sue Wislon stated that she is offering a US based trip to Washington, D.C. on the
30 Monday through Friday of April vacation. 20-40, 7th and 8th graders will take buses
31 down, and visit a variety of places including the Spy museum, WWII memorial,
32 Holocaust Museum, Smithsonian, and Newseum (journalism and media). Many of
33 the places have direct curriculum connections. There are three teachers going and
34 parents are welcome also. The budget for the trip includes all meals and rooming.
35 The trip will be about \$900 or if there are less than 25 students it will be \$1300.
36 The trip is through EF tours, which is also fully accredited. During the parent
37 meeting a representative from EF Tours will be there to answer parents questions,
38 also.

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40 The board discussed insurance coverage with Ms. Shankel, who feels comfortable
41 with this company. They asked Ms. Wilson to make another video of this trip.

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43 Ms. Wilson discussed the last trip and the positive things that have happened since
44 with those students.

46 Ms. Facey suggested contacting local representatives so they can get tours of the
47 Capital building and other governmental places.
48
49 The board and Ms. Wilson discussed the learning of civics, vertical teaching, how the
50 trip connects to 7th and 8th grade content and organic learning that happens on a trip
51 like this.
52
53 Ms. Wilson stated that she would send an email out to parents. Once she gets replies
54 from interested families she would have a meeting. The families who are interested
55 will be put into a raffle to determine if the students will go.
56
57 **Ms. Facey made motion to make this a school-sanctioned trip. Ms. Foulks**
58 **seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**
59
60 6th Grade Science Trip
61
62 Mr. Dodge stated that 6 students from the 6th grade who attended Environmental
63 Camp were present to speak to the board about their experience.
64
65 Brenda Makahusz introduced the students: Jeff Boehm, Jacob Grasset, Vincent
66 Bowman, Jackie Chistolini, and Zoe Garvey.
67
68 Ms. Bennett thanked the 6th graders for coming.
69
70 The students presented the following:
71
72 Jeff stated that camp was a great experience. They had Field groups where they
73 would do fun activities like hiking and exploring the camp. They met new friends
74 from AMS and Mont Vernon. The Nature classrooms staff was really nice.
75
76 Jacob stated that the cabins were mingled with Mont Vernon and Amherst kids. It
77 was nice to know who you would look forward to seeing next year. The cabins were
78 good and everyone had fun. The cabin parents read scary stories and Mr. Desnoyers
79 read a really scary story and everyone was scared, but kids were there for each
80 other.
81
82 Vincent explained what I LAC is (I am loving and caring). It is when a group comes
83 across another field group; they have to go compliment the other group. They
84 received beads when they did good things.
85
86 Jackie stated that there were classes you could sign up for. All of them were fun.
87 The schedule for the day was breakfast, field group, lunch, class, free time, dinner,
88 and a night activity, which was always different.
89
90 Zoe stated that the food at camp was good. They had pizza, sandwiches, and salad.
91 There was a big variety. They even had brunch one day with bacon and whipped

92 cream. There was always PBJ if did not like what was served. Two people were
93 assigned to each meal to clean the table. There was always entertainment at the end
94 of meal, which was a lot of fun.

95
96 The students discussed free time and all the activities they could do including: ball
97 games, an 80ft. slide, basketball, whiffle ball, bouldering wall, activity room with a
98 jukebox and foosball table, a farm with an 800lb pig and going back to the cabins
99 was an option too.

100
101 The students all agreed it was nice to have the Mont Vernon students there.

102
103 Jeff stated that at the end of a meal the table would put leftover food on a plate and
104 put in bucket and weighed it to show the amount of wasted food. It was neat to see,
105 how much waste was cut down by the end of the week.

106
107 Jackie stated that this taught the students how lucky they are have food and taught
108 them how to take smaller portions.

109
110 Mr. Warburton and the board thanked the students.

111
112 Mr. Dodge discussed the impact of environmental school and how his son says it
113 was the greatest experience he ever had in school.

114
115 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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117 **Principals Report**

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119 Ms. Foulks asked Mr. Dodge about the Professional Development.

120
121 Mr. Dodge stated that 51 facilitated leaders lead cross-district groups and used protocols
122 to look at the Common Core Standards and at student work. It was a great experience.

123
124 Ms. Facey asked about the work the kids did for the Hurricane Sandy victims.

125
126 Mr. Dodge stated that they collected stuff and put it into boxes. College Bound Movers
127 donated the boxes, which will be transported with the Nashua school's donations in an
128 18-wheeler to NYC. AMS has family connections and tried to get a hold of people today
129 and could not. The 18-wheeler will go to a donation center. Amherst has a reputation for
130 fund raising for disasters.

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132 Ms. Bennett asked the principals to review the school's goals and where they stand this
133 year with teacher evaluations in principal's reports next month.

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135 **PUBLIC TIME**

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137 No Public present.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Bennett asked to pull the October 18th minutes.

Mr. Prescott made a motion to accept the consent agenda containing: Treasurers Report, September 2012 and Retirement Requests. Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Ms. Bennett made the following changes to the minutes:

Line 42: Mr. White and Ms. Ferrington

Line 44: This project

Line 111: Town’s rainy Day fund

Line 127/128: board needs to be more vocal about the budget; remove transparent

Line 163: add commas and the lack of consistency from classroom to classroom.

Line 214: This issue

Line 184: Roos-Unger

Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the minutes from October 18th as amended.

Ms. Facey seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Mr. Dodge discussed the activity of the assessment committee and how consistency and grading is a district wide and national issue. He would like the report card to represent what kids are learning. This will be a lot of work for the board, teachers and school if changes are made. Parents need to understand why changes are being made.

Mr. Manning asked if the school really does have that many superior kids, since so many students are getting A’s. He feels parents need to better understand if grading is still done on a distribution curve like when they were students.

Mr. Dodge stated that the ABCDF system of grading does not match our teaching.

Ms. Foulks stated that the grade kids receive has lost meaning. What does an A mean? Students use to know what an A was and what had to happen to get there. The credibility of the A is in question.

Mr. Dodge stated that grading was based on 100 and now there are projects that have many facets and authentic learning, which are much more difficult to grade.

184 Rubrics help, but they are still subjective. This is a national conversation and a
185 debate that is happening even at the college level. AMS is working on getting grades
186 out on MMS to be visible for parents, but the school and the board will need to
187 educate the public on how often grades will be posted.
188

189 Mr. Warburton stated that it is really important to look at grading SAU wide. He
190 stated that he would begin a strategic plan with the SAU board to deal with big
191 issues like grading. All boards are concerned about the grading and how many A's
192 there are. There needs to be a discussion at the SAU level to gain direction to have a
193 more seamless pre-k – 12 experience.
194

195 Ms. Heimarck stated that since the last meeting about assessment planning and
196 grading, the trainers from Math in Focus have been back in the district. They had a
197 conversation about assessment, test security, and how to track the success of the
198 new program. Many districts hold tests back and the administration now has a
199 drafted proposal, which is to send chapter tests and preps home and to use a
200 combination of bench mark and end of course assessments to monitor curriculum
201 implementation. They are also looking at modifications to assessments to monitor
202 implementation over time. Ms. Heimarck gave several examples.
203

204 Mr. Manning clarified that the tests will go home and the school will employ other
205 assessments and do item analysis of content to evaluate the implementation of the
206 program.
207

208 Ms. Heimarck stated that this plan would be in action after the administration meets
209 with the assessment committee to discuss this proposal.
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211 FY14 Budget Draft #1

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213 Ms. Shankel presented Draft 1 of the budget presentation as in the packet.
214 She discussed the budget process, key budget drivers, and NH retirement. She stated
215 that the budget is driven by personnel. There was a 1.5% increase in FY13 to comply
216 with the law and the rest of the FY13 budget was not included because of the default
217 budget. The draft budget for FY14 has a 0.31% decrease, which was hard to reach
218 because of the increases in benefits and NH retirement. The AEA agreement is not
219 included because it is still being negotiated and those increases will be in a warrant
220 article.
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222 Ms. Shankel explained the budget challenges of decreasing the budget by \$75,725
223 on top of the increases: NHRS – 243,950; Health – 134,976; ASSA CBA New wages –
224 41,729. The total increases were \$420,657, which is 1.73% of the FY13 budget and
225 then the FY14 draft budget was reduced further by \$75,725.
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227 The Board and Ms. Shankel discussed the numbers and how they are different from
228 the projection and how the projection can change before the first draft of the
229 budget.

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Ms. Shankel discussed the Warrant articles including the Operating budget, AEA collective bargaining article, and the Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Article.

Ms. Shankel stated that she suggests not having the 2.5% RSA as a warrant article this year. This is a one time article to ask the voters if the school can set aside 2.5% of the surplus. There is no ability for voters to approve of how the money is spent. The state must approve the spending or without state approval the money can be used to reduce the tax rate. This is not a great plan for this year, but eventually the district can look at this as a warrant article in a later year. The district could use this money if there was an issue with revenue, which could happen because of the new tuition agreement with Mont Vernon.

Mr. Prescott asked when the board would discuss the wording for the expendable trust article.

Ms. Shankel stated that they would look at wording for all of the warrant articles later on.

The board, administration, and the finance committee discussed the warrant articles and how to present them. There was discussion of separating out the operating budget into fix costs and improvements in education. This is risky because the fixed costs have to be voted through, that is why there is always a default budget option. They discussed what the selectman do to keep their budget numbers low. They discussed the importance of communication and the deliberative session in March. They discussed helping voters understand the historical increases in benefits and NH retirement. Appointing a communication leader for both the board and the finance committee was discussed. Attending other meetings in town, like Rotary, PTA, and town events, to discuss the budget and plant seeds my help to spread the message was discussed. They decided to confirm a communication plan at a work session before the next meeting.

Mr. St. Amand presented the Clark/Wilkins presentation as in the packet. He discussed the budget focus, enrollments (projected to be 606 students), and educational programming and technology needs including smartboards and technology needs for the Math in Focus Program.

Mr. St. Amand discussed the staffing changes: total of 2.4 reductions in professional staff and 1.3 reductions of support staff. The changes in special education are because of the mix of students.

Mr. St. Amand discussed certified and non-certified staffing changes in comparisons between FY13 and FY14. He discussed the contract and job description changes for classroom assistants becoming 0.75 classroom assistants and 0.25 para-professional.

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277 Mr. Dodge presented the AMS budget as in the packet. He discussed what the
278 budget supports, the enrollment projection of 677, changes in student to teacher
279 ratio to 22:1 and the staffing reductions of 7.7 reductions in professional staff and
280 3.3 reduction of support staff. This is a total of an 11 staff member reduction for
281 next year. He showed the certified and non-certified staff comparisons from FY13 to
282 FY14. Mr. Dodge is confident that the school can maintain the high quality of
283 learning with less staff and a high student teacher ratio.

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285 Ms. Shankel discussed the next steps for the budget and that the draft 2 presentation
286 would be at the next meeting.

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288 Ms. Bennett pointed out that the line 2300 the letters were wrong.

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290 Ms. Shankel stated she would fix the letters, but the numbers are right. She stated
291 that the numbers correspond to the following schools:

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01=Clark

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02=Wilkins

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03-AMS

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05 = Clark/Wilkins and AMS

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297 Ms. Shankel asked the board and finance committee to proof read the warrant
298 articles. She stated that two board members Ms. Bennett and Ms. Foulks are up for
299 re-election.

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301 Mr. Warburton stated that he met with Clark/Wilkins staff and the AMS staff and
302 told them that there would be staffing cuts. Many people were at the meetings. The
303 board meeting agendas are on the website and now there is a link to the SAU
304 website where people can access the agenda packet that the board gets.

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306 **Mr. Manning made a motion to go into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II.**
307 **(a)(b)(c) at 8:10pm. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion and the roll call was**
308 **yes.**