

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **Thursday, December 20, 2012**

3
4 **ATTENDANCE**

5
6 **Amherst School Board**

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

8
9 **Administrative Team**

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

12
13 **Minute Taker**

14 Lyn Jennings

15
16 **CALL TO ORDER**

17
18 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

19
20 Ms. Bennett told board members this evening they were welcoming a few of the 8th grade
21 members from the AMS Chorus and Choral Director, Larry Ballard for a bit of a holiday
22 treat.

23
24 The Amherst Choral members introduced themselves and then sang a couple of songs.

25
26 The board thanked the choral members and director for coming to sing before the board!

27
28 Ms. Bennett introduced Dick Vasser, an 8th grade Social Studies Teacher at AMS. Mr.
29 Vasser brought some 8th grade students before the board to speak about their experience
30 at Environmental School.

31
32 The students introduced themselves and then spoke about their experience.

33
34 Ms. Bennett told meeting attendees she and Ms. Foulks went to the Environmental
35 School for an afternoon and had lunch with the students. Ms. Bennett said she enjoyed
36 her time at the school so much that she went back the following week and ended up
37 sleeping over!

38
39 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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41 **Principals Report** – Ms. Bennett asked board members if they had any questions or
42 comments about the Principal's Reports provided by Mr. St. Amand or Mr. Dodge.

43
44 Ms. Foulks asked Mr. St. Amand to speak about the Holidays Around the World that took
45 place at Wilkins.

47 Mr. St. Amand told meeting attendees 4th graders (8 classes) were involved in learning
48 about how others around the world celebrate holidays. Mr. St. Amand said the event was
49 outstanding and by the end of the event the 4th graders became experts about a particular
50 holiday in another country.

51
52 Ms. Bennett asked if at the next board meeting, some teachers could come before the
53 board to discuss their experience with the new math curriculum.

54
55 Mr. Manning asked if they are where they want to be with regards to the progress of the
56 math curriculum.

57
58 Mr. St. Amand said we are almost exactly where they want to be at this time.

59
60 Mr. Manning asked how it is going with the spectrum of children, is it what they thought
61 it would be as we take very seriously children learning at all levels. Mr. St. Amand said
62 he thinks this math program helps all children.

63
64 Many teachers were present at the board meeting and offered to make a few comments
65 with regards to the new math curriculum. Michelle Emmond – Grade 6, Sue Nedelman -
66 Grade 5, Karen Urbanick – Grade 6 and Grant Dustin – Grade 6 came before the board to
67 make comments with regards to the new math curriculum, Math in Focus.

68
69 Teachers commented that Math in Focus makes connections to real life. One of the
70 teachers commented she is in love with this math program! Examples were provided of
71 how the math programs works for students at all levels.

72
73 Amy Facey suggested a Bar Modeling lesson be provided to the board so they can see
74 how it works.

75
76 The teachers said their classrooms are always open and said observers are always
77 welcome.

78
79 Ms. Bennett asked Mr. St. Amand and Mr. Dodge to review their building Goals and
80 provide evaluation updates.

81
82 Mr. St. Amand reviewed his 2011-2012 goals via SharePoint. No handout was provided.

83
84 Mr. St. Amand said they plan on collecting data regularly. Mr. St. Amand said their
85 focus is on best practices, small group instruction.

86
87 Mr. St. Amand said they have observed all the teachers multiple times. They plan on
88 using an App with the iPad and math will be the focus this year. Mr. St. Amand said
89 evaluations with the iPad will begin in January.

90
91 Ms. Bennett asked Mr. St. Amand to tell the board about the iPad format they would be
92 using for the staff evaluations. Mr. St. Amand said he got the iPad evaluation format

93 from Sue Blair, Principal at MVVS. Mr. St. Amand said there is a check list to follow as
94 well as an area for comments. Teachers receive feedback right away with this
95 application.
96

97 Mr. Dodge included the AMS Goal Review for 2011-2012 in his Principal's Report. Mr.
98 Dodge said his goals were two year goals and they have 4 goals. Mr. Dodge reviewed his
99 results with the board. Mr. Dodge said they met their first goal easily - to ensure all
100 students are challenged at an appropriate level, they will provide staff with a minimum of
101 three Professional Development opportunities that are embedded and targeted for specific
102 roles with a focus on RTI and Differentiated Instruction.
103

104 Mr. Dodge said the second goal had to do with developing a more meaningful Core &
105 More program. Mr. Dodge said they could do a better job having people understand what
106 is Core and More.
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108 Ms. Facey asked if Mr. Dodge could provide a status report as to what they talked about
109 at the last Core and More meeting. Mr. Dodge said at the last meeting a parent
110 volunteered to take minutes and put them up on the website.
111

112 The third goal had to do with full implementation of the Math in Focus program. Mr.
113 Dodge said Andy Clark a representative from Math in Focus had been working with
114 Math teachers and modeled lessons for them last week.
115

116 The last goal was about continuing to develop systematic communication processes for
117 all stakeholders. Mr. Dodge said the principal now attends all monthly Staff Advisory
118 Meetings and the minutes are distributed to the staff. Also formed by the Administration
119 was a Parent Partnership Committee which meets monthly with a core of parents. To
120 date, they have held two public Monday night meetings. Ms. Bennett said the first
121 meeting had a large turnout however, at the second meeting there wasn't as big a turnout
122 but given the time of year they believe the turnout is going to grow. Mr. Dodge said at
123 the last meeting, they decided on what the topic would be at the next meeting.
124

125 Mr. Warburton spoke about the formation of a Strategic Planning Committee. Mr.
126 Warburton reminded board members the SAU39 encompasses three separate districts and
127 17 board members. The goal of the Strategic Planning Committee is to come up with a
128 Strategic Model which will give the SAU 39 a planning mechanism for the next 3-5
129 years. Mr. Warburton said the process will involve 7-8 months of work. Mr. Warburton
130 reminded the board at the last SAU 39 meeting they discussed the proposed makeup of
131 the committee and how he is eager to get their work started in January.
132

133 **PUBLIC TIME** - Larry Ballard, a music teacher at the Middle School, who currently
134 serves as President of the Amherst Education Association, and is a resident of Amherst
135 told meeting attendees he wanted to make some comments with regards to the draft
136 budget.
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138 Mr. Ballard read from a prepared statement.

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In summary, Mr. Ballard said he has a long-term investment in the success of this district both as a professional educator and as a parent. Mr. Ballard said there were four areas of concern he would ask the school board to consider as they prepare the 2014 budget:

- Have all the areas of the budget been scrutinized before increasing class sizes and laying off skilled staff members?
- Are the proposed cuts proportional to declining enrollment, or are we eliminating more staff than the projected student numbers warrant?
- Please re-consider the proposal to increase class size.
- I would strongly urge the board to consider the impact on the quality of instruction and the effect that has on student performance.

Mr. Ballard had additional comments for each of the concerns he highlighted.

In the end, Mr. Ballard summarized by stating the board has a responsibility not only to the voter, but to parents, students and the community at large. The high quality of Amherst schools is an asset to the community and to property values. Mr. Ballard said they have a shared responsibility to nurture students as they cultivate their own independence.

Mr. Ballard thanked the board for the opportunity to speak before the board.

Ms. Bennett thanked Mr. Ballard for his comments.

Ms. Bennett said they would not respond to Mr. Ballard’s comments, but simply take his comments under advisement.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the consent agenda containing: Minutes: 1. November 15, 2012 and Treasurers Reports, October 2012 and November 2012. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS

- A. FY12 AUDITOR’S REPORT – Vachon, Clukay & Co. – Ms. Bennett introduced Jarad Vartanian, Senior Audit Manager of Vachon Clukay who was before the board to review the Amherst Auditor’s Report for FY12.

Jarad provided a handout to the board members, which he said was the Governance letter. Jarad said they examined the districts internal controls and found no deficiencies or weaknesses. Jarad said there were no findings which required reporting.

184 Jarad said there was one significant audit adjustment, which pertained solely to the
185 financial statements and had no effect on the budget.

186
187 Jarad said the districts records were in excellent condition and everyone was
188 extremely helpful.

189
190 Jarad said Amherst received the highest unqualified opinion. Jarad reviewed the Audit
191 Report with the board and highlighted significant financial numbers for Fiscal Year
192 FY12.

193
194 Jarad said the district ended the year with a favorable budget variance of \$294,000. Jarad
195 said actual revenues exceeded the forecasted amount in the services area by \$231,000.

196
197 Mr. Prescott asked where the excess in revenue came from was it from the preschool or
198 from the Mont Vernon tuition?

199
200 Ms. Bennett said the favorable variance was mainly due to the way the AMS tuition was
201 billed to Mont Vernon this year.

202
203 Ms. Bennett thanked Jarad for his presentation. Jarad said the hard work was done
204 by the Finance Department, they did an excellent job so all Vachon, Clukay had to do
205 was come in and substantiate the numbers. Jarad thanked Karen and Betty for all
206 their hard work and assistance.

207
208 B. FY 14 Budget – Board members received several handouts in their board
209 packets which related to Draft 2 of the FY14 Budget.

210
211 Ms. Shankel reviewed the FY 14 Budget Changes from Draft 1 to Draft 2 of the
212 budget.

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214 In draft 1, the proposed budget total was \$24, 264, 019 and in draft 2 the proposed
215 budget total was \$24,278,585. The total increases from draft 1 to draft 2 were
216 \$30,318. The total decreases from draft 1 to draft 2 were \$15,752.

217
218 Ms. Shankel told board members the Amherst portion of the SAU 39 Budget
219 (\$1,161,736) that passed on Tuesday evening, December 18th, was included in Draft
220 2 of the budget.

221
222 Ms. Shankel told board members Draft 2 of the budget is .25% less than the default
223 budget the district is currently operating under.

224
225 Ms. Shankel also reviewed the Amherst School District FY14 Revenue Projection.
226 Ms. Shankel said they are anticipating an increase in local revenue of \$260,000 due
227 to Mont Vernon tuition.

228

229 Ms. Shankel said they are forecasting a considerable amount less (\$359,633) in the
230 Adequacy Aid Grant (Amherst portion) as well as less in State Property Tax
231 (\$185,811).
232
233 Ms. Shankel said the increase in local revenue is eaten up by the decrease in state
234 aid.
235
236 Based on the numbers presented Draft 2 of the budget represents an increase of
237 \$.09 per \$1,000. FY13 DRA tax impact was \$12.08 per \$1,000 as compared to a FY
238 14 projection of \$12.17 per \$1,000.
239
240 Ms. Bennett asked if any of the subcommittees had any highlights for the board.
241
242 Mr. Prescott said this was the 4th year he has worked on the budget.
243
244 Mr. Prescott said this year every single line of the budget was gone through
245 carefully. Mr. Prescott said he appreciates the fact that the administration/staff and
246 the Ways and Means answered all their questions until they were fully answered.
247 Mr. Prescott said his subcommittee wanted to make sure they understood every line
248 of the budget.
249
250 Mr. Prescott thanked Ways and Means for all they did to help him understand the
251 budget.
252
253 Mark Vincent, Chair of the Ways and Means Committee introduced the other
254 members that were present at this evening's board meeting: Andrew Rowe, and Fred
255 Iannelli.
256
257 Mark said members who were on the committee but not in attendance this evening
258 included: Tedd Landon, Roberta Hasselbrack, and Donni Hodgkins.
259
260 Mark said everyone on the committee did a great job this year.
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262 Mark said Ways and Means was pleased and impressed with how all their questions
263 were answered.
264
265 Mark said the process worked really well, communication between the
266 administration/staff and the committee, were excellent.
267
268 Mark said it is unfortunate that the level of spending is going down this year but the
269 tax rate is going up, however, we just found out why based on Ms. Shankel's
270 presentation of the projected FY14 Revenue.
271
272 Mark told board members the Ways and Means has a meeting on January 7, 2013, to
273 take a vote on the Warrant Articles.
274

275 Ms. Bennett thanked the Ways and Means for all their hard work.

276

277 **NON-PUBLIC SESSION**

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279 **Mr. Manning made a motion to go into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II.**

280 **(a)(c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) (i) at 7:21pm. Ms. Foulks seconded the motion and the**

281 **roll call was yes.**

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