

1 **AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD**
2 **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2011**

3
4 **ATTENDANCE**

5
6 Amherst School Board

7 Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, Nancy Head, James Manning, Peter Maresco

8
9 Administrative Team

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

12
13 Minutes Taker

14 Beth Penney

15
16 **PUBLIC HEARING**

17 Ms. Bennett called the public hearing to order at 6:05pm.

18 Ms. Shankel stated that this is a formality because the board already accepted
19 the donation from the Bean Grant for iPads at AMS last month.

20 Ms. Bennett closed the public hearing at 6:07pm.

21 **CALL TO ORDER**

22 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:07pm.

23 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

24 Principals' reports

25 Mr. Dodge stated that the Corale Holiday concerts were well attended. The band
26 concerts will be in January. AMS has been accepted by the NH Department of
27 Education as a RTI pilot site. The Department of Education was impressed with
28 AMS's RTI committee. The school is the first and only middle school in the state
29 to be a RTI pilot school. By being a pilot site, the school will get consultation from
30 people who are experts in the field, which will help to streamline the program and
31 AMS will be a model school. There is very little data for middle schools and high
32 schools. AMS is farther than many other schools that are already pilot schools,
33 which is very exciting.

34 Mr. Warburton stated that this is big deal, especially being the only middle school
35 in state. This allows for lots of professional development also and will help to
36 identify the school as one of the best in NH.

37 The board congratulated Mr. Dodge.

38 Mr. St. Amand and Mr. Warburton discussed making a presentation in February
39 and June to give the board an update on the schools goals.

40 Mr. Manning stated that after report cards came out he was amazed at the
41 number of kids who got A's or straight A's. After Dec. 14th he went with his son to
42 several sporting events where his son (5th grader) compared grades with 20-30
43 other kids. Mr. Manning asked is the work easier the first semester? Is there
44 grade inflation? He asked to know the grade distribution and for insight into the
45 grade distribution for whole school.

46 Mr. Dodge stated that grade inflation does exist in schools today. He discussed
47 an article he read where a study at Harvard looked at schools and grade inflation.
48 He discussed how students are evaluated has changed. Students work towards
49 mastery and students can retake or redo assignments. Schools have to ensure
50 the students are still getting rigorous study. Mr. Dodge discussed how the fifth
51 grade in past years was pass/fail for the first semester. He also discussed how
52 there are very few failing grades at the elementary and middle school level.

53 Mr. Warburton asked Mr. Dodge to discuss grade inflation with the staff and
54 include Ms. Heimarck in the discussion.

55 The board, Administrators, and Mr. Prescott discussed how much of the first
56 semester is review. They discussed the idea of mastery and retention. How
57 much knowledge students are required to know is the question. They discussed
58 why there is so much review and that the feedback from SHS is that the students
59 are ready for high school.

60 Ms. Foulks asked Mr. St. Amand to explain the Math Wall of Fame.

61 St. Amand stated that this is the number of students who have achieved mastery
62 in one area of multiplication or division. This has proven to be a great tool to see
63 success.

64 Ms. Bennett asked Mr. Dodge about instructional rounds.

65 Mr. Dodge stated that this is part of the Maria Banks training. It is a chance for
66 teachers to show others their work by letting them come into their classrooms.
67 The purpose is to have professional learning communities and to help critique
68 work without criticism.

69 Food Services report

70 Danielle Collins the School Nutrition Director gave the presentation. She
71 discussed new federal legislation addressing nutrition standards in schools. She
72 stated that they have worked to find creative ways to give students nutrition
73 without using the word whole grains. She discussed many of her secrets
74 including "donuts". She stated that the cafeterias are now making food from
75 scratch. By making gradual changes in the food the student's palates will adjust.

76 If the food tastes good students will eat it. Sodium is high in processed foods
77 and even though raw ingredients can be expensive cooking from scratch is
78 better. She gave more examples of food they have been serving including sliders
79 and quiche. The goal is to introduce two new menu items a month. They would
80 like to be 100% whole grain in two years. She also discussed putting beans in
81 places that they do not usually appear. They have been doing soup taste testing
82 with the kids. They are hiding ingredients and not naming them.

83 Ms. Collins discussed the cafeteria renovations including painting the walls and
84 having students paint the “My Plate” icon on the wall by doing a student
85 challenge. The students must express wellness in the icon. They are investing
86 in digital signage, which will include three screens. Ms. Collins discussed the use
87 of those screens including menus, pictures of the food, birthday recognition, and
88 much more.

89 Ms. Collins discussed that products are made especially for schools to meet the
90 food requirements. The Poptarts sold in schools are not the same ones available
91 in stores. This year the food service has a surplus of \$71,000 and that can only
92 be used for the food service. Part of this surplus is because the school is part of
93 a buying group and gets food including produce and raw ingredients at a much
94 cheaper price.

95 Mr. Dodge explained an area outside his office where the school has built a few
96 step garden plots. The gardens are fully organic and will be used by the 7th
97 grade science curriculum and the cooking club. They hope to expand the
98 gardens and use the food in the cafeteria as well.

99 Ms. Shankel explained the state guidelines about how the surplus for the food
100 service must be spent on food service. The surplus will pay for all of the
101 renovations of the room except for the stage. The stage renovations will be paid
102 for out of the operating budget.

103 Ms. Collins explained that since she is part of the buying group she could save
104 money to off set the labor required to cook from scratch. She also explained how
105 she has a highly qualified staff that is training the rest of the staff.

106 The board, Ms. Shankel, and Ms. Collins discussed that the schools have done a
107 good job keeping the maintenance up with the appliances and that they are all in
108 good shape. They also discussed lowering the cost of lunch at Clark/ Wilkins
109 and the requirements for the cost for lunch by the state because of the
110 reimbursement for free lunches.

111 The board thanked Ms. Collins for her hard work and enthusiasm.

112 **PUBLIC TIME**

113 No public present.

114

115 **CONSENT AGENDA**

116 **Ms. Head asked to pull the November 17th minutes.**

117 **Ms. Head moved to accept the consent agenda containing the changed**
118 **minutes (as noted below) for November 17th, Unanticipated Revenue:**
119 **Special Revenue Fund Donation - \$12,760.00, General Fund Donation -**
120 **\$2,721.80 from Hockmeyer Studios, Inc., Donation - \$88.00 from Grondins**
121 **Photographers, and the Transfer. Ms. Foulks seconded the motion.**

122 Ms. Head asked to change line 172 – AMS support staff change to - ASSA
123 collective bargaining agreement.

124 Mr. St. Amand asked to change line 142 – 0.5 FTE literacy coach should be
125 literacy teacher at Wilkins; 1.0 FTE literacy coach at Clark/ Wilkins

126 **The vote was unanimous, except Mr. Maresco abstained.**

127 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

128 **FY11 Auditor's Report- Vachon, Clukay & Co.**

129 Karen Taylor, the director of finance, introduced Jared Vartanian the Audit
130 Manager.

131 Mr. Vartanian explained the Governance Communication, which is a required
132 communication to the board and summarizes the audit process. This year there
133 are no audit adjustments. They examined the internal controls over the financial
134 reporting and did a more extensive audit of the school's grant money and found
135 no errors. There were no findings for compliance issues and the financial
136 records are in great condition. The only significant item is that statement 54 has
137 changed. For the financial statements the district received unqualified opinions,
138 which is the highest opinion that can be obtained. Statement 54 the fund balance
139 reporting has changed and no longer is detailed on the balance sheet. The
140 statement also has five new categories and the details are now in the footnotes.
141 The long-term perspective shows a decrease in the total district assets caused
142 by spending down the capital projects fund. The short-term focus indicates a
143 decrease in fund balance of \$800,000 in total and in line with what was
144 anticipated. The year ended with a favorable budget variance.

145 The board, Mr. Vartanian, and Ms. Taylor discussed how the statements looked
146 before and how they look now. They also discussed past issues within the
147 financial department and that those issues are gone because they are working
148 hard and have good people who are detailed oriented.

149 The board thanked Ms. Taylor and Mr. Vartarian.

150 **Allocation of ARRA – IDEA Grant Funds**

151 Ms. Sparks stated that the money was from the ARRA funds. She discussed the
152 expenditures of 99.16% of the money.

153 Ms. Sparks and the board discussed that the unspent money may be used by the
154 state if they get approval for their waiver. They also discussed if the items paid
155 for will be built into future budgets. The money will be financed both by grants
156 and the budget in future years.

157 Ms. Shankel stated that in other districts they are having a hard time spending
158 the ARRA funds. Ms. Sparks did an excellent job putting the funds to use for
159 good training and good equipment.

160 Ms. Sparks discussed the IDEA grant money and that if money is not spent it can
161 now be rolled over. The money must be used for paying teachers, except 15%.
162 The IDEA grant offsets 3 special education teachers and 3 para-educators.

163 Ms. Shankel explained how this shows up in the operating budget.

164 **FY13 Budget**

165 **Draft 2**

166 Ms. Shankel described the changes in draft two including: instructional materials
167 had a transcription error; coordinators were budgeted for 7 and there should only
168 6 in both schools; replacement equipment for the library there was a calculation
169 correction for DVD players; the district assessment was increased; repairs to
170 building decreased because the lights for the portables are getting rebates back;
171 the cafeteria upgrades are being paid for by the food service surplus.

172 Ms. Shankel thanked the budget committee for taking a second look at the
173 budget. The budget has a 2.18% increase.

174 Ms. Shankel explained changes in the revenue including: line 8: other state aid,
175 there was money given for the NH retirement system; under line 15 (other) this is
176 requested by the state to determine what to do with education jobs funding grant,
177 so there is federal money coming back; Under local revenue line 19: tuition
178 parents - has increased because of the preschool tuition and Mont Vernon tuition
179 has increased also. Since there are large increases in revenue there is only a 1%
180 increase in the tax rate. Costs went up over 4% and to have a tax rate increase
181 of only 1% is admirable.

182 The board discussed how to explain the increase to the taxpayers.

183 Ms. Shankel discussed one time increases in the revenue and how the tuition in
184 Mont Vernon changes based on the students coming. The preschool revenue is
185 not a one time revenue.

186 The board and Ms. Sparks discussed how the preschool has saved the district
187 \$115,000 in out of district costs and there has been revenue as well.

188 Ms. Shankel stated that she is very confident and comfortable that they are going
189 to find close to 1% as being a number we can be returning back to the taxpayers.

190 Ms. Shankel stated that Article 15 has been changed because of a Ways and
191 Means recommendation to use the surplus for the \$80,000. Also typos were
192 changed in the warrant article.

193 Ways & Means report

194 Mr. Vincent stated that the difference between Draft 1 and 2 was looking at the
195 nutrition fund balance and how far that can be stretched for the wellness
196 definition to use those funds. The technology committee had a good discussion
197 and there was great detail in the line-by-line expenditures. The committee got
198 answers for their questions not about new equipment purchases, but the ability of
199 the IT staff to deploy the new purchases. This was a concern with the number of
200 smart boards and similar equipment. The committee asked for a deployment
201 plan and schedule including installing and training of the new equipment.

202 The board, administration, and Ways and Means discussed why the other smart
203 boards were not installed in a timely manner including issues mounting them on
204 the wall and that the boards did not arrive quickly after July 1st. At AMS when
205 they installed 15 boards it took 4hrs. per board. The administrators did receive a
206 deployment plan and it looks good.

207 Ms. Head explained that the number of IEPs drives the special education budget
208 increases. There are increases in the numbers and severities of disabilities, but
209 this is not a trend but a blip.

210 Mr. Maresco stated that the technology and curriculum/ professional
211 development committee's biggest issue was that the smart board installation plan
212 was executable and the plan is realistic.

213 Mr. Warburton stated that the three smart boards from last year would be
214 installed by January 1st. He thanked the Ways and Means committee for their
215 work.

216 The board discussed a follow-up to ensure the deployment plan happened as
217 stated.

218 Mr. Warburton stated at the September meeting the administration can report out
219 about the facilities also.

220 The board asked the IT director to check in at milestones with Ms. Heimarck
221 also.

222 The board and Ms. Heimarck discussed Math textbooks. 3 textbooks will be
223 piloted for 5 weeks starting January 15th and there will be a study group of
224 teachers looking at each textbook for vertical alignment and at the bigger picture.
225 There is only one option for a K-8 math program.

226 Ms. Bennett stated that the AMS budget was uneventful and was very lean. 45%
227 of students in the district buy hot lunch.

228 The board discussed the food service at AMS and the terrific food they are
229 serving. They discussed how the food is different from food outside of the
230 school. They also discussed how to let parents know that the food has to meet
231 wellness standards.

232 The board thanked the Ways and Means committee.

233 The board discussed how effective the budget process is in this district.

234 **DISCUSSION ITEM**

235 School Board goals

236 Ms. Bennett stated that the board had adopted the goals for the SAU and the
237 schools have their goals. She asked if the board wanted to have a workshop to
238 have specific goals or to try to live between the school's goals and the SAU
239 goals.

240 Mr. Maresco stated that the board goal should be around the budget, because
241 this is the one thing missing with the other goals.

242 The board discussed the idea of goals and having too many goals. They
243 discussed using the SAU goals to see how they apply to this district to maybe
244 create sub-goals. They also discussed the SAU goals and the need for a goal
245 around the budget. The board discussed bringing the idea of a 5th goal to the
246 SAU board about having a fiscally responsible budget.

247 Mr. Warburton stated that they would discuss the idea to have a budget goal at
248 the at SAU meeting.

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251 **ACTION ITEM**

252 Policy IMGGA – Animal Service – 2nd Reading

253 Policy DIA – Fund Balances – 2nd Reading

254 Policy JFAC – Admission and Enrollment Preschool-2nd Reading

255 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to adopt all three policies, IMGGA, DIA, and JFAC,**
256 **as currently written in the second reading. Ms. Head seconded the motion**
257 **and the vote was unanimous.**

258 Ms. Bennett read a letter of retirement for Custodian Bob Goule and a letter from
259 Debra Thumas to let the board know she will not be taking her sabbatical.

260 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to go into Non-Public Session under RSA: 91-A:**
261 **3 II. (a) (b) (c) at 8:26pm. Mr. Maresco seconded the motion and the role**
262 **call was all yes.**
263