

1 Amherst School Board  
2 Thursday, March 22, 2012

3  
4 ATTENDANCE

5  
6 Amherst School Board

7 Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, James Manning, Amy Facey, and Paul Prescott (arrived  
8 6:23pm)

9  
10 Administrative Team

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

13  
14 Minutes Taker

15 Beth Penney

16  
17 ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

18 CALL TO ORDER

19 Mr. Warburton called the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

20 ELECTION OF SCHOOL BOARD OFFICERS

21 Chairman

22 **Ms. Foulks nominated Peg Bennett for Chairman. Mr. Manning seconded the**  
23 **nomination and the vote was unanimous.**

24 Vice-Chairman

25 **Mr. Manning nominated Lucienne Foulks as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Facey seconded**  
26 **the nomination and the vote was unanimous.**

27 Secretary

28 **Ms. Foulks nominated Amy Facey for Secretary. Mr. Manning seconded the**  
29 **nomination and the vote was unanimous.**

30 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

31 Ms. Bennett will contact all of the board members after the meeting and discuss which  
32 committees they would like to serve on.

33 APPOINTMENT OF SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICIALS

34 Ms. Bennett thanked Nancy Baker who swore in new member Amy Facey and would  
35 soon be swearing in Paul Prescott when he arrives.

36 **REGULAR MEETING**

37 **CALL TO ORDER**

38

39 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:06pm.

40 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

41 **AMS Wells Speech winners/Geography/Spelling Bee finalists**

42 Mr. Dodge congratulated all of the students present. He recognized The Spelling Bee  
43 winner, Geography Bee winner and the Wells Public Speaking winners at each grade  
44 level. He stated that people were very impressed by the level of the students in the Wells  
45 speaking competition and thanked all of the students for their hard work.

46 Mr. St. Amand and Mr. Warburton also thanked the Wells speaking students for their  
47 hard work because they were both judges for the competition.

48 Mr. St. Amand recognized the winner of the Geography Bee and the Spelling Bee.

49 The administration and the board congratulated and thanked all of the students for  
50 coming to the meeting.

51 **Student discussion re: World Languages**

52 Katie Lynch, a senior at SHS working on her Sr. Project, thanked Mr. Warburton for help  
53 with her project. She explained what Sr. Project is and that her topic is Language  
54 Programs at Elementary Schools. She explained her essential questions and why she  
55 chose this topic. She has been taking French since 7<sup>th</sup> grade and took Spanish in grades  
56 1-4 till the funding for foreign language was cut. She stated that research shows that if a  
57 child does not learn a language before age seven then may never learn a language. She  
58 discussed the importance of language in the economic future. She asked the board if she  
59 could come back in April to present her findings and research.

60 Ms. Bennett stated that the board would love for her to come back on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

61 **Principals' Reports**

62 Ms. Bennett stated that the reports are back to the second format because they are going  
63 to have the goal updates quarterly.

64 Ms. Foulks asked if this is the second year doing Tiger.

65 Mr. St. Amand stated yes, it is the second year for the whole school.

66 Mr. Manning asked if there has been a 30% reduction in enrollment in last 10yrs.

67 Mr. St. Amand stated that yes, at the highest point enrollment was around 900. They are  
68 still accepting registration for all levels and are interested in the new attendance of K and  
69 1<sup>st</sup>. They are not expecting a noticeable increase, but there maybe more students than this  
70 year.

71 Ms. Foulks asked about the parent Math night.

72 Mr. Dodge stated that 60-70 parents attended and asked a lot of good questions. People  
73 got good direction for addressing their further concerns. The big question was the ability  
74 of the students to get to calculus by senior year and those concerns were settled.

75 Ms. Heimark stated that the presentation was posted to AMS' website and the meeting  
76 for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade parents is next week.

77 Ms. Bennett stated that she loved to hear about the recognition breakfast for the support  
78 staff that was put together by the teachers.

79 Mr. Manning and Mr. St. Amand discussed the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of teacher observations. The  
80 observations were focusing on literacy with the classroom teachers. Mr. St. Amand  
81 explained the process for the formal and informal observations. Mr. St. Amand explained  
82 what teacher look for help with during the observations and also how they are using  
83 technology in their classrooms.

84 Mr. Manning and Mr. Dodge discussed the evaluation process at AMS. The formal  
85 observations have been completed and the principals have been focusing on doing a  
86 frequent walk through in classrooms looking for student engagement. A discussion  
87 ensued about how to gage student engagement and how difficult this is. By walking  
88 through multiple times the administration gets a snapshot and they also look for patterns.

89 Mr. Warburton stated that the board would be hearing more about observations and  
90 evaluation at the May or June meeting.

91 Mr. Manning and Ms. Heimark discussed that the CBA does not guide evaluations except  
92 the time frame of the observation. Principals can observe anything and always have a  
93 post conference with the teacher.

94 Mr. Dodge discussed the Zumba class he watched. He could not participate because of  
95 injury, but stated, "I was jiving standing still".

96 **PUBLIC TIME**

97 No public present.

98

99 **CONSENT AGENDA**

100 Ms. Foulks pulled the February minutes.

101 Ms. Foulks asked to change line 32 change Mullens to Foulks.

102 Ms. Bennett asked to change line 191 to having a joint faculty meeting.

103 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, containing the changed**  
104 **February minutes. Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

105 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

106 **FY13 ASD Default Proposal**

107 Ms. Shankel explained the budget process for the new board members and the public.  
108 The FY13 budget goals brought to the board were to support the new mathematics  
109 initiative and to create 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. She explained the FY13 budget  
110 obligations including: NH retirement which went up 24%, Health insurance which went  
111 up 7.9%, Dental Insurance which went up 14.8%, AEA agreement is up 2% + step  
112 because they had gone a year without an agreement. The voters on last year's ballot  
113 approved this agreement. These are the major issues and do not include increase in fuel  
114 and energy prices. The total budget obligations increase is \$900,575, almost a 5%  
115 increase. The administration looked for a way to decrease the budget impact for  
116 taxpayers and still meet the goals for the students. Ms. Shankel discussed the reduction of  
117 staff and compared FY07 to FY12 and projected for FY13 including: in FY07 there were  
118 150.3 staff compared to 135.2 in FY13, para-professionals went from 72 in FY07 to 56  
119 for FY13.

120 Ms. Shankel explained the default budget and how law defines it. The default budget  
121 looks at the FY12 budget and then looks at what is contractually obligated. The default  
122 budget reduces onetime expenditures. Ms. Shankel explained how a default budget could  
123 be more than operating budget as has been the case in surrounding towns. She gave  
124 examples using professional staff for Amherst. Other towns do this so that voters do not  
125 have a choice, because the default budget is more than the operating budget. These  
126 towns use expenses for teachers that they do not plan to hire when calculating the default  
127 budget. The ASB default budget will not be greater than the proposed budget because the  
128 district feels it is important to give the voters a choice.

129 The default budget is \$24,245,571 is \$247,936 less than the proposed budget. The board  
130 has duty to stay within the bottom line of the default budget.

131 Mr. Warburton congratulated Ms. Shankel for working the numbers the way she does to  
132 give the voters of Amherst a choice and thanked her for her work.

133 Ms. Shankel stated that the default budget eliminates technology and textbooks.  
134 Although because there was a text book line in the FY12 budget there will be the same  
135 amount in FY13. This was a loss of about \$30,000 for textbooks from the proposed FY13

136 budget.

137 Ms. Shankel explained a proposal for spending the FY12 surplus to offset the default  
138 budget. The potential FY12 surplus is about \$150,375, which includes a grant. The  
139 administration would like to buy the elementary textbooks and spend \$31,800 in  
140 technology for interactive classroom systems. If the textbooks are purchased this year it  
141 will allow for savings in FY13 that can be applied elsewhere.

142 Ms. Shankel stated that the FY13 projected surplus is \$162,402. \$60,000 of the surplus  
143 the district will not know about till June FY13. The surplus is never safe because  
144 something could happen at anytime. The surplus in FY13 is because of a reduction in the  
145 Health insurance rate, which is lower than projected. There are also going to be two  
146 retirements in support staff and there will be savings in textbooks if they are bought in  
147 FY12. The FY13 surplus could be spent on Anti-bullying materials, NWEA testing,  
148 technology, buildings and grounds and salary and benefits for the group of employees  
149 that are not covered by any collective bargaining agreements. The administrators did not  
150 receive raises last year and might not this year, but that will be determined in Non-public  
151 session. Other technology purchases totaling \$27,000 can be bought later in year when  
152 the administration is more comfortable with the amount of the surplus. The FY12  
153 spending proposal needs a decision from the board by next month and FY13 spending  
154 proposal needs a decision from the board by June.

155 Ms. Bennett explained where to find a more detailed summary of the proposal in the  
156 agenda packet.

157 Mark Vincent asked about the money that was to be put into the Capital Facilities  
158 Expendable Trust.

159 Ms. Shankel stated that the surplus is making a projection and is a conservative  
160 projection. She hopes there will be more money left to put in the expendable trust. There  
161 is a need to put money in that fund because when running on a default budget, money is  
162 slim.

163 Mark Vincent discussed doing a better job of communicating that the board gives voters a  
164 choice and does not calculate the default budget the other way. He stated that it is great  
165 to have a surplus to make up for the difference when working with a default budget.  
166 Communication is big part of not having FY14 be a default budget. Voters did not agree  
167 to the FY13 budget, which indicates that the board and the advisory committee did not  
168 get the word out strong or often enough. Next year they need to discuss the educational  
169 benefits from the budget that would be lost in the default budget. They need to do more  
170 messaging and changing the message. None of the town or school's budgets passed.

171 Ms. Bennett stated that Mr. Vincent's point is well taken; the board needs to  
172 communicate early and often with the voters.

173 Mr. Prescott stated that he worked on Ways and Means and thought the FY13 budget was  
174 a great budget and he supported it. He stated that next year they really have to sell the  
175 budget to the citizens. He stated that the board should not down play what they do not

176 have control over, but rather try to educate about what the increases give the voter's  
177 children. He stated that the board should be there on voting day and available for voters  
178 to ask questions and address their concerns to make an informed decision at the polls.  
179 The citizens are saying that it is tough all over, no more increases. The board works for  
180 the students and parents and therefore must do some things that cost money and cause  
181 increases.

182 Mr. Manning stated that he agreed with everything being said, but the voter turn out was  
183 poor. He voted because he was part of the process and knew what was at risk. He urged  
184 people to vote. He stated that the board should be more accessible to the people who  
185 have questions. He urged people to come to meetings because the room is usually empty.

186 Mr. Warburton stated that the district's budget process is very solid. He stated that the  
187 board has a role to talk with voters and ask why the budget did not pass. He proposed  
188 having small meetings with parents and people in town to ask people to help the board to  
189 better understand why the budget did not pass.

190 Ms. Foulks urged the voters to feel free to talk to the board or write a letter to the paper  
191 and let the board know why the budget did not pass.

#### 192 NECAP UPDATE

193 Ms. Heimark explained what NECAP is and its history. She stated that this testing  
194 complies with the No Child Left Behind legislature, it measures achievement in sub  
195 groups of students, accesses grade level proficiency and growth, and measure students  
196 achievement against standards.

197 She discussed Reading results from the last 5 years for grades 3-8 and 11. She explained  
198 that these scores are different than what people might read in papers and explained why.  
199 This data only show results for students who were in our schools the year before.

200 Ms. Heimark discussed a transition to a new test, which will be a spring assessment. She  
201 also discussed the old test, NEAP, which was given in the spring and the results were  
202 given to teachers in the fall.

203 Ms. Heimark discussed the reading scores and how to read the data to look at a single  
204 grade level or to follow a group of students. The schools use this data to inform  
205 curriculum changes. She highlighted that at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the results for Oct. 2011 were 92%  
206 were proficient and proficient with distinction. This is the first group of students with a  
207 core-reading program for grades K-2. This is the highest mean scale score in all eight  
208 years of NECAP. 46% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders performed in level 4 bringing the mean scale score  
209 up. There were only 10 students who did not make proficiency standards in reading this  
210 year for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She hopes this is the beginning of seeing the impact of the  
211 curriculum changes made. Mont Vernon is also seeing the gains and has had the core  
212 reading program longer. Gains are not being seen in grades 4 and 5 because this is the  
213 first year of full implementation of the core-reading program in those grades.

214 Ms. Heimark discussed the schools peer districts data in reading. The community likes to

215 compare Amherst to Bedford. She discussed how they picked the core-reading program,  
216 which is also being implemented in Bedford, who has had the core-reading program at  
217 grades 5 and 6 for 6 years. They have seen their scores plateau in a place you would  
218 expect based on research. She stated that she is very pleased with where the Amherst  
219 school district is with reading performance, although the goal is to get to 95% in all  
220 grades.

221 Ms. Heimark gave a sample question from the reading test, which was a hard question.  
222 She discussed the transition to a new assessment in spring of 2015, which will have  
223 higher expectations for students. She stated that the district still has work to do because  
224 they want to make the 95% goal and meet the new higher demands that are coming.

225 Ms. Foulks stated that she is glad to hear about how data is broken down and what the  
226 items mean. She expressed concern about the phenomenon occurring in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
227 where the scores are flat or decrease from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

228 Ms. Heimark explained that 4<sup>th</sup> grade is reflection of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade instruction.

229 Ms. Foulks and Ms. Heimark discussed implementation of the core-reading program and  
230 the results of the students who were in the pilot. They discussed a possible  
231 implementation dip because there is a learning year for teachers when a new curriculum  
232 is implemented.

233 Mr. Prescott stated that the dip from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade happens in every year with or without  
234 the core-reading program and asked if there is a known explanation.

235 Ms. Heimark explained that the adoption of the core-reading program occurred because  
236 of flat performance or regression of students at multiple grade levels. She explained the  
237 history of past reading programs and how the lack of continuous curriculum, common  
238 language, and lack of logical progression harmed the student's ability to show growth and  
239 proficiency of understanding. The core-reading program has been a slow implementation  
240 for Amherst because there was a need to save good practices that have been in place for  
241 many years. She stated that it take 3-5 years to determine if a change in curriculum is  
242 working.

243 Mr. St. Amand reinforced what Ms. Heimark stated and that the growth in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
244 score was a 3% change and is statistically significant. The schools need another 2 years  
245 of data to see the impact of the new reading program. If the pattern in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade continues  
246 the district will look at other factors, but they hope to maintain 92% or more students  
247 becoming proficient. He stated that as students move up in grade level the test and  
248 standards get harder.

249 Ms. Facey asked if the consistency of implementation of the reading program is being  
250 assessed during teacher evaluations.

251 Mr. St. Amand stated that yes; they are looking for specific strategies of teaching in every  
252 classroom.

253 Mr. Dodge stated that the reading coaches have data down to each specific question and  
254 the coaches can look for weaknesses in a teacher and help support them. The scores this  
255 year were very consistent and teachers are doing a great job.

256 Ms. Heimark stated that they look at different levels of detail when they go through the  
257 assessment results. They look at each kid, at each grade level and the percentage of kids  
258 at the cut point that are missing proficient by 1 pt. She discussed how to spend time  
259 digging in the data and where to spend the time. She discussed how they look at the data  
260 by strands, skills, and in other ways.

261 Ms. Heimark discussed the scores in Math. She stated the Math program is 11 years old  
262 and math instruction has changed significantly. There are different levels of  
263 implementation of this program at all grade levels. Grades 6-8 have no specific math  
264 program. This is not a new problem. There is a lack of consistency, common tools, and  
265 curriculum. Other districts have this consistency and perform better. She discussed the  
266 2001 Math revision and how it was poorly done. The SAU is now doing a K-12 math  
267 program review.

268 Ms. Foulks and Ms. Heimark discussed similar dips in the Math as in Reading but at  
269 different grade levels. Having a common structure and language will help to reduce and  
270 eliminate these dips. Reading and Math scores statewide and nationally decrease in a  
271 significant way as students move up in grade and in high school. The decreases start to  
272 occur at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This trend is not happening in Amherst in Reading. The  
273 middle level kids are out performing the elementary and high school students. Decreases  
274 in math scores are greater than reading statewide and nationally also.

275 Mr. Dodge stated that he has wanted to see a common math program for a long time and  
276 is excited that the schools are getting there.

277 Ms. Heimark discussed the Math programs in Bedford and Hollis/ Brookline and how  
278 those programs have helped to increase test scores. She discussed how being three  
279 independent school districts is difficult and only now are all three working to look at a K-  
280 12 curriculum for all three districts. Amherst has a lot of work to do in math. Changes  
281 are not going to be easy for staff, students, and leaders of the district. State standards are  
282 accelerating by ¼ to ½ year. The district wants all kids to benefit from the transition to a  
283 more rigorous curriculum at an accelerated pace. There will also be a challenge in  
284 merging old curriculum with new curriculum. This will be more difficult for staff and  
285 students in 7-12 grade. The district is already hearing good things from Kindergarten  
286 parents about what the students are learning compared to prior years since the full  
287 implementation of a Math program this year.

288 Mr. Prescott stated that he is concerned about dumping a lot on the kids and asked how  
289 do we transition kids without asking them to work harder.

290 Ms. Heimark stated that at all grade levels K-11 there would be a core curriculum. The  
291 teachers have had sessions to work, as complete grade levels at unpacking the curriculum  
292 to determine what curriculum will stay, what is being added, what is going away. All



293 grade levels have released a fair amount of content. The teachers looked at the relevance  
294 of the topics and where the content they are giving up is going. She discussed what is  
295 being done this spring to prepare students at each grade level for the transition for next  
296 year. This summer, once a program is adopted, the administration, teachers, and Math  
297 coaches will discuss what is realistic to accomplish next year. Ms. Heimark and the Math  
298 Coaches will be working on transition plans for teachers in May and June.

299 Mr. Warburton recommended moving the rest of the presentation to the next meeting so  
300 there is time to ask questions and look at the hard work that has been done. This would  
301 also give the board more time with the slides and to form and ask questions through  
302 email.

303 The board thanked Ms. Heimark for all of her hard work and discussed how to ask  
304 questions and get answers through email.

305 Ms. Facey stated that she was on the Math program review committee. She has  
306 knowledge and understanding she would like to share with the board.

307 Ms. Foulks discussed ways to get the understanding of the data out to a greater  
308 population.

309 Mr. Manning wanted to remind the public that the Math curriculum has not changed yet  
310 when looking at the numbers in this presentation. He discussed how to make the impact  
311 of the math transition and the changes known less difficult.

312 The board and Ms. Heimark discussed how the implementation of the new Math program  
313 will not be measured by the results of NECAP because the program standards will not  
314 align with the test standards since the NECAP tests will be gone soon.

315 **DISCUSSION ITEM**

316 Grading trimester update

317 Mr. St. Amand stated that the Mont Vernon principal and staff will present at the May or  
318 June faculty meeting. Clark Wilkins may be in a position to pilot something next year.

319 **NON-PUBLIC SESSION – RSA 91-A:3 II. (a) (c)**

320 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to go into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3II. (a)**  
321 **(c) at 8:42pm. Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the roll call was all yes.**

322