

MINUTES
AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
October 2, 2008
Amherst Town Hall Meeting Room

Dwight Brew called the board meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Amherst School Board: Peg Bennett, Dwight Brew, Peter de Bruyn Kops, Rob Graybill, and Nancy Head

Administrative Team: Gerry St. Amand, Dr. Mary Jennings, Nicole Heimarck, Betty Shankel, and Renee Sparks

Ways and Means: Mark Vincent

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

- A. Principals Report – Board members received a copy of Gerald St. Amand’s Principal Report for October 2, 2008 in their board packets. Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nancy Head was pleased to see that the replacement windows in both Clark and Wilkins reduced the level of outside sound traveling into the buildings.

Dwight Brew said he needed to address a couple of issues.

Dwight told board members Charlene Carper was the Amherst School Board Community Representative to the SAU 39 Budget Advisory Committee last year and has expressed interest in serving on the SAU Budget Advisory Committee again this year. Board members agreed to appoint Charlene to the SAU Budget Advisory Committee.

Dwight told board members he received an e-mail from Bruce Bowler, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen an hour before this meeting requesting a joint meeting with

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the Souhegan School Board, the Amherst School Board and the Amherst Board of Selectmen. The date Bruce set for the meeting was Monday, October 20, 2008. Dwight said the Board of Selectmen had not put together an agenda yet as to what topics should be covered, but Bruce had suggested the Amherst School Board and the Souhegan School Board put together their topics of interest for this meeting.

Nancy Head told board members the renovation work at all three schools for this year has been completed. Nancy said in December the Master Plan Committee would begin to look at what will be done next year.

Dwight said the schools looked great and thanked Nancy for all her work.

Peg Bennett updated the board on the Alternative Start Committee's progress. Peg said the committee was formed back in the spring. Peg said the Souhegan School Board initiated the formation of this committee.

Peg said studies have shown it is better for teenagers to start school later. Peg said the committee has spoken to different administrators to get an idea of what the impact would be to starting school one hour later. Peg told board members they have put together a survey in order to gather parent feedback. Peg said the suggested later start time for the Amherst Middle School and Souhegan High School is 8:30 a.m. Currently they start school at 7:30 a.m.

Peg said she would send everyone on the school board a copy of the survey. Peg said she welcomes their feedback.

Dwight told board members they would begin the budget process at this evenings meeting. Dwight welcomed Mark Vincent from the Ways and Means Committee to the Amherst School Board meeting.

Dwight Brew invited comments from the Public but none were forthcoming.

III. PUBLIC TIME

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The D 1. Coca Cola agreement was pulled from the Consent Agenda by Nancy Head. **V. CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Rob Graybill to approve Consent Agenda Items A. Minutes 1. September 4, 2008 B. Treasurer's Report, C. Donation of Scale - \$1,000.00 estimated value and E. Resignation Letter. Peter de Bruyn Kops seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

Nancy Head said the prices seemed high in the Coca Cola agreement.

Betty Shankel said the pricing is comparable to other vendors. Betty said the rebates we receive from Coca Cola are far more aggressive than from Pepsi.

Dwight explained to board members as well as the public, currently the district buys products other than soda from Coca Cola and Pepsi distributors.

Betty said the students vastly prefer Coca Cola products to Pepsi products. Betty said Coca Cola would provide free fridges and coolers.

Betty said Per Appendix A the term of the agreement is six years, the minimum case volume is 6,000, and Coca Cola has agreed to donate \$4,500 toward the scoreboard at the Middle School.

Rob asked if Souhegan High School received the same pricing and Betty said yes.

Peter de Bruyn Kops asked if our attorney's had reviewed the agreement and Betty said yes.

A motion was made by Nancy Head to approve the Coca Cola Agreement as presented. Peg Bennett seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed

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unanimously. (5-0)

- A. **Budget Assumptions** - Dr. Jennings presented the Amherst School District FY10 Budget Assumptions. Board members received a handout, which detailed the Budget Assumptions.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Jennings explained to board members this is the third year they've followed this process. Dr. Jennings told board members during the first meeting the administration should get a clear understanding as to what assumptions they should base the budget on. Dr. Jennings welcomed input from the school board. Dr. Jennings said at the next meeting, Draft 1 of the budget would be presented based on this evening's assumptions and feedback from the board.

Dr. Jennings told board members Enrollments are tied to supplies, materials, educational initiatives and staffing.

Dr. Jennings said last year (FY09) they budgeted for 766 students at Clark/Wilkins and 748 students at the Amherst Middle School. The actual figures for FY08 at Clark/Wilkins was 746 students and at the Amherst Middle School it was 802 students.

Dr. Jennings told board members the projected number of students for Clark/Wilkins is 676 and for Amherst Middle School its 845. Dr. Jennings said for FY10 they will be budgeting for 700 students at Clark/Wilkins and 798 students for the Amherst Middle School. Dr. Jennings said these numbers have been discussed with Jerry St. Amand and Porter Dodge.

Dr. Jennings presented the Class Size / Student Load:

Dr. Jennings said these numbers are the same figures as used in the past.

- Kindergarten – Grade 1 18:1
- Grades 2-3-4 20:1
- Middle School Teams 80:Team

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- Middle School Specials 20-25:1

Dr. Jennings presented the Staffing as follows:

- Administration – Supervision of Staff and student
- Special Education – Case Loads
- Custodial – Facility Square Footage
- Support Staff – Support per staff members and individualized Education Plans

Nancy Head asked if Special Education Case Loads were down this year and Dr. Jennings said no, they were not. Dr. Jennings agreed to bring back some data with regards to Case Loads at the next board meeting.

Dr. Jennings presented the Staffing Benefits:

- Health Care - Budgeting an estimated 8% increase.
- Dental – Budgeting an estimated increase of 5%.
- Employee Contribution to State Retirement – Teachers new rate – 20% increase; Employees new rate – 4% increase.

Betty told board members the health care providers will tell them what the guaranteed maximum would be by the end of October.

Dr. Jennings said than next year the AEA Contract will be in the third year of a three-year contact and the ASSA's contract negotiations are underway.

Dr. Jennings said New Hire Teachers would be budgeted at an MA Step 5 rate.

Under Retirements, Dr. Jennings told board members five employees per the Collective Bargaining Agreement will receive additional benefits per section 14.4.

Dr. Jennings presented the following for Operations:

- Cost of supply increases – 5.5% per August

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- Northeast CPI-U.
- Fuel:
 - FY09 Budgeted \$2.75/gallon
 - FY09 Actual \$3.595/gallon
 - FY10 Budgeted \$3.90/gallon
 - Electricity – 5% increase
 - Maintenance and repairs – Capital items: Long term capital plan and technology plans.
 - Replacement needs – Rotational basis
 - Transportation – RFP issued – bids are to be opened on October 9, 2008, at 1 p.m. The focus is on route optimization.
 - Food Service – Continue to be self-supporting except for cost of Capital Equipment.

Peg asked if the Northeast CPI-U Index had been used in the past to determine an estimated cost increase for supplies.

Betty said this is the index the town uses.

Dwight asked if this was the best index for them to be using for goods and services.

Betty said she would look into it further and let the board know which is the best index for them to be using.

Peg asked how many bids they were expecting from the Transportation RFP? Betty said at the first pre-bid meeting they had, four companies were present so, they are expecting four bidders. She said they had another bidder coming in to meet with them in the morning, so they are hoping for five bids in total.

Dr. Jennings presented the Initiatives Affecting the Budget:

- Year Three of the Strategic Plan – Use of data to inform student progress in reading across the curriculum
- Curriculum Review Cycle – Implement Science Curriculum, Pilot Core Reading Program

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- RTI (Response to Intervention) – Reallocate resources
- Integrated Pre-School – Bring students back from out-of-district.

Nancy asked if they could have a presentation on what they are doing at the Middle School with regards to Response to Intervention. (RTI) Dr. Jennings said they would have a presentation at a future board meeting.

Nancy said she was anxious to hear the information about the integrated preschool.

Nancy said she is also interested in seeing how far the district is on Response to Intervention (RTI). Dr. Jennings said they are currently understanding the model and beginning to implement it through CSI terms. (Child Study Intervention Teams.)

Dr. Jennings presented the following for Revenues:

- Grants – Projected to remain at current reduced levels.
- State Aid – they are estimating it to be the same as FY09. \$2,231,611 (It will be updated November 15th)
- Catastrophic / Medicare AID (Special Education) – Projection will be based on current year expenditures.
- Tuition Income – There are no tuition students other than staff members, and inter-district agreements.

Dr. Jennings told board members they currently have the following Expendable Trust:

- Facility Maintenance – balance of \$125,000

Dr. Jennings said other possible Expendable Trusts they could have include:

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- Land / Capital Reserve
- Unfunded Liabilities for Retirees
- Special Education

Dr. Jennings asked if board members had anything they wanted to include as a directive for consideration that would be presented in Draft 1 of the budget.

Dr. Jennings presented the Timeline for the Amherst Budget as follows:

- October – The Administration creates Draft 1 using current assumptions.
- November 6 – Draft 1 of the Budget
- December 4 – Draft 2 of the Budget
- January 14 – Public Hearing: Budget and other warrant articles
- February 5 – Deliberative Session
- March 10 – District Voting

Board members were given the opportunity to comment on the Budget Assumptions as presented by Dr. Jennings.

Nancy Head said these are tough economic times and it's going to be a tough budget year.

Peter de Bruyn Kops asked why the Transportation RFP was focusing on route time optimization.

Betty explained the reason they were focusing on this was because the routing has not been overhauled in a very long time and the district wants to know if they are being routed properly. Betty said they want to determine if there is there a better way to optimize the buses and in the end save the district money.

Dwight Brew said some bus routes could be traveling more miles than necessary and if the buses were driving less, route optimization would benefit because it would save money and the students would spend less time on the bus.

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Peter de Bruyn Kops suggested they phone the gentlemen who worked on bus route optimization in the past, George Bower, to gain an understanding of his past work.

Dwight said he agreed with Nancy, this year they want to be as tight as possible with regards to the budget as its going to be a difficult year for everyone.

Dwight said even when they receive the refined medical numbers we always seem to end up with a surplus so he suggested we look at these numbers carefully.

Dr. Jennings said they would bring forward the last 4-5 years worth of data on the budgeted versus actual on Medical.

Dwight said that not all the Initiatives will have a cost impact but asked if they knew which ones would.

Dr. Jennings said because of the Curriculum Review Cycle there might be a larger number in the budget than usual. Dr. Jennings said they are going to be piloting a core reading program so there may be an increase there as well.

Dr. Jennings told board members Sally Grimes would be speaking to staff on Friday regarding the Core Reading Program. She invited board members to come listen to her speak. Dr. Jennings said she would be speaking to a K-6 audience from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and a 7-12 audience from 12:30-3:30 p.m.

Dwight Brew asked if Ways and Means had any questions. Mark Vincent said he had questions but they were already answered.

- B. Science NECAP – Nicole told board members the Science NECAP illustrates the changes in the Science curriculum. Nicole said it is very much equipment driven particularly at a very young age.

Nicole presented the 2008 Science NECAP Results.

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Nicole said they were anxious to receive these results, as it was the first time the Science NECAP was taken.

Nicole reminded board members the Science Curriculum was adopted last spring.

Nicole said they are pleased with the fourth grade results. All students performed above the state average.

Nicole said the fourth graders performed thirteen percentage points above the state average and the eighth graders performed eighteen percentage points above the state average.

Nicole told board members during this evenings presentation she would provide them with individual grade level results as compared to state averages, she would present comparative district results and she would provide some released test items utilizing the Grade 4 Inquiry Task Book.

Nicole said she would show what a typical 4th grader had to go through to complete one of the test questions, particularly an experiment utilizing different points of data, etcetera.

Nicole presented a slide detailing the Amherst School District 2008 Grade 4 Science NECAP Results.

- 64% of the Amherst students in grade 4 performed proficient or above as compared to 51% in the state.
- 44% of the 8th Grade Amherst students performed proficient as compared to 26% in the state.

Nicole said the greatest weakness for 4th and 8th graders was the Inquiry section. Nicole said the 4th grade demonstrates a spread of approximately 5% above the state results in physical, life and earth space science. The 8th grades greatest area of strength was in life and physical science, approximately 10-15% above the state average.

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Nicole provided a graph, which detailed the Area District Comparison for 2008, Grade 4 Science NECAP, % Proficient, % Proficient with Distinction.

Also provided was a graph, which detailed the Area District Comparison for 2008 for Grade 8 Science NECAP, % Proficient, % Proficient with Distinction.

Board members were given a portion of the New England Common Assessment Program Task Booklet 2008, for Grade 4.

Nicole explained this was in regards to the Released Science Inquiry Task, which related to Bird Beaks and Survival.

Board members were given all the necessary data and supplies needed to perform this Inquiry just like a 4th grade student. Board members were shown how a 4th grader would have to make a prediction about the Inquiry prior to completing it. The procedure was explained to the board and they were told during the procedure, a student would be paired up with a partner to complete the task. At the end of the task, students were required to record their findings in a Data Table.

Dwight Brew thanked Nicole for her presentation.

- C. Cable TV Committee – Steve Coughlan told board members the Cable TV Committee met with the Town of Amherst and Comcast this past spring. Steve said Comcast gave them a second channel, Channel 21.

Steve said the Amherst School Board meeting is on live and then replay it every other Thursday. Steve said the second channel, Channel 21 is for educational use and the content will be controlled by SAU39.

Steve explained the Cable TV Committee now has two

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channels to run and volunteers are running them.

Steve said they would like to look at putting a non-profit corporation into place on behalf of the entities involved – Town of Amherst, Souhegan School District, and the Amherst School District.

Steve said two weeks ago they started talking about how they would set up a non-profit organization.

Steve said the selectmen were as supportive as they could be, and thought it was a good idea to look into and talk about.

Steve said they are recommending a non-profit, nine member board of Directors which would include the following: Superintendent, Town Administrator, Amherst School Board member, Souhegan School Board member, 3 citizens approved by the Selectmen, and 2 Board of Selectmen.

Steve said they are proposing the non-profit gets funding from each of the three entities and the source of revenue is from the town through the cable franchise fees. Steve said everyone has the ability to control the operation and everyone owns the operation. (Town of Amherst, Amherst School Board, and Souhegan School Board)

Dwight asked Steve if he was looking to gain support from the Amherst School Board to look into this further and Steve said yes.

Nancy Head said she thinks this a logical next step. Nancy asked Steve what he envisions this will cost. Steve said nothing more than what it costs to operate under the current system.

Nancy asked if Steve sees this proposal effecting the volunteer staffing or staff and Steve said he doesn't think this proposal will make any difference for staffing.

Dwight Brew said he is not opposed to exploring the proposal further, but he does have some concerns. Dwight said a nine-member board seems like a rather large board.

Dwight asked board members if they were in favor of looking into this proposal further and all board members said they were in favor of further research.

Nancy Head volunteered to sit on the committee and Dwight Brew said he would attend the meeting if Nancy couldn't make it.

- A. **ASB Goal Setting** – Board members received a handout entitled Amherst School Board Goals 2008-2009 in their board packets.

V. ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Jennings asked board members if they were prepared to adopt the goal as presented and then review the strategies.

A motion was made by Nancy Head to adopt the goal as presented in the Amherst School Board Goals 2008-2009. Peg Bennett seconded the motion.

Discussion followed amongst board members regarding the goal.

Board members received a handout in their board packets entitled Amherst School District Communications Master Plan.

Dr. Jennings told board members the Communications Master Plan Committee relates to the five-year plan and the two schools in the Amherst District and their progress to the five-year plan.

Board members discussed the make up of the committee. It was decided they would eliminate the Director of Technology or designee and the Building Administrator. Dr. Jennings said she could always bring staff people in on an ad hoc basis.

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At the next meeting, they will have a charge for the committee.

Board members voted on the motion as presented above.

All board members voted in favor of the previous motion to adopt the Amherst School Board Goals for the 2008-2009 school year. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

A motion was made by Nancy Head to establish the Amherst School District Communications Master Plan. Peg Bennett seconded the motion.

Discussion amongst board members followed.

Peter de Bruyn Kops said they should have someone on the committee that has a professional background in communications.

Board members agreed either a parent or citizen could be the one with the expertise in communication.

Dwight Brew asked how they plan to fill the parent and citizen spots. Dr. Jennings said they would solicit volunteers through the local newspaper or board members could speak to people to see if they are interested in serving on the committee.

Board members agreed they were comfortable with Dwight appointing the 2 parents and 2 citizens offline.

Board members voted on the motion as presented above:

All board members voted in favor of the previous motion to establish the Amherst School District Communication Master Plan. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

A motion was made by Peter de Bruyn Kops to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, (a). Rob

VI. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

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Graybill seconded the motion. By roll call vote Brew-yes; Graybill-yes; de Bruyn Kops-yes; Bennett-yes; and Head-yes. The board entered into non-public session at 7:55 p.m.

The Board discussed a one-time bonus, paid for by the Amherst School Board, for administration member, Jim Miner, for work done on school renovations.

The Board discussed a situation regarding 14.4.

A motion was made by Rob Graybill to come out of non-public session. Nancy Head seconded the motion. By roll call vote Head – yes, Graybill – yes, Bennett – yes, Brew – yes, de Bruyn Kops – yes the board came out of non-public session at 8:23 p.m.

A motion was made by Peter de Bruyn Kops to accept the Superintendents recommendation to give a one-time bonus to Jim Miner based on his exceptional quality, cost, and on-time performance with the school renovations over the summer. Peg Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

A motion was made by Rob Graybill to adjourn the meeting. Peter de Bruyn Kops seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (5-0) The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

IX. REVIEW OF MEETING/ADJOURN