

AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD

June 22, 2009

MINUTES

Approved 8/25/09

Chairman Head called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present

ATTENDANCE

Amherst School Board: Dwight Brew, Peg Bennett, Peter Maresco, Rob Graybill and Nancy Head.

Administrative Team: Gerry St. Amand, Kris Gallo, Dr. Mary Jennings, Porter Dodge, Elizabeth Shankel, Renea Sparks and Nicole Heimarck.

Public: Debbie Almeida, Manny Almeida, and Nancy Protzmann

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

Nancy Head asked if there were any comments from the public but none were forthcoming under Public Time. Members of the public did comment under the topic K-12 Math Placement.

II. PUBLIC TIME

Board members received a handout entitled Communications Framework Presented by Communications Committee.

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rob Graybill explained what the Phase I deliverables were and what the committee's recommendations were going forward.

Rob explained one of the school board's goals was to do a better job communicating. A committee was put together to discuss how to improve communication.

Rob said the committee found they started the process too late and plan on starting their work in the fall as soon as school begins.

Peg Bennett explained during Phase II, they would be defining goals and craft message.

Rob said there is no one in the district whose formal job is communications. This job is done within the current staff that is in place. Rob said they need to get more community members, parents, etcetera involved.

The A. Minutes – June 4, 2009, were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Peg Bennett to approve Consent Agenda Items B. Treasurer's Report – May 2009, C. Treasurer, D. Donations to Activity

Fund; 1. Clark School - \$4,050.01, 2. Wilkins School - \$2,050.70, 3. Clark School - \$449.21. Peter Maresco seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

The A. Minutes – June 4, 2009, were accepted as corrected.

A. K-12 Math Placement – Nicole Heimark presented the Mathematics Placement for 2008-2009 for the Amherst Middle School and Souhegan High School. Nicole explained this process is in place at the Amherst Middle School as well as Souhegan High School.

V. PRESENTATIONS

Nicole spoke about the History of Placement – Changes in the methodology used.

The Charge – Evaluation of mathematics instruction.

Rationale – Inconsistent practices observed in the delivery of instruction within and/or across our three school districts – Amherst, Mont Vernon and Souhegan.

Nicole told board members as well as meeting attendees, last April they looked at a variety of Points of Interest including – Grouping, Acceleration, Placement Process, Course/Grade level Competencies, and Programs across the schools that do not align. Nicole explained they are aware if programs do not align across the three districts, it is not in the best interest of the students and it is something that needs to be examined.

Nicole presented the Committee Outcomes:

- A vision for mathematics instruction
- Local Case Study – piloted concept of flexible grouping almost two years ago.
- Placement Process – Developed Timeline for Placement of students, Student Work Habits Rubric, and Acceleration Rubric – used to place students in advanced mathematics.
- Recommendations for future curriculum work.

Nicole presented the Recommendations for the Future:

- Create common EOY (end of year) or EOC (end of course) assessments for all grade levels. (K-12)

- Support teachers in implementing flexible grouping through professional development and release time. Spend time with student data, visitation to other schools.
- Evaluate the process and materials used for placement into accelerated mathematics.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of flexible grouping for grade levels K-6.
- Continue with the curriculum alignment that has occurred at grade levels 7-10, mirror process for other grade levels. Nicole said the 7-8 and 9-10 grade teachers have done a lot of work to align their curriculums.
- Pursue common curriculum adoption across the school districts.
- Examine other entry points into advanced mathematics at the secondary level.
- Identification of “Power” skills/standards for each grade level.
- Research opportunities that may become available for students beyond the 2-year acceleration path. Such opportunities could become available to those students who demonstrate truly exceptional needs in mathematics.

Nicole presented the Modifications they made to the placement process, both immediate and long-term.

Nicole presented the Alterations Already Implemented –

- 6th grade rubric range for placement into accelerated mathematics modified by 1 point.
- Timing of Orleans Hannah Assessment moved from March to May.
- Point span on Orleans Hannah modified.

Nicole presented the Continuing Work –

- Formatting of rubric(s)
- Ongoing review of “best practice” in measuring student content knowledge vs. application knowledge.
- Use of 8th period at SHS in advancing students

- Addition of student self-assessment
- Weighting of indicators on the placement rubric differently.

Nicole presented a copy of the New Accelerated Math Placement Rubric.

Nicole told board members as well as meeting attendees, Kris Gallo, Dean of Faculty would be speaking about the Courses and Curriculum. Nicole said Kris was also the Co-Chair of the last mathematics curriculum revision in 2001.

A slide was shown detailing the different course options for students, which included Math 1, 2, 3, Precalc, Stats, Math 4, AP Stats, etcetera.

Nicole presented a slide, which detailed the Enrollment in Advanced Mathematics, Five-Year Trends. Nicole said this information was requested at the May Board Meeting.

A graph was shown Tracking the 7th Grade enrollment in Advanced Mathematics – 5 Year Trend. The graph showed Grade 7 Advanced Math as a % of Students in 1-year and as a % of Students 2-year. The data was shown beginning in 04-05 and ending in 09-10.

A graph was shown Tracking 8th Grade Enrollment in Advanced Mathematics 5 Year Trend as a % of Students 1-year, 2-year and 3-year. The data was shown beginning in 04-05 and ending in 09-10.

A graph was shown Tracking Senior Year Enrollment, Mathematics Courses, 5 Year Trend. This graph showed what the enrollment at the High School has looked like for seniors for the past five years.

The last graph shown was for Tracking Senior Year Enrollment for Mathematics Courses, 5 Year Trends, % of Seniors Enrolled in Math Courses. Kris Gallo explained the number of students enrolled in Calc 1, Precalc, and Stats has increased.

Nicole explained that a letter was sent home to all families of 7th – 11th graders so that the parents and students could decide whether they wanted to opt into advanced mathematics. Nicole said a self-study is created through Angel for any students who wanted to take advanced mathematics.

Board members as well as members of the public were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Dwight Brew said it was very interesting to see the increase in the number of students taking Calc AB or BC.

Rob Graybill asked when the rubric changed. Nicole said the rubric was originally designed and brought before the board on April 24, 2008.

Nicole said this year is really the first operational year of the rubric. Nicole said they met in March to discuss the rubric and began modifications in May.

Rob said he is not sure they addressed the distribution issue, the most notable is in this incoming 9th grade class. For example, five-year trend – 70% in Math 1 2009-2010.

Nicole said the administration's responsibility is to appropriately place students, she said they would test them if needed.

Manny and Debbie Almeida were at the board meeting to address their concerns with regards to the rubric and placing their child in mathematics this coming year – 2009-2010.

Nancy Protzmann, another concerned parent said they have forgotten about the child's wishes and the change in the rubric will affect her daughter's placement this year.

Nancy said her daughter's scores were close, and she wants to be in the advanced mathematics class this coming year. Nancy said her daughter would work to her potential and she wouldn't be at the board meeting fighting for her if she didn't believe she could do the work.

Nancy said she has been fighting this issue since April 10th, and she is asking the board to consider her request to place her daughter in the advanced mathematics program. Nancy said she has gone through every proper channel and she doesn't know why they are not putting her in the class.

Nancy requested the board revise the policy to let children in who deserve to be in the program this year.

Peter Maresco said they cannot get involved in individual placement. Peter said he did think the rubric had too much emphasis on standardized testing. Peter said he doesn't understand how you can have a student perform at the advanced level and now because they did not perform well on the standardized test, you can take someone out of the advanced class.

Porter Dodge said that in the past, the Orleans Hannah was the only factor to get into Advanced Mathematics; it is now 1/5 of the decision-making process.

Nicole Heimarck said curriculum revision begins in the fall and the committee will look at scope and sequence for all grades K-12. Nicole said the research phase lasts for 8-12 months, and will begin in September.

Nancy Protzmann said her daughter does not handle standardized tests well, and doesn't believe this should prevent her daughter from getting into the advanced math class.

Debbie Almeida said the Orleans Hannah is a time test and the students are not really prepped for it. Debbie said the rubric takes away from teacher input.

Debbie said in her research for college entry, calculus is more important than statistics.

Debbie asked how children are chosen to redo the Orleans Hannah. Debbie said way too much emphasis is placed on standardized testing and not enough on teacher input.

Nancy Head said there is a policy in place for placing children into advanced mathematics classes and members of the board do not have the authority to change it.

- A. Acceptance of ARRA Funds – Dr. Jennings explained at the last SAU Board meeting board members were given an overview of ARRA Funding.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

Renea Sparks presented a slide entitled IDEA Funding by District. Renea explained board members had seen this slide at the last SAU Meeting.

Renea told board members the Total ARRA Funds for Amherst were \$338,194.17.

Renea said at the last Amherst Board Meeting in early June, members of the board asked for some additional information as to where the funds might be used. Renea said the A Team met a couple of weeks ago to look at the needs in the district and determine what they'd like to spend the money on.

Renea presented a slide detailing the Planning for the Application. The slide showed the Priorities to be Addressed, Performance Measurement, Desired Outcome, and the Projected Expense.

Dwight asked given that we have been advised to avoid any funding cliffs are we were adding any staff or any hours to any staff positions.

Renea said if any staff positions see an increase in their hours, they will know its only short term. (two years)

Renea said on the application, they need to say what the district's desired outcome is, for example their scores will go up. Renea said she thinks it is great they have an opportunity to do these things. She said it is not the administrations intent to come back to the board to ask for additional funds at the end of the two years.

A motion was made by Peg Bennett to accept the ARRA Funds in the amount of \$338,194.17. Rob Graybill seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

- B. FY09 Budget Adjustments – Board members received a handout in their board packets entitled Amherst School District, Fiscal Year 2009, 7/1/2008-5/31/2009. Betty Shankel told board members they are estimating a \$460,000 surplus at the end of the year, June 30, 2009.

Betty explained the biggest overrun in the budget is in Employee Benefits. (\$406,161) Betty told board members this is due to the changes in teacher's salaries – FICA, Medicare, and Retirement as well as healthcare plans. Also, retirement payments were much lower than anticipated.

Board members also received a handout in their board packets entitled ASD 2009 Surplus \$ Proposed Summer Projects 6/4/09. The total proposed projects were \$114,114. Betty explained the projects for AMS, Wilkins and Clark were presented at the last board meeting. Betty told board members some of these projects were cut from the budget. Betty said the Ways and Means Committee approved all of the projects that had been cut from the FY10 Budget however; the administration went back and reduced the budget in order to come in under a 2% increase.

A review was done with regard to the proposed technology and it was determined the AMS Equipment was critical for the new integration lab. The other items on the Technology Project list are deemed to be important but none as critical as the lab equipment.

Also provided was a narrative explaining the need for the Replacement Desktops for the 2nd AMS Computer Lab. The narrative was dated June 1, 2009.

Dwight Brew suggested they return all the surplus money back to the taxpayers this year on July 1, 2009, and then process a budget transfer on July 1, 2009, from the surplus funds from the 2009-2010 budget that will result from the reduced rate for health insurance coverage.

Nancy Head said she didn't feel comfortable with this option since she told the Master Plan Committee they would be taking the funds from the surplus funds in the 2008-2009 budget. Nancy said she likes returning money to the taxpayers at the end of the year however, she is a little nervous about reaching the \$5 million figure.

Betty Shankel suggested another option could be to split the difference by using surplus funds for the renovations and technology from next years budget through a transfer.

Dwight said they have the money in next years budget and they would be missing an opportunity to return money to the taxpayer's if they don't transfer the money as of July 1, 2009.

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to approve a budget transfer from the FY10 Budget health insurance premiums in the amount of \$114, 114 for the Proposed Summer Projects in the handout provided by Jim Miner, Director of Buildings and Grounds. Rob Graybill seconded the motion. Four board members voted in favor of the motion and one member, Nancy Head voted against the motion, the motion passed. (4-1-0)

Nancy Head explained her no vote, she said she felt she had an obligation to the citizens to follow through with the previously proposed plan for payment of the renovations.

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to approve a budget transfer from the FY10 Budget health insurance premiums in the amount of \$24,222 for the desktop computers for the new AMS Computer Lab. Peter Maresco seconded the motion.

Discussion followed.

Board members voted on the motion.

All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

- C. ASSA Agreement – Board members received a copy of the new ASSA Agreement in their board packets.

A motion was made by Peg Bennett to approve and authorize the board to sign the ASSA Agreement for 2009-2012. Dwight Brew seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to approve and to authorize the Chair to sign the Sidebar to the new ASSA Agreement noting the change in working assignment. Peg Bennett seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

- D. AMS Renovation Natural Gas Conversion – Board members received an updated handout from Jim Miner, Director of Buildings and Grounds regarding the Amherst Middle School Natural Gas Conversion. The handout outlined the benefits of converting to Natural Gas. Two cost options were presented. The first option was to replace both (2) existing boilers with high efficiency natural gas units and convert Kitchen, Home Economics, Restrooms and Locker rooms to gas water heating. The cost for option #1 is Construction - \$126,000, Engineering and Design - \$9,500, and Contingency – \$25,200. The total cost for Option #1 is \$160,700. The second option is to replace one (1) existing boiler with high efficiency natural gas unit; convert Kitchen, Home Economics, Restrooms, and Locker rooms to natural gas water heating. The cost for option # 1 is Construction - \$91,000, Engineering & Design - \$7,500, and Contingency - \$18,200. The total cost for Option #2 is \$116,700.

The handout provided Return on Investment (ROI) Criteria. Also provided was the Annual Cost to Heat AMS. The cost to heat AMS using #2 Fuel Oil is \$69,299 and the cost to heat AMS using Natural Gas the cost would be \$45,548. The annual savings using natural gas would be \$23,751.

The Payback Period for Option #1 is 5.9 years and for Option #2 it is 3.8 years. Jim Miner told board members he was recommending they go with Option #1.

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to accept Jim Miner's recommendation to go with Option 1 for the Natural Gas Conversion. Peter Maresco seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

- E. School Status Change – Clark/Wilkins – Board members received a handout entitled School Status Change Request Form in their board packets.

Nicole Heimarek told board members the purpose for filing this form is a matter of formality. Nicole said we have always referred to Clark/Wilkins as one school. Nicole explained since Wilkins received a SINI designation, we really need to file this paperwork with the NH Department of Education in order to get one ID # so each of the schools do not have to write individual Title I SINI Plans.

Rob Graybill asked if the Status Change would change how we are operationally doing business.

Gerry St. Amand said if this Change Request isn't submitted to the NH Department of Education, we would have two different school improvement teams. Gerry said this change would not change how we have been doing business.

A motion was made by Rob Graybill to consolidate the elementary schools under the name of Clark-Wilkins Elementary School effective June 22, 2009 in order to obtain a single ID from the Department of Education. Dwight Brew seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

- F. Intent to Purchase Portable – Clark School – Board members received a copy of a letter addressed to Jim Miner from George Caccavaro, Business Administrator of the Mascoma Valley Regional School District – SAU#62 in their board packets.

The letter outlined Mascoma Valley Regional School District’s commitment to purchase the portable classroom from SAU 39 for a sum of \$40,000. The letter stated they would remove the unit from the SAU 39 site before July 31, 2009.

A motion was made by Peg Bennett to sell the Clark School portable to the Mascoma Valley Regional School District – SAU 62. Rob Graybill seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

- A. Policy JLCF revision – 1st reading - Board members received a copy of the Amherst School District Wellness Policy, JLCF in their board packets.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Dr. Jennings explained Souhegan initiated this policy change. Dr. Jennings said it was also the wish of the students to be able to drink coffee at the high school.

Board members requested they receive input from the school nurses.

Dr. Jennings said the administration would check with the school nurses and advise the board as to whether they are in agreement with the changes to the policy.

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 (a) for the purpose of hiring a public employee. Rob Graybill seconded the motion. By roll call vote, Brew-yes; Maresco-yes; Head-yes; Graybill-yes, and Bennett-yes. The board entered into Non-Public Session at 8:45 p.m.

VIII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION – RSA 91-A:3 (a)

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to come out of Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 (a). Rob Graybill seconded the motion. By roll call vote, Brew-yes; Maresco-yes; Head-yes; Graybill-yes; and Bennett-yes. The board came out of Non-Public Session at 8:55 p.m.

The administration presented Danielle Service as a qualified candidate for the Grade 8 Language Arts position and asked the Board approve her for this position.

IX. NOMINATIONS

A motion was made by Dwight Brew to offer the Grade 8 Language Arts position to Danielle Service. Peg Bennett seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0)

A motion was made by Peg Bennett to adjourn the meeting. Peter Maresco seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed unanimously. (5-0-0) The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

**X. REVIEW OF
MEETING/ ADJOURN**