

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **September 18, 2014**

3
4 **ATTENDANCE**

5
6 Amherst School Board

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

8
9 Administrative Team

10 Peter Warburton, Betty Shankel, Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, and Meg Beauchamp

11
12 Minute Taker

13 Beth Penney

14 **CALL TO ORDER**

15 Ms. Foulks called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

16 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

17 Principals' reports

18 The Board thanked Mr. St. Amand for the pictures.

19 Mr. Dodge stated that camp was wonderful.

20 Ms. Foulks stated that she got a nice comment about how wonderful it is that AMS is
21 including Mont Vernon in the 6th grade camp experience.

22 Mr. Dodge stated that this is the second year of doing that.

23 Social Media Conference / AMS Facebook page

24 Mr. Dodge discussed that Scott Spradling and a teacher from Kearsage, who was the
25 teacher of the year spoke at the conference. They spoke about some of the things schools
26 need to do. Social media often has the message before schools get the message. The
27 conference suggested using Facebook and Twitter. The office staff at AMS have been
28 trained and there is no ability for people to respond to the AMS Facebook page. Having a
29 Facebook page allows the school to put the message out and control what gets out to the
30 public. AMS is ready to start a Facebook page and they would like to start it soon. The
31 school needs a clear and smart policy for what goes on Facebook.

32 Mr. Warburton stated that SHS has had a Facebook page and have been on Twitter for a
33 while. Putting information on Facebook can help the school and get important
34 information out there. The Brick School will have a Facebook page and he is hoping the
35 elementary schools will follow. This will enhance the communication with parents and
36 the community.

37 Mr. Dodge stated at the conference they discussed things that the schools can not control
38 on other websites.

39 Mr. Warburton stated that he would like to try Facebook for a while and get feedback
40 from parents and the community.

41 Mr. Dodge stated that he wants to have clear guidelines of what will be put on Facebook,
42 but do not need a Board approved policy.

43 Ms. Facey asked if Mr. Dodge was continuing the Parent Partnership to discuss the
44 replacement of the academic awards.

45 Mr. Dodge stated that the Parent Partnership on October 20th is first night and this will be
46 a topic for one of the nights because he would like parents involvement in the changes.

47 Mr. Warburton stated that he will check if there needs to be a policy for Facebook and he
48 will find out what SHS has.

49 Ms. Shankel stated that LGC sent a letter for another premium holiday. The estimate for
50 how much district will get is \$160,000.

51 Ms. Foulks asked if this would be surplus.

52 Ms. Shankel stated that this would be budget savings.

53 Mr. Prescott asked if this is a premium holiday that has been spread out over a number of
54 years.

55 Ms. Shankel stated that the district and employees will get money back every year and
56 LGC is playing catch up. After this premium holiday there will be an annual pay out to
57 reduce the premiums. This is all happening because of court cases precipitating new laws
58 and regulations. There were people on the LGC board who fought for making sure that
59 people were getting the money back that they deserve. The district calculates who gets a
60 returned premium and how much.

61 The Board discussed how to discuss the surplus and tax increases during the budget
62 discussions ahead. This LGC return will be projected on the Revenue sheet for next year.

63 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

64 None.

65 **CONSENT AGENDA**

66 Ms. Foulks pulled the minutes.

67 **Ms. Facey made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda containing Treasurer's**
68 **report for July 2014, Request to transfer funds – Josh Savyon Scholarship Fun,**
69 **Budget transfers, Rebate from Market Velocity Inc./HP Catalyst for Change for**

70 **\$920 to offset General Fund expenditures, and Donations for Clark School**
71 **Student Activities - \$273.49 from Target and AMS Student Activities - \$128.75 from**
72 **Target. Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

73 Ms. Foulks asked to change Line 190 of the August minutes to add there is an impact on
74 the school population.

75 **Ms. Facey made a motion to accept the Minutes for August 19, 2014 as amended.**
76 **Mr. Prescott seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous and Ms. Bennett**
77 **abstained.**

78 **INFORMATIONAL**

79 Safe routes to school update

80 Rick Katzenburg and Susan Durling

81 Mr. Katzenburg stated that he is on the Safe Routes to School Committee and there is
82 now a sub-committee to decide where sidewalks should be. Amherst now has a 5ft wide
83 sidewalk that starts at Cross Street, on the Library side to the Corner by Mikes Auto, past
84 the corner of Foundry and down to Sunset St. There has been lots of work on done on
85 Middle St. There may be a sidewalk across from Brick School. The purpose is so
86 students can walk ride and scoot to the elementary schools safely. The students are also
87 safe of cars backing up by Moultons and the Brick School. The improvements are
88 enormous so far. There are still areas where sidewalks are needed by Spaulding Field.
89 There are lots of curbs where there was not a curb before. 16 people are on the committee
90 and it is an interesting group. The committee is helping to change the culture of the town
91 about how we transport ourselves. The sidewalks will help seniors and moms with baby
92 carriages also.

93 Mr. Katzenburg stated that the Town has applied for a grant to the NH DOT, where the
94 DOT would pay 80% of the cost. The grant would be to put sidewalks from the Village
95 green circle, past the town hall, up Mack Hill Rd., past upper Wilkins, and connect to the
96 new sidewalks by Wilkins This is a popular route and is a 1.5 long walk, ride, and scoot.
97 This is very heavily traveled for walkers and connects neighborhoods to the town center.
98 There are a lot of reasons to put sidewalks there. This needs to be pulled together by the
99 26th and there are petitions for public support. The selectmen have approved the idea and
100 it will be a warrant article in March.

101 Mr. Katzenburg stated that the other place that needs sidewalks is from AMS across Bean
102 Field and on Boston Post Road up to Homestead Dr. He would like to see the school pave
103 the area from the school through the fields to Boston Post Rd. The committee will have
104 the cost estimates soon. The path needs to be wide enough to be snowplow. This would
105 provide students a safe walk from the schools to the Homestead and all of the fields. The
106 Schools would pay about \$60,000 and the town would pay \$60,000. The Town and
107 school needs to get together to decide who is responsible for which piece. The cost is too
108 small of an amount to be funded by a grant and it cannot be combined with anything else

109 in order to get a grant.

110 The Board, Mr. Katzenburg, and Ms. Durling discussed the AMS paths and the use now
111 by students. The hope is that people would use the path and not walk on Cross St. The
112 board discussed getting a quote for the building and the lighting needs of the path. The
113 Board looked at where the path would go on a map, which would be below the Amherst
114 Recreation building and above the fields along the tree line from AMS to Boston Post Rd.

115 Mr. Dodge stated that he gets lots of calls from people because kids are walking on Cross
116 Rd. three or more abreast.

117 Ms. Bennett discussed how important it is to sign the petition and get others to sign the
118 petition for the sidewalks.

119 Ms. Foulks asked Mr. Katzenburg and Ms. Durling to get some numbers and come back
120 to the board. She asked about the possibilities for private donations.

121 Mr. Katzenburg discussed to a private foundation in Amherst, which is working to raise
122 money for projects to make Amherst a better community.

123 Ms. Foulks thanked Mr. Katzenburg and Ms. Durling. She stated that there is interest
124 from the board to hear more about the cost and obligation for the path at AMS.

125 Mr. Manning asked if this is a school responsibility. If this is a path to the Homestead and
126 the Homestead could be closed in a few years.

127 Mr. Katzenburg stated that this is a valid point.

128 Ms. Shankel stated that this path is for walkers. This would be a good path whether
129 people are going to the Homestead or not.

130 Mr. Manning asked should the town take ownership and not look back at the school
131 boards for putting in the path? The board needs more information to see why there needs
132 to be a paved path.

133 Mr. Katzenburg stated that the Homestead is heavily utilized by lots of people and there
134 needs to be a path. Someone needs to pay for the path.

135 Mr. Manning stated that he needs more information to understand if the Board needs to
136 build a trail costing \$60,000.

137 Ms. Durling stated that she wants to see the sidewalks built to take care of the AMS
138 students too. She agrees the town should to pay for it.

139 Mr. Katzenburg stated that the new sidewalks did not come from Safe Routes to School,
140 but because the town was redoing roads.

141 Ms. Foulks stated that she would like to have Mr. Katzenburg and Ms. Durling come

142 back with more detail about cost.

143 The Board discussed if the path needs to be paved or not and determined that it should be
144 for snow blowing in the winter.

145 Mr. Manning and Mr. Dodge discussed getting a group of kids together to see if the kids
146 would use a path.

147 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

148 Pre-K Program Presentation

149 Janet Davis, Kim Ballantyne (teacher), Karen Rimol (coordinator), Anne Goldsmith
150 (teacher), Jane Lindsey (guidance)

151 Ms. Rimol discussed the staff of the preschool staff. The staff is certified in Early
152 Childhood Elementary Education and Special education. There is another special
153 education teacher, Allison Bernet, who is part of the Elementary Inclusionary Program,
154 and is specialized support for students on the Autistic spectrum. There are also several
155 para-professionals helping in the classrooms. The public school allows for students to
156 also have access to the school nurse and guidance. Professional staff for special services
157 and Consultative staff for children who need PT, Vision, and hearing also come into the
158 classroom. Ms. Goldsmith and Ms. Ballantyne use a co-teaching model. The classrooms
159 are Owls and Monkeys and are an integrated mix of 3year olds and 4 year olds. This
160 model promotes growth and learning for all children. The model also ultimately promotes
161 readiness for kindergarten and the least restrictive environment. Integrated preschool in
162 an early childhood setting must have at least 50/50 ratio of special needs students to
163 regular students. The preschool is being discovered for the typical students because of
164 siblings, children of staff, and some advertising. Special education students come through
165 referral services. The school offers Child Check to the community 3 times per year. The
166 first Child Check is Oct. 10th. The district is obligated by law to provide the least
167 restrictive environment for special education students. The focus is on safety and quality.
168 The two classrooms are adjoining and the program is two half-day sessions, 4 days per
169 week. The preschool program offers lots of exploration learning and emphasizes process
170 and not products.

171 Ms. Ballantyne stated how much she loves preschoolers; they are unique and amazing
172 little people. She stated that it is fun to be part of their learning. The playground is now a
173 wonderful space. She is pleased with the huge shed, which fits everything in it. The kids
174 get involved in taking toys out and cleaning them up. The fenced in area gives Preschool
175 its own space. She explained how the curriculum plan changes because the children just
176 take off with their exploration. She gave an example of an activity to target certain skills
177 and how students went beyond what the teachers expected to happen. There are many
178 staff and dedicated people to support the students being engaged, helping them to have
179 fun, and a quality learning experience. They follow the preschool curriculum and have
180 the idea of where the students are headed. Ms. Ballantyne did teach Kindergarten for 5
181 years so she understands what is expected of students. The program is a creative and

182 thematic curriculum. She discussed the domains in the curriculum including approach to
183 learning, social and emotional development, health, wellness, physical development,
184 creative arts, expression, literacy, mathematics and math language, scientific thinking,
185 independent student, problem solving, and working with peers. The staff and students
186 need to feel included so everyone can learn and grow.

187 Ms. Goldsmith stated that she is honored to be member of the staff here; they are
188 wonderful and dedicated. She discussed learning through play. The teacher's job is to
189 engineer the environment and set-up the classroom so kids can blossom through their
190 play. She discussed skills and what those skills look like. The skills include cooperation,
191 empathy, pride, success, imagination, creating structures, building vocabulary,
192 connecting language to their actions, spoken language, geometry, spatial relationships,
193 concepts of size and weight, understanding of gravity, engineering, understanding simple
194 machines, large muscle strength and coordination, and use of small muscles. All of these
195 skills are incorporated into every activity in the classroom. She discussed a typical day in
196 the classroom, including using a visual schedule for the day that the students can
197 manipulate it. The basic schedule is as follows: Arrival, Table time, Morning meeting,
198 Choice time, Snack, Sing/Dance, Playground, Dismissal and this all happens in 2 hours
199 and 45 minutes. The students have specials 1 time per week, which could include
200 Library, OT, Guidance, and special therapies for students with identified needs.

201 Ms. Lindsey stated that she works with the students on social emotional competence,
202 which is very critical for school and educational success. This work helps to reduce
203 behaviors later like retention and school drop out. She utilizes Second Step Early
204 Learning Program, which includes, skills for learning, empathy, emotion management,
205 friendship, and problem solving skills. The students in the kindergarten program that
206 were in preschool already have a great basis in this learning. Often schools are reactive
207 rather than being proactive and this preschool program helps to be proactive and teach the
208 skills needed.

209 Mr. Manning asked if the preschool was AYC accredited.

210 Ms. Beauchamp stated that they are currently working with the Department of Education
211 to deal with the growing pains of this program. They are trying to keep the program at the
212 50/50 ratio. This is not a problem unique to Amherst and this is a relatively new program.
213 Accreditation is an extensive and rigorous process. We need to be sure we are ready.
214 She is pleased with adjustments made to the program to maintain the 50/50 ratio. She
215 wants to be well established and firm on the philosophy of the program before they
216 embark on being accredited.

217 Bean Field update

218 Mr. Warburton stated that Primex determined that the plans for the swing set look ok.
219 They have given the ok to go ahead.

220 The Board discussed the timeline for completion.

221 Mr. Warburton stated that he would push for construction this fall.

222 Mr. Warburton read the comments made by Primex, which stated that “the area should be
223 monitored carefully, if lacrosse balls enter the area then a barrier fence should be
224 installed”.

225 **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

226 Commitments/Strategic Planning

227 Ms. Foulks stated that at the last meeting the Board would think about what aspects of the
228 strategic plans and commitments could be connected or if they want to abandon the
229 commitments and go with the strategic plan goals.

230 Ms. Facey stated that the idea came from Mr. Manning at the last meeting. All of the
231 AMS board commitments were encompassed in the strategic plan goals. She is happy to
232 take any one of the strategic goals on.

233 Ms. Bennett stated that she still has work to complete on the commitment from last year,
234 but she is willing to take on a Strategic plan goal or weave the two together.

235 The Board discussed at length whether they should continue the commitments until the
236 SAU Board has determined subcommittees for the strategic plan goals.

237 Mr. Warburton stated that at the September 25th SAU Board meeting he would like to
238 have the AMS board share this idea with the other two boards. Maybe the AMS Board
239 could be the leaders to create a committee and this is the logical next step. At the SAU
240 Board meeting they will agree to the strategies and the goals and the next step would be
241 forums with the community and staff members. Then have a strategic plan in place. The
242 hope is to have the plan done in late October. He wants to go public with the plan and
243 show the good work the Boards have been doing. The SAU Board is going to form
244 committees at some point in the future once the strategic plan is in place.

245 Mr. Prescott stated that the Board should stick with last years commitments until the
246 strategic plan committees are formed.

247 Fields and Grounds Committee

248 Ms. Foulks stated that the Board needs a committee for fields and ground because of the
249 insufficient recreation space in town is an issue. This committee needs to include the
250 town, community, and school representatives to look at the areas we have and what we
251 can do with these areas. She would like to move forward with the committee and invite
252 the Recreation Department, Board of Selectman, Jim Miner, and community members.
253 The committee needs to begin with an audit of what the town has for spaces.

254 Mr. Warburton stated that this discussion started when the portables left and when trying
255 to figure out what to put where.

256 Ms. Bennett and Ms. Facey offered to be on the committee.

257 The Board and the administration discussed if this committee should hold off to be part
258 of one of the strategic plan committees.

259 Ms. Foulks stated that she would like to get the committee going because there appears to
260 be revitalized energy around this topic and she would like to harness it. The recreation
261 director has a lot of ideas and energy. She would like to begin the conversation. The
262 AMS administration is also anxious to start the conversation.

263 Ms. Facey stated that whatever work happens in this subcommittee can then be
264 encompassed into the strategic plan committee.

265 Mr. Dodge stated that this committee could also allow for space to be used in the short
266 term before the strategic plan happens.

267 The Board discussed who should be on the committee, how to form the committee and
268 the committees first steps.

269 **ACTION ITEMS**

270 **STEM Committee**

271 Ms. Foulks stated that the Board discussed this last month. Ms. Heimarck will send a
272 status update though email tomorrow.

273 Mr. Warburton stated that SESC has selected SAU 39. There will be three days this year
274 and a week in the summer. Potentially by next school year the schools could have a
275 STEM program.

276 Mr. St. Amand stated that there is a lot of interest from staff to be involved.

277 **Policy KEB**

278 Mr. Warbuton stated that the only change is in paragraph three at the bottom, there was
279 an editorial change. This new policy gives the board members a procedure to follow if
280 there are complaints including about the administration and the superintendent.

281 Ms. Foulks stated that the policy gives the board a better understanding of what to do
282 when presented by complaints. There is a process the complaint needs to go through
283 before coming to the board level. Board members need to redirect the complaint to the
284 appropriate place. There was no previous policy discussing how to deal with a complaint
285 about the superintendent and now there is.

286 Mr. Manning stated that he read this policy as if it were for dealing with complaints about
287 students, personnel, employees, and the administration.

288 Ms. Foulks asked if there should be a different approach if the complaint is about another
289 topics.

290 Mr. Manning stated that the Board should always be referring the complaint back through
291 the chain of command. When the Board member hears it from more than a handful of
292 people then the board needs to acknowledge that there is a problem and needs to do its
293 job at over seeing the schools.

294 Ms. Foulks stated that if someone comes to Board with a complaint and the Board is
295 concerned then they have a right to go to the principals to get further information.

296 Mr. Manning stated that he does not want to endorse a policy that prohibits oversight
297 because that is the Board's job to over see the schools.

298 Ms. Foulks and Mr. Manning discussed the level of what the Board needs to know and
299 how much detail and the level of oversight the Board is responsible for.

300 Mr. Prescott stated that the policy is only for complaints about personnel, staff,
301 employees, administration or the superintendent.

302 Mr. Bennett stated that the intent of the policy is supposed to be all complaints and not
303 just the complaints about people.

304 Mr. Warburton stated that this policy was brought forward because of complaints and
305 how complaints are handled. He wondered if there is a need for two policies or should
306 other complaints be added to this policy.

307 The Board discussed whether there needs to be a formal policy or could it be an unwritten
308 rule about the chain of command.

309 Mr. Warburton stated that the board needs to have a policy in place for the chain of
310 command for all cases. If the board gets complaints directly from employees, there needs
311 to be a policy to indicate the chain of command.

312 Mr. Dodge discussed the lunch issue and the history of the lunch times. He stated that this
313 is an example of the chain of command. He is happy to answer questions and those
314 issues do not need to go to the board because they are easily explained and diffused.

315 The Board discussed if there needs to be a second policy or not. They discussed how to
316 talk to the public when they have a complaint. If you do what you are supposed to do as a
317 board member then a policy should not be needed. It is in the board's best interest to not
318 be involved in personnel issues and there should be a policy for that.

319 The Board looked at the wording of the current policy and decided to look at the policy a
320 second time. If people have edits, they should be suggested at the SAU 39 meeting.

321 Vachon Clukay audit engagement letter

322 Ms. Shankel stated that this is a new process. The auditing company wants the chair's
323 signature on the engagement letter, also.

324 **Ms. Bennett made a motion that the Board authorizes the chair to sign the**
325 **engagement letter for the auditing company. Ms. Facey seconded the motion and**
326 **the vote was unanimous.**

327 Ms. Foulks asked the Board to send her agenda items for October.

328 Mr. St. Amand stated that he has a 0.5 Special Education position nomination. He would
329 like to nominate Shawn Hollister. She has already been subbing in that position and
330 would like to nominate her for the 0.5 position for the full year.

331 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept the nomination as recommended. Mr.**
332 **Manning seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

333 **Mr. Manning made a motion to go into NON-PUBLIC SESSION under RSA 91-A:3**
334 **II. (a) (b) (c) at 9:19pm. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion and the roll call was all**
335 **yes.**