

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **December 18th, 2014**
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4

5 **ATTENDANCE**
6

7 Amherst School Board

8 Lucienne Foulks, Amy Facey, James Manning, Peg Bennett, and Paul Prescott
9

10 Administrative Team

11 Peter Warburton, Betty Shankel, Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Meg Beauchamp,
12 Nicole Heimarck
13

14 Minute Taker

15 Beth Penney

16 **CALL TO ORDER**

17 Ms. Foulks called the meeting to order at 6:37pm.

18 **ANOUNCEMENTS**

19 Principals' Reports

20 Ms. Foulks asked Mr. St. Amand about the teachers using MMS.

21 Mr. St. Amand stated that MMS is a student database that had been being used for
22 attendance and record keeping. Teachers are now using it to create a report card. This is
23 a user friendly and electronic report card. This has been received well and eventually it
24 will be connected to the parent portal. Teachers like that through MMS, they can get
25 information about students including email, contact information, etc. He thanked Kathy
26 Johnson and Bruce Chakrin.

27 Ms. Facey asked if the plan to use I39 eventually for report cards.

28 Mr. Prescott stated that the idea was to use I39 to show a continuous grade book. AMS
29 has 7 teachers and classes piloting the continuous grade book on I39.

30 Mr. Dodge discussed how I39 has the capability to have a grade report form and that they
31 could use it for progress reports.

32 Mr. St. Amand stated that all teachers at Clark/ Wilkins have an I39 page for information.
33 Teachers are still trying to figure out how it can be most effective for communication
34 with parents.

35 Mr. Prescott asked about the technology professional development offered last week.

36 Mr. Dodge stated that it went well and many teachers are really getting involved. Mr.

37 Chakrin has offered a lot of training especially for I39. AMS is no longer using the term
38 technology integration because it is becoming part of the best practices at AMS.

39 Mr. St. Amand stated that there are SAU wide STEAM groups and building level groups.
40 The building group met today and they are going to try to make a connection to the
41 Invention Convention.

42 Mr. Warburton stated that Ms. Heimarck would be at the meeting at 7:15pm. He thanked
43 Mr. Dodge and Mr. St. Amand for setting up the camera for the meeting tonight. He
44 stated that all of the district's schools and the SAU now have a Facebook page. He
45 thanked Kathy Johnson for her help with those. He discussed getting an outside group to
46 come in and the access math implementation. He discussed the organization they are
47 looking at hiring and that the director will be at the next meeting, in January, to discuss a
48 proposal for the work. This will cost no more than \$1,500.

49 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

50 Sarah Skinner spoke to the board. She currently has a 2nd grader and is a huge advocate
51 of full day kindergarten. In the past she was a dramatic arts teacher, casting director for
52 Disney and Nickelodeon, and helped to implement dramatic arts curriculum. She stated
53 that Ms. Heimarck's presentation is fantastic and shows why full day Kindergarten is
54 needed especially for the mental health of the students.

55 Mr. Warburton stated that the Dec. 8th presentation was recorded and it will be on the
56 website tomorrow.

57 Sarah Skinner stated that during the forum the two Kindergarten teachers were physically
58 moved when they discussed what they couldn't give the kids in a half-day program. This
59 shows how important the kids are to them and how the students need time to play and
60 have independent thinking. There is a lot of group teaching now, but not enough
61 individualized teaching happening. She discussed growing up brave, and that anxiety is
62 the number one disorder in America. The teachers at Clark/Wilkins are well educated
63 and trained. If can help to identify issues and help kids deal with their emotions in
64 Kindergarten the kids will be better off going forward. She discussed the numerous
65 transitions each day for most kids. Clark/Wilkins will do full day Kindergarten right. The
66 mental health issues have to be addressed early. Half day Kindergarten is detrimental to
67 our kids.

68 **CONSENT AGENDA**

69 Ms. Foulks asked about the donation.

70 Mr. Dodge stated that Peter and Sally Wells began a fund many years ago. Peter Jr. and
71 Sally have supported this for many years and have now turned over the rest of the money
72 that was in the fund to the school. He would like to continue to have the Wells Speaking
73 Program. He will present to the board once the teachers and school determine how to
74 move forward.

75 Ms. Foulks pulled the retirement requests and stated that the Board would wait till
76 January to discuss those.

77 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept the consent agenda containing Minutes for**
78 **October 14, 2014, Donation to Student Activities- \$4,350 from Peter and Sally Wells,**
79 **and the FY14 Audited Financial Statements. Ms. Facey seconded the motion and**
80 **the vote was unanimous.**

81 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

82 FY16 Budget

83 Ms. Shankel stated that the Board and the Ways and Means Committees have met and
84 worked very hard to look at every line of the budget. The changes to the Budget are in the
85 agenda packet and include: the School Resource Officer training for the Middle School
86 was omitted in first draft; Maximum guaranteed rate for property rate was received and it
87 is a reduced the amount; the SAU budget share for the three boards has been added; the
88 service contracts for the school nutrition area were in the wrong place; and the Spaulding
89 Grant was missed in the first draft. She discussed the school bus contract and how the
90 SAU put out to bid again and two bids came back. First Student submitted the same bid
91 as the first time and Butler Busing decreased the contract by \$50,000. The Amherst share
92 is about \$31,000. The SAU Board decided to move forward with Butler Busing. Other
93 changes to the budget include new equipment for technology was changed because it was
94 coded wrong and the curriculum design software had an error on the line. Finally, the
95 Ways and Means had a great idea for the AMS site improvement they suggested leaving
96 \$10,000 for the design part of the plan instead of putting a placeholder of \$50,000.

97 Ms. Shankel stated that the total for the Budget is an increase of 0.89%.

98 Ms. Shankel discussed the revenue estimate. They have an increase of \$221,000 for
99 expenditures. There is a decrease in revenue because the district gave back a large
100 amount of money to the taxpayers to reduce the tax bill. This sum of money was because
101 Mont Vernon sent down more students than they had estimated and there was a large
102 amount of money from LGC for Health Insurance. This has made a big impact on how
103 much money was returned. For this year there looks like a decrease in revenue. Next
104 month the quarterly report will look at revenue and the surplus the number will increase
105 because again this year the district has more students from Mont Vernon than expected
106 and will again have LGC rebates. She will have the numbers for the January 6th meeting
107 and the information will be included in Public Hearing documents. The tax rate is
108 currently \$0.44/\$1,000.

109 Ms. Shankel discussed the warrant articles. The default budget will not be calculated till
110 January. Article 13 is the Kindergarten program and the amount is reduced by \$120,000.
111 The SAU went to the Department of Education for a waiver for the classroom size. The
112 Kindergarten standard size room is 1,000sq ft. and have a space that is almost that large
113 already. She discussed the warrant article for the support staff contract and that they
114 have a tentative agreement. The Board will vote tonight in Non-public on the support

115 staff agreement. Article 15 is to allow a redo if Article 14 is defeated. Article 16 is to add
116 \$50,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance to the Special Education Fund. This will
117 cost \$0.03/\$1,000. This is the second year of adding to this fund.

118 Ways and Means Report

119 Mr. Vincent stated that the Ways and Means began the budget review a month ago and it
120 was a very smooth and efficient process. They had 30 questions after the first draft. The
121 subcommittee meetings helped to make the changes for draft 2 of the budget. They had a
122 little difficulty this year because there were the line changes for the health related line
123 items. He thanked Ms. Shankel and Ms. Beauchamp for their support in comparing those
124 accounts. The big driver for this budget is Special Education. There is a big increase this
125 year. The district is limited in that area of the budget because of federal mandates that
126 are mostly unfunded and because of changes in the student population. The federal
127 mandates that are unfunded are having a direct impact on property taxes in this town.
128 The nutritional mandates are an issue also. There is no longer a surplus in this area of the
129 budget. The Board has no control over that. There is a floor to the budget, which is
130 increasing each year and the contribution to the decisions made are not made in Amherst.
131 He wondered if people are moving to town to take advantage of the great supports and
132 service the special education program gives to students. The federal officials need to hear
133 about the fact that they need to fund the mandates for special education. The Ways and
134 Means would like to see the Public Forum video about Kindergarten before they make a
135 decision and vote.

136 Kindergarten Update

137 Ms. Foulks asked about studies that address the social emotional benefits of full day
138 Kindergarten.

139 Ms. Heimarck stated that studies show that the social maturity of a student has a
140 significant bearing on the academic achievement in students at any age. If students are
141 not socially well adjusted then they typically are not engaged in learning. Students need
142 time for social interaction in the classroom. The teachers discussed the need to have time
143 to allow for conflict resolution, play, and social interaction.

144 Mr. Prescott asked if there are studies that have been done that say full-day Kindergarten
145 and time for socialization and play in Kindergarten yield benefits in first and second
146 grade. He stated that he is looking for something beyond the antidotal piece.

147 Ms. Heimarck stated that there is no metric that states quantitative data showing the
148 impact of full day Kindergarten on 1st-3rd graders. All studies are qualitative. She stated
149 that she did find a study discussing the change in expectations for Kindergarten over the
150 last decade. This study is posted on the website. It is called Kindergarten is the new first
151 grade. The study also looks at the Kindergarten teacher's perception and gives data about
152 what kids are expected to do today in areas including academic, behavioral, music, art
153 and creative based activities.

154 Mr. Prescott summarized that there is no study with quantitative data, but there is a study

155 that states that it is unrealistic to expect a student to do well in a half-day program
156 because the expectations have increased so much.

157 Ms. Heimarck stated that this is correct.

158 Ms. Facey asked if there are any studies that link any grade to another grade.

159 Ms. Heimarck stated that these types of studies are complicated and complex to run.
160 There is research about the social emotional experiences in Pre-K, K and 1st grade and the
161 students' ability over time to engage in learning. This study is qualitative. Much of the
162 comparison of half day and full day Kindergarten is challenging because districts employ
163 different Kindergarten programs including a focus on academics, a balanced program or a
164 focus on social and emotional. She discussed a conversation with the Department of
165 Education. The state of NH has gone after an Early Education federal grant for three
166 years and has not gotten it because the state has not focused on early childhood (prek-2)
167 education.

168 Mr. St. Amand discussed the faculty meeting where he asked the staff to respond after
169 watching the presentation give at the Public Forum. He discussed the feedback from the
170 teachers including that kids lack basic skills with cutting, pasting, and tying laces. He can
171 collect data about the social emotional data and life skills, which use to be covered in the
172 half-day program. Much of that is not happening because of the standards changing. The
173 4th graders this year are part of a longitudinal study that will happen through 12th grade.
174 Ms. Heimarck has done a great job and has done tons of research. He cannot stress
175 enough the need for more time for the children and the teachers for play and to
176 implement a curriculum that has been designed for full day Kindergarten. Kindergarten
177 is now the foundational grade, where it used to be readiness and first grade. This is the
178 foundation where skills are developed. By the end of Kindergarten, kids need to have 50
179 site words and the children and teachers have risen to the challenge. They have lost the
180 time to play, resolve problems, etc. People can find research to support anything and the
181 research can be interpreted differently. Full day kindergarten is not just about the
182 academic piece. Students and teachers need more time. Lunch and recess is a great time
183 for kids to learn and use their social emotional skills.

184 Ms. Heimarck stated that 82% of districts in the US offer a full day Kindergarten
185 program. Amherst kids are not getting the same level of program, but we pride ourselves
186 on being a strong education. Last year, 56% of NH school districts offered a full day
187 Kindergarten option.

188 Ms. Bennett asked about the state not receiving the federal grant.

189 Ms. Heimarck stated that NH prides itself on being a state with local control, but NH is at
190 the top with the amount of funding received to run the state Department of Education.
191 The stated does receive early childhood money, but this is a large competitive grant to
192 support preschool and Kindergarten. The federal government will not give the grant until
193 the state invests its own money into pre-K and Kindergarten.

194 Mr. Prescott stated that NH adopted the Common Core standards. These are the new

195 standard for Kindergarten. Those standards are based on a full day Kindergarten
196 experience because 82% of the US offers a full day program. Amherst is trying to meet
197 those standards but in half a day and this is pushing out social emotional education and
198 play.

199 Ms. Heimark stated that the Common Core standards are also based on research about
200 what students are ready for and how the US is underperforming. Other countries are
201 proving that kids with high standards can rise to those standards. The US is catching up.

202 Mr. Prescott stated that the Common Core standards exist today, but are being taught in
203 half a day. With a full day Kindergarten the upper grades will get more time because
204 students will get the basic skills, developmental skills, and life skills in kindergarten.

205 Mr. St. Amand stated that yes those are the skills that have been put to the side so the
206 curriculum can meet the standards. The upper grades will benefit and also benefit
207 because those kids who need a full day Kindergarten will come to the public program. 1st
208 grade will not need the same level and amount of interventions. About 80% of kids who
209 did not attend public Kindergarten did live in Amherst during Kindergarten.

210 Ms. Bennett asked if the number of staffing is absolutely necessary.

211 Mr. St. Amand stated that the Administration has submitted the minimum amount to have
212 a successful and fully fledged full day Kindergarten program. He discussed potential
213 savings in Professional Development and furniture and that these maybe one time costs.
214 They will be able reduce the number of 1st grades from 7 to 6 and Clark School will be
215 only pre-K and Kindergarten. All 1st grade classrooms will be at Wilkins. Many families
216 are in support and many teachers are interested in the full day Kindergarten.

217 Ms. Bennett stated that she has only heard from people who want full day Kindergarten.

218 Mr. St. Amand discussed the support and how some people have discussed concern about
219 the dollar amount. He has tried to assure people that this is the minimal amount. He
220 would like to look at World language at a future date, but it is not include this proposed
221 cost in order to have a successful full day Kindergarten program.

222 Ms. Foulks stated that the cost is tough. These have been helpful presentations. It is good
223 for people to hear the logic, data, and thought that are behind this proposal. The proposal
224 is asking people to make an investment. She appreciates the depth of the presentations
225 and recognizes that this has been a tough and deeply looked into proposal. It is nice to
226 hear that there have been efforts made to keep the cost as low as possible.

227 Mr. Prescott encouraged the public to go to the website and come to next month's
228 meeting. The Board will be voting next month.

229 Mr. Manning asked how they are getting the message out to different constituencies.

230 Mr. Warburton stated that there was a lot of conversation at the forum. The SAU has
231 also posted on the Facebook page, is starting a blog on January 5th, and has proposed

232 sending a post card with information about full day Kindergarten to each house. He is
233 looking for suggestions on how to inform the community members and parents. The
234 Board will be live streaming meetings soon. He also suggested putting up driving boards
235 in town with information and little statements about Kindergarten and the day of the
236 school board meeting.

237 Mr. Manning asked about presentations at the library and housing association meetings.

238 Mr. Warburton stated that they would be doing this after the board decision in January.

239 Mr. St. Amand stated that they have already spoken to the Jr. Women's club, library and
240 private preschools about giving a presentation. He will send a note in the email to parents
241 tomorrow about the next Board meeting. He is willing to go out and do what the need to
242 help inform and hear different voices.

243 Ms. Bennett stated that the teachers on the panel on Dec. 8th and the PTA meeting did a
244 great job.

245 Mr. St. Amand agreed.

246 **INFORMATIONAL**

247 NHSBA resolutions for 2015

248 Mr. Warburton stated that the NH School Boards have a day to look at RSAs and board
249 members are invited. It is January 10th in Concord and important discussions happening
250 as they relate to policies. The SAU can sign board members up for that workshop if they
251 are interested.

252 **ACTION ITEM**

253 Policies EGA and JKAA

254 EGA-School District Internet Access for Students

255 JKAA-Use of Physical Restraint, Seclusion, and Intentional Physical Contact

256

257 Ms. Foulks stated that this is a second reading for both policies. There are no
258 changes from the last reading.

259

260 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept policies EGA and JKAA as currently**
261 **written. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

262

263 Mr. Warburton asked the Board to email with any additional information they want
264 next meeting to make a decision about the Kindergarten proposal.

265

266 **Mr. Prescott made motion into NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A:3 II. (a) (b) (c)**
267 **at 8:06pm. Ms. Facey seconded the motion and the roll call was all yes.**