

1 **Amherst School Board**
2 **January 6, 2015**
3
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 Gerry St. Amand

16 **CALL TO ORDER**

17 Ms. Foulks called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

18 **ANOUNCEMENTS**

19 Porter Dodge, AMS Principal, reported on STEAM/STEM activities that are taking
20 place at AMS, including: Some students are learning the programming languages
21 Java Script and Small Basic. Would like to rename the "specials wing" to the STEAM
22 wing--would allow access to tools before and after school in addition to during
23 school hours. Mr. Dodge discussed a program in Nashua that invites parents and
24 community members in to use tools and facilities. Mr. Dodge also had a hand-out
25 regarding STEAM that will be included in the minutes. Many activities are being
26 offered during Eagle Block at AMS. Pictures are being displayed on Facebook. Porter
27 extended an invitation to administrators and school board members to visit some of
28 the STEAM events and activities at AMS.

29 Lucienne Foulks asked if any of the student projects might be shared at a Board meeting
30 in the near future. Mr. St. Amand, Clark-Wilkins principal, reported on the Young
31 Inventor's Convention that will have a "STEAM" logo, the introduction of the "inventor's
32 convention" to all of the students at Clark-Wilkins. Several third grade classes--Mrs.
33 Kellndorfer and Mrs. Piotrowski, along with two fourth grade classes--Mrs. Polio and
34 Mrs. Godin--have designed and are implementing new "STEAM" lessons and activities
35 that integrate all areas.
36

37 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

38 Sarah Skinner, parent, spoke to her interest in seeing the social-emotional needs of
39 each child as a priority with the implementation of full-day Kindergarten. Amherst
40 does support its children, has great teachers, and want it to be stated that full-day
41 Kindergarten is an answer to many of the needs of K students.

42 John Glover--Amherst resident for three years with three children--interested in seeing
43 full-day Kindergarten implemented. Noted that many people who attended the December

44 8th meeting are interested in full-day K. He shares a concern with the previous speaker
45 about what might happen if we do not offer full-day K. Mr. Glover would like to see a
46 greater level of public outreach in place to inform the community.
47 Dorothy Chabot, a current Amherst homeowner and parent of young children, spoke in
48 support of full-day K. Her oldest child attended a full-day program in Michigan prior to
49 moving to Amherst. Concerned that other states, counties, and towns are ahead of us in
50 this regard and would like to see Amherst continue to excel.

51

52 **CONSENT AGENDA**

53 Pulling minutes: Line 154--Mr. Prescott's statement. Line 196--cross out word "doing".
54 Amy Facey: Line 123--fix spelling of Beauchamp.

55

56 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept the consent agenda containing Minutes for**
57 **December 18, 2014, Donation of \$500.00 from Energy North. Ms. Facey seconded**
58 **the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

59 Motion to accept consent agenda with amended minutes: All in favor to accept.

60

61 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

62 Lucienne explained that each Board member has a commitment area on which they report
63 regularly. Amy Facey reported out on "inspiration" and shared conversation from the
64 Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Leader Effectiveness program. Amy worked on the
65 learning component. The value-added model will not be included. Student surveys are
66 also being explored as well as portfolio assessment. Another meeting will take place at
67 the end of the month. Will also review information brought forward by the group that
68 visited East Syracuse/Minoa, NY. Forms are now available on PD Express for observers
69 to access. Formal observations will be conducted every three years. The plan will be to
70 have two informal observations completed each year for all professional staff.

71

72 Ongoing PD in the Thoughtful Classroom tool will continue for all educators at both
73 schools with designated time at late starts, grade level, and/or faculty meetings. There
74 will be ongoing PD over the next few years.

75

76 Betty Shankel shared out on the quarterly financial report. Overall budget savings of
77 approximately \$500K. With regards to Draft 3 of FY16 Budget, Betty Shankel shared
78 changes including an additional amount added to the salary line for administrators, the
79 cost of an additional retirement, and increases in FICA and Medicare. Instructional
80 material line at Clark-Wilkins was reduced by \$6300. Overall increase is 1.54%. Mrs.
81 Shankel spoke to unanticipated revenues. Revenue and state property tax revenue will
82 decrease, which requires Amherst to come up with the difference. The rate will increase
83 from \$12.05 to \$12.43--an increase of \$0.38. Paul Prescott asked a question about a food
84 service line. Betty clarified that the lunch program and other special revenues are self-
85 funding. The food service program must meet USDA government regulations. Danielle
86 Collins, food services director for SAU39, was acknowledged for her significant efforts

87 with the program, which benefits the students and the community. Paul Prescott noted
88 that new regulations are impacting our revenue from the food program.
89
90
91 Betty Shankel distributed a packet specific to the default budget. Betty asked the Board to
92 not that the default budget reflects the figure we will work with if the proposed FY16
93 budget is defeated. A significant amount of supplies and materials would be lost if the
94 default becomes the budget. Betty also reviewed the articles that will go on the ballot.
95 Article 13 specific to the full-day K proposal was reviewed. \$75K of the proposal would
96 be one time expenditures. The balance would be reoccurring since they focus on staff
97 salaries and benefits. Article 14 references a special vote and Article 16 references the
98 undesignated fund balance and its tax impact.
99
100 Lucienne asked if there were any questions for Betty. No questions were raised.
101
102 Discussion ensued about the proposal for full-day Kindergarten. Lucienne asked for the
103 format to use in soliciting feedback and questions. Paul Prescott asked how we would
104 measure the success of the program. Paul suggested that each Board member should have
105 an opportunity to bring forward questions/concerns. Amy Facey noted that her questions
106 have been answered, but she would be interested in hearing what other Board members
107 have for questions before voting.
108
109 Paul noted this is an expensive program to implement and to continue, but has concerns
110 about how we will measure success. What metrics can we get from today's half-day
111 program and compare to a full-day program. We would need that data to confirm if the
112 program has been a success. Nicole responded that we have ideas/metrics to consider:
113 academic achievement metrics, intervention metrics, and social-emotional metrics. We
114 could continue to use STAR assessment three times a year in a full or half-day program.
115 We would also use AIMS web with half and full day programming. Nicole referenced the
116 implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The extended time would provide
117 two important components: some additional instructional time along with increased focus
118 on social-emotional growth. We would report to the Board annually. Three to five year
119 time spans would be typical to gather long-term data. We would like the K teachers to be
120 involved in this conversation. The social-emotional component will be more difficult to
121 track. Paul expressed concern about trying to implement a K program during a half-day,
122 when the Common Core State Standards are based on a full-day program. Paul is
123 concerned about the execution of the program.
124
125 Jim Manning asked about full-day K offerings in Massachusetts. Nicole referenced the
126 different models: full-day for all students in a community, full-day for targeted students
127 in a community, and full-day for "pay" as an option. Jim asked how towns that offer these
128 multiple options determine the benefits of full vs. half-day. Nicole cited conversations
129 with leading educators at Harvard and Dartmouth whose research stated that variations
130 among and within towns and communities varies greatly and makes comparisons
131 difficult. Jim asked if Massachusetts has a methodology in place to assess the different

132 types of K programs, ranging from half-day for all to full-day for all, to variations that
133 include everything components of both.

134
135 Lucienne asked for any additional concerns or questions about full-day K. The Board
136 indicated they had no additional questions, but are concerned about the cost of
137 implementation to Amherst residents, even though they recognize the value of offering
138 full-day to all incoming K students. Jim Manning expressed concern that some of the
139 funding provided by the community to support unfunded state or national mandates
140 places additional pressure on towns like Amherst.

141
142 Paul Prescott acknowledged the diligence that Ways & Means Committee members, the
143 administration, and teachers provide in presenting fiscally diligent budgets. Lucienne
144 noted that there is risk to any proposal, since we want the operating budget to pass. Could
145 the operating budget be at risk if a full-day K proposal goes forward? What risk might we
146 be placing our students at without a full-day K program? Asked how other Board
147 members feel.

148
149 Amy does not feel that the full-day K proposal should be withdrawn at the risk of having
150 the operating budget voted down. Peg asked if a warrant article should be placed on the
151 ballot that has no dollars connected to it, but that asks voters to vote in an advisory
152 capacity with no dollars attached, but that an article could be brought forward for the next
153 year with a dollar amount attached. It would only be advisory. Peg noted that the
154 operating budget could increase for the next year--the proposal could become more
155 expensive. Some people could be blind-sided by the numbers. It would give the town an
156 opportunity to raise some of the questions that exist. One audience member stated that he
157 didn't view the amount for full-day K as too costly given the total budget proposal.

158
159 One attendee noted a need to organize and get the message out. Jim Manning noted the
160 Board's role as one of advocacy for the town. Jim stated that we should come up with
161 some unique and clever ways to detail the proposal. Jim stated that he believes this is the
162 right thing for kids and for the town. Lucienne indicated that everyone, at some level,
163 needs to know: "What is in this for me? How will individuals benefit?"

164
165 Gene K. of the Ways & Means noted that everyone needs to get out and vote. A
166 suggestion was made to get out some clips that include interviews with targeted
167 individuals. Amy Facey noted that two discussions are taking place, since two potential
168 warrant articles have been proposed. Lucienne suggested that we hear from the Ways &
169 Means Committee before finalizing proposals.

170
171 Mark Vincent--chairperson of W & M noted the committee unanimously supports the full
172 budget. Also unanimously in favor of Article 16--in support of Capital Reserve Fund.
173 The ASSA agreement is also supported completely.

174
175 Ways and Means supports the full-day K article by a vote of 4 to 3. Very different from
176 other articles. The Ways & Means did NOT discuss the idea of a non-binding--no dollar
177 amount proposal. Such an article would require the W & M to vote on that specific

178 article. Mark noted that such a vote would reflect the voice of the community and could
179 forecast the success or failure of such a vote in future years. Mark noted some potential
180 reservations with either proposal. Mark would prefer to see a proposal with dollar
181 amounts connected to it. Ted Landon from the W & M voted against the full-day K
182 proposal and noted a need for additional metrics that would denote significant, not just
183 adequate progress. We would need to agree on the metrics to prove this program is
184 effective. A program that is well conceived and well intentioned does not provide the
185 information that confirms progress is taking place. Ted is concerned that the current
186 proposal could be political suicide. Another W & M member noted that it was difficult to
187 vote against this proposal, since he doesn't believe that all of the homework has been
188 done that should be done. If we keep changing the curricula and changing the metrics it
189 becomes difficult to measure growth. Studies have not been provided via meta-analysis
190 that confirm the long-term benefit of full-day K.

191
192 Jim Manning noted that our new math curricula has been very successful. Jim noted that
193 many early literacy and intervention programs have been able to provide data with third
194 graders that documents growth. Lucienne stated that any new program would need to be
195 reviewed and discussed regularly. Ted stated that five years would provide a reasonable
196 time frame, but asked what the ramifications would be if the five year data, using agreed
197 upon metrics, do not document the growth/progress that many people would anticipate.

198
199 Nicole Heimarck noted that the NWEA assessment is used from grades two through eight
200 and will continue to provide valuable data points as we forge ahead with any new
201 programs. We have been using NWEA since 2007. Jim Manning stated that we have
202 integrated a high degree of accountability across the district. Ted stated that we need to
203 be able to prove that progress has been made

204
205 Peter Warburton, superintendent, stated that the Amherst Board needs to vote on full-day
206 K and noted that other districts in which he has worked that have fewer resources than
207 Amherst have helped students make marked growth with additional time. Peter feels it is
208 essential to start with kids as soon as possible. Donnie, a member of the W & M,
209 expressed an interest in knowing the long-term costs that might be reduced via early
210 intervention. Donnie would like to see a three year pilot project, fully funded, where it
211 could be brought back to the community for discussion. Gene K. from W & M reported
212 on the results of a thirty year STAR study.

213
214 Paul Prescott moved Article 13, Full-Day K, as written, seconded by Peg Bennett. Vote
215 taken--unanimous vote to forge ahead with Article 13 as currently written.

216
217 Nicole Heimarck spoke about the K to * math program evaluation meeting that is
218 scheduled for January 22nd. A quorum of ASB members would need to be present to
219 vote on the proposal. This meeting will happen just before the SAU39 Board meeting.
220 Outside evaluators will be brought in to examine our work and progress in mathematics
221 since the change in curricula and programming. Nicole noted that a psychometrician can
222 bring a unique skill set to the table.

223

224 Amy Facey motioned and Paul Prescott seconded that all other articles should be brought
225 forward to the public hearing as written. Lucienne thanked everyone connected to the
226 budget process for their hard work and contributions; including administrators, Ways &
227 Means members, and community members and teachers who contributed to the process.
228 Porter Dodge stated that he sees the benefit of full-day K to middle school and high
229 school students.

230

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

233