

## MONT VERNON SCHOOL BOARD

### Minutes

**September 11, 2008**

Chairman Darula called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

#### Present

Mont Vernon School Board: Chairman Jayson Darula, Howard Brown, Bruce Schmidt, John Schwope, and Leo White

Administrative Team: Superintendent Mary Jennings, Elizabeth Shankel, Director of Curriculum Nicole Heimarck, Principal Gail Westergren

Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

#### ATTENDANCE

#### A. Principal's Report

Ms. Westergren called attention to the facilities update in her report and noted that she would like direction as to where excess furniture should be stored on a temporary basis. She also questioned the Board as to whether there is a formal policy regarding playground use by children not currently enrolled in the school. A member of the public noted that there is no formal policy and while in the past children have always been allowed to use the playground, in recent years this has been discouraged for safety reasons. She explained that there is no other place in town for the children to go and suggested that the Board could ask the Board of Selectman to consider building a toddler playground. Chairman Darula stated that there is no official policy. Mr. Schmidt requested that research be done regarding the school's liability if someone were to get hurt on the playground.

#### II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Westergren noted that the enrollment is down three children since August. She also noted that a replacement for the Special Education Paraprofessional who resigned has been found and will start on Monday. She further noted that 70 children registered for the late start child care program and currently there are only two parents supervising the children. Ms. Heimarck explained that the funds from the Title 2A Professional Development Grant will be used to pay for the child care providers.

Mr. Schmidt expressed concern regarding the insurance forms that parents are required to sign even if they do not want to purchase insurance for their child, Ms. Shankel suggested that possibly the form was required to make sure that the school was covering its responsibilities, and stated that she will research it.

Mr. Schmidt also noted that the information on the food service plan information has the wrong zip code and explained that this was huge problem

last year. Ms. Shankel explained that the zip code has been corrected with the provider even though it is still incorrect on the paperwork that was sent home.

Mr. Schmidt noted that he read about an asbestos hazard mitigation plan and questioned whether there was asbestos in the school. Dr. Jennings stated that there is asbestos but none that is breathable or a danger to the students and explained that she can provide Mr. Schmidt with the mitigation plan as required for anyone who requests it.

Mr. Schmidt explained that he returned the kindergarten paperwork for his child in May but did not find out there was an issue with it until the day before school started. He stated that if parents need to return the paperwork in May then they should receive notification of errors long before the start of school.

### **B. Administrator's Reports**

Dr. Jennings stated that she wanted Ms. Shankel to review some balance issues with the Board. Ms. Shankel explained that the district budgeted \$2.75 per gallon for fuel this year but the SAU locked in a price of \$3.595 per gallon which will cause a budget shortfall of \$9,500 to \$12,000. However, she noted, the bid for insurance was under budget by \$12,000 so this should cover the fuel shortfall. She also noted that the Special Education department has had some increases due to Individualized Education Plans but they feel that they will be able to cover the increases as long as there are no other increases this year. Ms. Shankel went on to explain that the district has budgeted \$871,000 for tuition, however the actual cost is going to be \$1,007,000, or \$136,000 over budget. She explained that the district budgeted for 69 students and ended up tuitioning 72 students and they budgeted \$12,600 per student, however since the Average Daily Membership at the Amherst Middle School went down they are being billed \$13,988 per student. She noted that if some revenues come in higher than budgeted the Board can hold a public hearing and ask to over expend the budget and use those moneys to pay the bill, however, she noted, the Board is not allowed to raise taxes in order to cover the deficit. She noted that she has been speaking to the DAR and another option is that the district run at a deficit and ask the voters to cover it in March of 2010. In response to a question from Mr. White, Ms. Shankel stated that she is hoping to find \$30,000 to \$40,000 in cost savings but this will be needed to cover the ELL costs. In response to a question from the Board, Dr. Jennings stated that the Board could look into creating a tuition stabilization fund. Mr. Schwope suggested that the Board could negotiate with Amherst to draw out the payments.

### **C. Committee Assignments**

The Board discussed their current committee assignments and decided to

abolish the Publicity and Middle School Transition, and the Future School Site Committees.

Mr. Darula called for public comment and saw none.

### III. PUBLIC TIME

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to accept the donation of \$268.46 from Stop & Shop into the Student Activities fund.**

### IV. CONSENT AGENDA

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Schwope requested that the minutes be pulled from the Consent Agenda.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to approve the remaining items of the Consent Agenda as follows: B. July 2008 Treasurer's Report, C. Manifest, and D. Budget Transfer.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

- Minutes of August 21, 2008

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schwope and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to approve the minutes of August 21, 2008 with amendments.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

#### **A. Board Appreciation – Bob Kent, Alpha Math teacher**

### V. PRESENTATIONS/ DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Board expressed profound and sincere gratitude to Bob Kent for the years of service in improving the student's mathematics through the Alpha Math program. Bob Kent stated that there have been 55 graduates from the Alpha Math program in 11 years and noted that the first graduate went on to graduate from Annapolis College and is now flying F-18s.

#### **B. School Board Goals and other initiatives**

The Board discussed the validity of the following goals discussed previously:

- 1.) To secure an education setting for grades 7 and 8 beyond 2011.
- 2.) To continue to support the Literacy Initiative by building knowledge about the building level literacy data practices and developing public awareness of literacy improvement.
- 3.) Negotiate the teacher's contract.

The Board agreed to the three goals.

#### **A. Selection of Board Attorney**

### VI. ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Jennings explained that Mr. Darula and Mr. Schwope were on the School Attorney Selection Committee. Mr. Darula explained that the committee

interviewed three different firms primarily regarding their experience with tuition agreements and teacher negotiations and they reached a unanimous agreement to recommend this firm. He stated that the polished presentation they presented, the cost, their familiarity with the parties involved, and their past experience in these top concerns were the deciding factors. Mr. Schwope noted that the firm sent the actual people who would be doing the work for the district and that their cost was the lowest and their experience was good. Dr. Jennings also noted that this firm used to be the counsel for the Manchester District but they no longer are so they are readily available. In response to a question from Mr. Schmidt, Dr. Jennings stated that the district should have enough money budgeted to cover this firm's costs.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Mr. Schwope to accept the firm of Wadleigh, Starr, & Peters, P.L.L.C. to represent the district.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

#### **B. Policies**

Dr. Jennings noted that she sent a letter to the Mont Vernon Teacher Association noting that the Board is considering and may approve Policy JFAB this evening. She was advised by the district counsel that that she should advise them of the meeting so there is less chance of them bringing up the issue for bargaining in the future.

Mr. Schmidt asked that Policy JFAB and JICD be pulled for discussion.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Brown and SECONDED by Mr. Schmidt to approve the following policies:**

- **EGA- School District Internet Access for Students**
- **EGAD – Copyright Compliance**
- **EHAA – Computer Security, E-Mail, and Internet**
- **KB – Title I Parent Involvement in Education.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

#### **- JFAB**

Mary Jennings explained that previously when employees wanted their children to be students of the Mont Vernon School District the home district of the student paid any special education costs the student incurred. However a recent ruling found that the district the student was attending is liable for these costs. Therefore this policy mandates that before the any agreement is made the home district of the student must agree to be responsible for any special education expenses the student incurs. She noted the legislature currently has the issue in

committee to make a recommendation as how to create a law to correct the situation.

Mr. Schmidt noted that the “three” should be changed to a “four”: on page 1, paragraph 2. He also noted that there are several sections where “Amherst School Board” needs to be changed to “Mont Vernon School Board.”

The Board discussed the appropriate way to rescind the previous policy.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Brown and SECONDED by Mr. Schmidt to approve policy JFAB – Admission of Tuition and Non – Resident Students, as amended.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to rescind the old Tuition and Non-Resident Student policy.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

- JICD

Mr. Schmidt expressed concern about the wording “Conform to reasonable rules of the school” noting that this infers that some rules of the school are not reasonable. Dr. Jennings stated that the Board does not want to say that they will defend every rule any teacher makes. Mr. White explained that if the word “reasonable” is not in the language and the court finds that there is an unreasonable rule then all the rules become void.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Schmidt and SECONDED by Mr. Brown to approve policy JICD – Student Conduct Discipline and Due Process.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

**A MOTION was made by Mr. Brown and SECONDED by Mr. Schmidt to rescind any policies which address the same issues as the policies approved this evening.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried.**

The Board requested that future agendas have an additional action item to rescind the appropriate policies.

In response to a question from Mr. Brown as to whether the PTA can sell penny candy at Lamson Farms and still be in accordance with the health policy. Dr. Jennings explained that the health policy only refers to school sponsored events and the PTA does not fall under its jurisdiction.

Mr. Darula explained that the field that belongs to the school has been

## **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

maintained by the town and funded by the Recreation Department, however the Recreation Department would like to no longer care for this field and work on a new field. Therefore the Board has to address whether the school is taking back the cost of maintenance. The Board decided to put the item on an upcoming agenda and to invite Jim Miner, Nancy Foster, and a Board of Selectman member to attend the meeting. Mr. Schmidt suggested that Ms. Westergren may want to suggest to them the need for a toddler facility at that time.

Mr. Darula noted that there has been some curriculum reconfiguration at the Middle School, which has led to problems with the band members. He stated that he would follow up with the Board.

Mr. Darula stated that he received a call from a citizen stating that when he called the school a person answered the phone rather than the automated phone system which the tax payers just paid for. Ms. Westergren explained that the automated system is on all day but when the staff is not tied up doing something else they are making an attempt to answer the phone personally.

Mr. Darula asked for an update on the tuition agreement situation. Mr. Schwope stated that legal counsel has been obtained and this was the first step. Dr. Jennings noted that more information will be forth coming at the four chairs meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Schmidt regarding the time table of negotiations, Dr. Jennings explained that SAU has just received the letter stating their intent to bargain and now that the counsel has been selected she will set up some meetings. Mr. Schwope noted that the initiating party has a finite amount of time to present a proposal.

Mr. White stated that he had a conversation with an angry tax payer who claims that the district has hired a person to maintain the computers other than the current technology person. Ms. Westergren stated that no such person has been hired and suggested that maybe the tax payer is referring to the SAU employee who had been at the school assisting.

Dr. Jennings gave the Board some pamphlets on NH Law and the Right to Know guidelines so they understood why they were going to go into non-meeting to discuss contract negotiations.

**A MOTION was made by Mr. White and SECONDED by Mr. Schmidt to adjourn the meeting.**

**Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.**

**VIII. REVIEW OF MEETING/ ADJOURN**

Chairman Darula, declared the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.