

MINUTES
AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD
March 6, 2006
Amherst Middle School First Floor Music Room

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Chairperson Deborah Cort called the Board meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. **CALL TO ORDER**

Present:

ATTENDANCE

Amherst School Board: Deborah Cort, Dwight Brew, Pam Dudoff, and Jim O'Mara (arrived at 6:52 p.m.)

Administrative Team: Howard Colter, Susan Ward, Gerry St. Amand, Kathy Skoglund, Nicole Heimarck, Deborah Martel, and Porter Dodge

Presenters: Cheryl Burke

Minutes Recorder: Terri Connolly

Deborah Cort invited comments from the public, but none were forthcoming. **PUBLIC TIME**

Cheryl Burke of Melanson Heath, auditors for the Amherst School District, reviewed the outcomes of the independent auditors report for FY'05. Cheryl briefly reviewed the auditing process and the various reports associated with the audit, including an Analysis Statement of Net Assets (GASB-34), which presents a long-term look at fixed assets and debt.

REPORTS
Audit Report by
Melanson Heath &
Company

Cheryl also reviewed the Statement of Activities and reported a positive change in net assets of \$424,578.00. Cheryl reviewed the Balance Sheet and Reconciliation of Statements and reported a budget to actual expenses of \$537,296.00, which reflects an under expenditure of the budget. Cheryl reviewed the Management Report in FY'05 and noted there were no new recommendations and all prior year recommendations have been addressed. The only issue is the *Improvement in the Student Activity Fund for Policies and Procedures*, which is currently being reviewed. Pam Dudoff questioned if Melanson Heath had a sample policy the board could review, to which Cheryl noted there was a sample of a student activity fund that reviewed internal controls and procedures and she would forward the sample policy to Susan Ward.

Dwight Brew noted there are times when requests are made to cover nominal expenses or reimbursements before the activity fees

are completely collected and questioned if \$10,000 can be budgeted to seed the activity fund account to meet any early request needs, to which Cheryl reported that is an acceptable practice with the proper controls in place for accounting purposes.

Cheryl noted the accounting measures are in order and the practices are in good standing with no new issues identified. Howard publicly thanked Susan Ward and the finance staff for their amazing effort in producing such high accounting standards for the district.

REPORTS

Building Principals

Gerry St. Amand reported on highlights from Clark and Wilkins Schools and noted the Sadecky Puppets presented school-wide assemblies on the topic of bullying to all students and staff members at both schools on March 5, 2006; the Wilkins school winner of the National Geographic Geography Bee was Tomas Stuopis and he has received notification that his written test score qualified him to proceed to the state finals, which will take place in Keene in April 2006; Shining Star recipients continue to receive monthly recognition via the Principal's Newsletter and through a drawing; registration for incoming Kindergarten students and first graders will take place on March 15, 2006; all classes will practice a variety of safety drills throughout March; and, recent discipline issues involving the sharing of material obtained from the Internet by students, while at home, have required significant time and attention—the Amherst Police Department will offer presentations to parents and caregivers to address this critical matter.

Dwight Brew requested the board receive copies of the Principal's Newsletter, to which Gerry reported he would make sure the board members are on the distribution list. Gerry also noted a copy of the newsletter is posted on the school website.

Porter Dodge reported highlights from the Amherst Middle School and noted he had met with Jim Minor, the Director of Buildings and Grounds, to discuss the vision for the AMS, the ASD, and SAU; the heating system upgrade was installed during the recent school vacation week; there are approximately 35 ventilators in need of repair; each ventilator will cost approximately \$300.00, which will be requested from the Expendable Trust Fund as these repairs are vital to support the efficient delivery of heat, particularly in light of the recent investment for the upgrade; the Wells Public Speaking finals were held on February 22nd and Porter thanked Deborah Cort, Howard Colter, Nicole Heimarck, and Kathy Skoglund for judging the event; the AMS Theater Group will present *Bye Bye Birdie* on March 16th through March 18th in the AMS cafeteria; guidance

counselors have begun working on transitional schedules and activities to assist students in moving from Mont Vernon to AMS and from AMS to the high school. Based upon the feedback received from last year, there is a plan to refine and improve the process and activities of last year.

**DISCUSSION
Transportation
Contract**

Susan Ward presented and reviewed additional informational regarding the transportation contract. Susan reported she has found the annual cost per bus is less than what other districts, such as Bedford and Convale, and paying; in addition, costs for Special Education transportation are less than these other two districts as well. Susan reported there is a provision, which would allow the district to review the routes and mileage before signing the contract. The existing contract allows for the possibility of a two-year extension, but it a three-year contract is reasonable as well.

Dwight Brew moved to accept Susan Ward's recommendation to extend the contract with the existing bus provider, under the revised terms for a period of three years, ending in FY'09. Pam Dudoff seconded the motion.

Dwight questioned if the costs and potential savings projected with the extended contract are similar to those realized by the Milford district, to which Susan noted she did not know but could inquire.

Dwight also questioned the age of the bus fleet, to which Susan reported the extension stipulated the age of the fleet would be no older than eight years (currently the provision is no older than six years). It was also noted the buses are inspected annually by the state.

Three members voted in favor of the motion. There was one abstention. The motion passed.

Pam Dudoff reported and presented some information on the State Board of Education regulations regarding the role of the board in hiring support staff. Pam referenced Ed 303.01 Substantive Duties. Each school board shall:

**Support Staff
Nominations**

- a) Adopt policies necessary and desirable to control and effectuate the retirement, employment, evaluation, and dismissal of teachers and other employees and may delegate authority to the superintendent of schools to carry out provisions of such policies provided that no teacher shall be employed who is not certified or who has not been nominated by the superintendent of schools and elected by the school

board; and:

Ed 302.02 Substantive Duties. The superintendent shall:

- b) Nominate all certified staff and appoint other employees in accordance with state law, the rules of the state board and school board policies;

Pam noted she would like to begin a conversation regarding this matter, as the board has many issues to attend to with limited meeting time and to use that time more efficiently and attend to the matters of most value. In terms of what the board is obligated to do, the board must set policies and must be involved with teacher hiring, but the board can delegate hiring of support staff to the superintendent.

Howard Colter briefly reviewed a proposed hiring model whereby hiring of positions already established by the board would be left to the administration. For new positions, with the exception of Special Education paraprofessionals, the administration would come to the board for approval and then the administration would post, hire and notify the board of the new employee.

Kathy Skoglund reviewed the current hiring process used within Special Education. If there is a current position, but it is vacant, and if the special education student is still in the district, the administration will fill the slot and inform the board. If there is a new student who requires adult support, this may require a new position, which would come before the board for approval after an assessment and analysis has been done of the situation. If a new student moves out of the district, the administration gives a two-week notice to the employee in the position that there is no longer a need. Kathy noted it may be helpful to review positions on a regular basis, but assured the board there is much oversight and controls over these positions.

Dwight Brew noted the spreadsheet of positions is a great idea. Dwight added the board has been supportive in meeting the position needs of the district and in some instances has offered cost-saving alternatives. Dwight noted he would like to maintain the existing process, but review the spreadsheet and look at the process in the future for some possible refinement.

Jim O'Mara concurred with Dwight and noted he has asked for a matrix of employees, by name, by job category, by grade, by building and still has not received the information. Jim added he would not entertain a motion at this time, but sees value in not having board involvement in hiring of line personnel.

There was additional discussion regarding the process of being notified of new special education cases, to which Kathy Skoglund reported there are times when there is no prior notification and the student shows up at school with an IEP. Jim questioned if there was any obligation of notification from the sending district, to which Kathy responded districts interpret the obligation differently. Some districts will send information with parental consent while others will not—there are a variety of practices.

Kathy reported the practice within the Amherst district is that confidential files are sent to the receiving district, as well as a phone call, and parents are given a copy of the student file as well.

Jim O'Mara noted that if the budget passes, the positions reflect point of origin of existing positions.

There was additional discussion regarding position inventory and Susan noted she would email the information Jim had requested.

Pam questioned what the timeframe would be in terms of reviewing the matrix and initiating steps to delegate the hiring of support staff to the superintendent, to which Dwight noted he would like to be comfortable with the matrix and cannot comment on how long it will take as he would like a chance to review the matrix over a period of time. Howard projected that by mid-year there would be a policy and the matrix would have had a chance to be processed through a few cycles.

Deborah Cort reported Steve Coughlan and Doug McAllister have offered to meet with the board to discuss televising the ASD board meetings. Deborah noted there is a cost to do live broadcast (filming), which is approximately \$5,000 per year. There is also an additional set up charge or cost of \$17,000 to \$20,000 and an annual expense of \$1,000 for tapes, replays, etc.

Public Access TV

Jim O'Mara questioned if the board could change meeting nights and conduct meetings at the town hall to reduce the costs by using existing equipment and set up, to which Deborah noted she would inquire about that suggestion. The board agreed it was a good idea to do the telecasts in an effort to gain more public awareness.

Howard will contact Doug McAllister and Steve Coughlan regarding an invitation to attend a future board meeting.

Deborah Cort reported Lisa Ambrosio had submitted a printing spec to area printers for printing the voters' guide and annual report. The bids were received without all the information, which resulted in a number of follow up calls and sorting through the quotations; this process was extremely time consuming. In order to meet the printing deadlines, Deborah had to approve the lowest-cost, most qualified bidder, as the board was not going to meet until after the printing was underway. Deborah reported she approved the contract with the understanding the item would be on the agenda tonight. Waiting for a board vote tonight would have detained the printing and prohibited the timeliness of distribution and mailing of the guides to the voters.

**Printing Contract For
Voters' Guide**

Dwight Brew moved to award the bid for printing the voters' guides and annual report to Hansen & Galligher Printing Services, in the amount of \$5,550.00. Pam Dudoff seconded the motion.

Jim O'Mara suggested specifications be outlined and receipt of bids completed sooner, to which Susan noted this process was new for the office staff, but it would be done earlier in the future.

All board members voted unanimously in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Deborah Cort and Susan Ward thanked Lisa for her efforts in this matter.

Dwight Brew moved to accept the minutes of the February 6, 2006 Deliberative Session. Pam Dudoff seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without amendment. The motion passed

**Acceptance of the
February 6, 2006
Deliberative Session**

Jim O'Mara moved to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2006 meeting. Dwight Brew seconded the motion. The minutes were approve with the following amendments:

**Approval of the
February 20, 2006
Meeting**

Page 1414, 4th paragraph, 2nd and 3rd lines, change to read: "...recently toured the district schools to..."

The motion passed.

Pam Dudoff moved to enter into a Non-Public Session, under the provision of RSA 91:A-3,II(a). Dwight Brew seconded the motion. By a roll-call vote, each member of the Board voted in favor: O'Mara-yes; Dudoff-yes; Cort-yes; Brew-yes. The motion passed. The Board went into a Non-Public Session at 7:50 p.m.

**NON-PUBLIC
SESSION**

The Board discussed personnel matters.

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Pam Dudoff moved to come out of Non-Public Session and Dwight Brew seconded. By a roll-call vote, each member of the Board voted in favor: O'Mara-yes; Dudoff-yes; Cort-yes; Brew-yes. The motion passed. The Board came out of Non-Public at 8:02 p.m.

Superintendent Howard Colter recommended the board accept the resignation of a faculty member and paraprofessional. **PERSONNEL**

Jim O'Mara moved to accept the resignation of a faculty member/athletic director, effective March 7, 2006, as recommended by the superintendent. Dwight Brew seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Jim O'Mara moved to accept the resignation of a paraprofessional at the Amherst Middle School, effective march 17, 2006, as recommended by the superintendent. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Pam Dudoff moved and Jim O'Mara seconded to adjourn the meeting. All board members voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m. **ADJOURNMENT**