

**MINUTES**  
**AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD**  
**April 3, 2006**  
**Amherst Middle School First Floor Music Room**

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Chairperson Dwight Brew called the board meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Present:

**ATTENDANCE**

Amherst School Board: Deborah Cort, Dwight Brew, Pam Dudoff, Nancy Head (arrived at 6:04 p.m.), and Jim O'Mara (arrived at 6:09 p.m.)

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

Ways & Means: Lynn Doherty and Peg Bennett

Minutes Recorder: Terri Connolly

Deborah Hinrichs addressed the board concerning the possible elimination of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Pinkham Notch environmental school. Deborah noted that she is a 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and has three children in the Amherst school system. Deborah added the environmental school is a fantastic experience in that it offers hands-on experiential learning in the areas of meteorology, environment, and survival training. In addition, the camp fosters friendships, particularly for those students coming in from Mont Vernon. Deborah was pleased to find that two Amherst Middle School graduates are now teaching at the environmental school.

**PUBLIC TIME**

Vicki Leknes added that from a teacher's perspective, this is where kids come together and grow. New friendships are fostered and leaders are born. There is tremendous educational value to this program.

Gale Polio added that she moved to the Amherst District because of the school programs and high standards for education and she does not want to see that changed.

Deborah Curran noted she was a 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and her three children have gone through the Amherst school system. When she questioned her children about their best school memories, the environmental schools and Wells Speaking program stood out as two of the most memorable experiences.

Susan Wilson, a teacher at AMS, added there are some lessons

taught inside the classroom while other lessons are taught outside the classroom; both types of lessons are invaluable. Students grow socially and academically to create a great community of citizens. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade environmental camp provides a good, safe opportunity for experiential learning; Susan asked the board to continue with the program.

Mary Westwater addressed the board and added she represents the students who thrive in this environment where they would otherwise be challenged academically; this program allows stars to be born in these areas.

Sherry Disco added her two sons have gone through the environmental camps and she would be highly disappointed if she had to tell her younger daughter she could not have that same experience, especially since her daughter will not experience the same World Language opportunity her older brothers were given.

Dwight Brew thanked the public and teachers for their input and noted the item will be discussed later in the board meeting.

Gerry St. Amand reported on highlights from Clark and Wilkins Schools and noted current enrollment for incoming Kindergarten students is 118; incoming first grade registrations for children who did not attend Kindergarten at Clark School is 30. Gerry also reported one of the architects from Frank Marinace Associates visited the Wilkins School on April 3, 2006 and will continue with Wilkins on April 5, 2006; Clark School will also be visited this week; all staff members have been encouraged to provide input into redesigning existing school facilities. Gerry added several teams of Clark and Wilkins students recently participated in the regional Destination Imagination competition, which was held on March 25, 2006; one of the primary teams won a Renaissance Award that was presented to three of the eighty-two participating teams. Gerry reported placement information would be shared with all parents in the April issue of the *Principal's Newsletter*, which will go home with students on April 6, 2006. Many staff members have availed themselves of the various technology workshops that have been conducted throughout the district; Gerry thanked Bruce Chakrin and the technology staff members for sharing their expertise with colleagues.

Deborah Martel reported on highlights from the Amherst Middle School and noted that last week two of the grade 6 teams went to the Museum of Fine Arts and the last team is going this Thursday; the administration thanked the PTA for another basketball hoop to accommodate the many players at AMS; NECAP scores were made

**REPORTS**  
**Building Principals**

available to the AMS administrators last week and curriculum coordinators and staff are beginning to analyze the data; last week fourth and five grade teachers had lunch to work on facilitating the student transition from elementary to middle school; tomorrow night Porter Dodge will meet with parents of Mont Vernon students to provide information and answer questions; the guidance counselors have been working closely to ensure the smoothest possible transition from both Wilkins and Mont Vernon.

Dwight Brew added there will be a brief discussion regarding the NECAP results during the April 18, 2006 SAU board meeting.

Eric Kidder presented a petition to the board, with a 100+ signatures from parents, requesting the continuation of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade environmental camps.

**DISCUSSION**  
**Funding Stipends for**  
**Environmental**  
**Camps**

Dwight Brew noted the AEA has negotiated stipends for the environmental camps. Expenses and revenue for the camps were in the operating budget last year and the 2006-07 operating budget, which was recently approved by the taxpayers. This year's revenue budget to be paid by taxes with the cost to be paid within the budget with the remaining portion to be paid by student fees. Dwight acknowledged this may not have been the best way to approach this matter and added the intent was not to cause any aggravation with the faculty.

Jim O'Mara moved the ASD not pass an increase on to the parents, in the amount of \$18,000.00, and see if the district can find additional resources of revenue for the environmental camps or reduce expenses of the environmental camps. Nancy Head seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Howard Colter reported he had met with Susan Ward and Porter Dodge regarding this matter. There have been discussions regarding how to come up with the \$18,000 that is currently not in the budget for this purpose. Howard expressed there may be some concern, within the community and faculty, that if the 7<sup>th</sup> grade camp is altered, this may be the beginning of dismantling all of the other camps. Howard explained the administration was asked to look at environmental camp expenses and to review those camps relative to curriculum. Based upon this review of all the camps, it was determined there would be 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade camps in 2006-07 and the 7<sup>th</sup> grade camp would be phased out by 2007-08. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade camps would continue, while 7<sup>th</sup> grade trips would focus on

experiential learning activities closer to home, such as day trips to museums. Howard added it was foreign practice, for him, to have parents pay for field trips especially if those trips are aligned with the curriculum.

Howard reported on possible areas for making up the \$18,000, which include looking at staffing, as there are usually end of year savings realized in personnel costs. In May 2006, there may be an unanticipated balance, which a portion of those monies could be used to purchase items that have been slotted for the FY 2007 budget, such as computers, books, etc.

Howard requested both the administration and staff consider the far-reaching staffing costs of these [camp] programs in that there are impacts on other teachers, which need to be taken into consideration.

Pam Dudoff noted teachers deserve to be compensated if the programs are part of the curriculum and parents should not have to pay, however, the district did not budget for this. Pam expressed concern about other unknown priorities and noted the administration conducted a comprehensive review of these programs, which resulted in the recommendation that there was not a need for as many camps.

Nancy Head questioned how the district can make it work financially next year, how many camps do most middle school grades go on, and what the financial implications are to the parents? There was also a question as to when the board should have the necessary information for a review and recommendation about the program, to which Howard added a 2-3 month information gathering process should begin now and encouraged the board to work with Nicole Heimarck, Deborah Martel, Porter Dodge and others in this process. A report and recommendation should be presented to the board by September 2006.

Jim O'Mara questioned why the 7<sup>th</sup> grade camp was targeted for elimination and what analysis was done regarding this, to which Deborah Martel noted the 7<sup>th</sup> grade environmental school had a greater impact on the World Language program and there were nurse-staffing issues. Pam Dudoff also noted the facilities for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade camps are smaller, which means there is more disruption in classrooms at AMS as a result of accommodating for the smaller facilities.

There was additional discussion as to identifying areas in the budget to make up the \$18,000; Howard noted the administration could generate a list of suggestions, to which Jim O'Mara noted he

would like to wait for staffing adjustments from attrition. Deborah Cort added the money must come from somewhere and something will be sacrificed whether it is computers, buildings and grounds, etc.

Deborah Cort moved the administration present a report and recommendation to the board in the September timeframe. The report will give information on the three camps at the AMS, including the educational, financial, and personnel impacts. Jim O'Mara seconded the motion.

Howard noted the report would include a recommendation, and, as of tonight, there should be no assumption that it [the 7<sup>th</sup> camp] is out.

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

It was noted there would be a reception for the superintendent finalist candidates at SCHS at 4:30 p.m. on Monday, April 10, 2006 and both candidates will meet with faculty, staff, and parents on Tuesday, April 11, 2006 at AMS.

Nancy Head reported she had met with Frank Marinace, Deborah Cort, Susan Ward and Howard Colter to discuss the Master Plan. Frank presented information regarding projected timelines and recommendations as to when to involve the community.

#### **Master Plan Update**

Nancy distributed a draft proposal of Master Plan purpose and goals and noted a good educational plan was needed; Nicole Heimarck, Gerry St. Amand and Porter Dodge will work on the educational planning portion of this project. Nancy requested the board members provide feedback on the draft materials presented.

Nancy also distributed the timeline, as established by Frank Marinace, and a document that provided a history of space needs. Nancy thanked Deborah Cort for providing the data compiled in the History of Space Needs document. Nancy questioned if the SAU office should be included in the Master Plan study, as it is eligible for 40% of building aid.

Jim O'Mara noted he would support a fresh, new healthy workspace and added he did not support putting more money into the existing Brick School building. Pam also expressed interest in a new space for the SAU staff including a recommended location and a design for new construction. Nancy responded that the district does not have to go with any of the renovation or addition recommendations, but at least the information would be available and

known. It was agreed that Nancy would ask Frank Marinace Associates how much it would cost to assess the SAU space needs.

There was also some discussion regarding posting the Master Plan information on the website and Nancy added she was writing up a communications piece, which would be submitted to the paper.

Pam Dudoff moved to accept the minutes of the March 20, 2006 Organizational Meeting. Jim O’Mara seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with the following amendments:

Page 1425, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, change “1 abstained” to “Dwight Brew abstained.”

Page 1425, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line, change to read: “Board Chair Dwight Brew requested nominations...”

Page 1425, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, change “1 abstained” to “Nancy Head abstained.”

Page 1425, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line, change to read: “Board Chair Dwight Brew requested nominations...”

Page 1425, 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line, change to read: “Nancy Head agreed to continue to volunteer as Chair of the Master Plan Committee...”

The motion passed

**APPROVAL OF  
MINUTES OF  
MARCH 20, 2006  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
MEETING**

Jim O’Mara moved to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2006 meeting. Deborah Cort seconded the motion. The minutes were approve with the following amendments:

Page 1427, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, 4<sup>th</sup> line, change to read: “...offered to aid in that...”

Page 1428, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph, 1<sup>st</sup> line, change to read: “Jan Bunker brought up the process of issuing...”

Page 1430, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> line, change to read: “...that the new software and a recent...”

Page 1431, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, add to last line: “...presented and would like that process to continue of who’s who. Porter indicated that wouldn’t be a big deal to do that.”

The motion passed.

**APPROVAL OF  
MINUTES OF  
MARCH 20, 2006**

The Board reviewed the 2006-07 school calendar. Howard Colter noted the AEA needs to review the calendar, and any change recommendations should be submitted to Nicole Heimarck. Susan Ward added she would forward electronic copies to Erik Kidder, for distribution to the AEA and ASSA, and e-copies will be distributed to Mont Vernon and SCHS as well.

**School Calendar  
2006-07**

The board briefly discussed the in-service dates, which are scheduled for September 5, 2006 and January 16, 2007. Howard

Colter added there has been a thorough review of teacher attendance for in-service days and there have been commitment discussions with those teachers who have had a consistence absence on in-service days.

Eric Kidder added he understood there was an oversight in getting the calendar out earlier, but noted that there is a stipulation in the CBA (8.2), which addresses the matter of teachers reviewing the calendar. Eric reiterated this was not a big deal, but did want it on the record for future administration teams to be aware of that provision.

**Expendable Trust Fund- Appointment of Members**

Deborah Cort moved to approve Scott Kent and Ann Logan for 2-year terms and Jim Jacobs for a 1-year term on the Expendable Trust Fund Committee. Pam Dudoff seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

The board reviewed the Expendable Trust Fund charter, as presented in the board packet, and the press release, which will be forwarded to *The Citizen*.

Deborah Cort thanked Jim O’Mara for his part on the ETF Committee.

**School Board Committee Assignments**

The board reviewed the Committee/Liaison Assignments for the period of April 2006 through March 2007, and agreed upon the following:

Committee:

Expendable Trust Fund – Deborah Cort (Chair) and Jim O’Mara

Liaison/Representative:

Ways and Means – Dwight Brew and Pam Dudoff

Recreation – Jim O’Mara

Town of Amherst – Nancy

Mont Vernon (MV) School Board – open. There are two board meetings per year with the MV board. Howard noted the MV board wants to talk about the [tuition] agreement, Master Plan, and the World Language program.

Board Responsibilities:

Master Plan – Nancy Head and Deborah Cort

Contract Negotiations (ASSA) – Open.

Contract Negotiations (AEA) – Will discuss in non meeting session

Manifest – Nancy Head and Pam Dudoff

Legislative Issues – Deborah Cort

Publicity – Pam Dudoff and Nancy Head

Policies – Pam Dudoff offered to recommend an approach to address the policies matter. There was additional discussion regarding the possibility of working with a professional and having the three boards allocate funds for common policies.

It was noted there are additional Committee and Task Force Assignments (not listed on the Assignment form):

SAU 39 Wellness – Pam Dudoff

K-12 Single District Task Force – Pam Dudoff

RSEC – Deborah Cort

Jim O’Mara moved to enter into a Non-Public Session, under the provision of RSA 91:A-3,II(a). Nancy Head 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, and Head-yes. The motion passed. The Board went into a Non-Public Session at 7:52 p.m.

**NON-PUBLIC  
SESSION**

The Board discussed personnel matters.

Deborah Cort moved to come out of Non-Public Session and Pam Dudoff seconded. By a roll-call vote, each member of the Board voted in favor: O’Mara-yes; Dudoff-yes; Cort-yes; Brew-yes, and Head-yes. The motion passed. The Board came out of Non-Public at 8:25 p.m.

Superintendent Howard Colter nominated the slate of teachers, as submitted in the board packet, for contracts to be renewed for school year 2006-07.

**PERSONNEL**

Pam Dudoff moved to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation and thanked the building principals for selecting the best candidates for the Amherst School District. Nancy Head seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Howard Colter recommended the board accept the following notices for early retirement, effective June 2007: Melanie Fillick, Janine Hartwell, Donna Hamel, Judith O’Keefe, and Kathleen Parkhurst.

Deborah Cort moved to approve the Superintendent’s recommendation, as presented. Pam Dudoff seconded the motion. All board members voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

Jim O'Mara moved to enter into a Non-Public Session, under the provision of RSA 91:A-3,II(a). Nancy Head 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, and Head-yes. The motion passed. The Board went into a Non-Public Session at 8:29 p.m.

**NON-PUBLIC  
SESSION**

The Board discussed a land sale.

Deborah Cort moved to come out of Non-Public Session and Nancy Head seconded. By a roll-call vote, each member of the Board voted in favor: O'Mara-yes; Dudoff-yes; Cort-yes; Brew-yes, and Head-yes. The motion passed. The Board came out of Non-Public at 8:40 p.m.

The board discussed the school calendar in terms of making future administrators aware of the process and to make sure a process is in place, to which Howard added there were several meetings among the administrators, but the matter should have been brought up at a faculty meeting.

**OTHER**

Jim O'Mara noted he would like to have the electronic copy of agenda and materials discussed at a future meeting and have the board make a decision about that matter.

**FUTURE ITEMS**

Deborah Cort noted the ETF Committee would be ready to present a proposal for projects at the next board meeting for board review and approval.

Deborah Cort moved and Nancy Head seconded to adjourn the meeting. All board members voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**