

**MINUTES**  
**AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD**  
**November 2, 2006**  
**Amherst Middle School Music Room**

**Page 1517**

Chair Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Present:

**ATTENDANCE**

Amherst School Board: Dwight Brew, Deborah Cort, Pam Dudoff, Jim O'Mara and Nancy Head

Administrative Team: Porter Dodge, Dr. Mary Jennings, Nicole Heimarck, Elizabeth Shankel, Kathy Skoglund, and Gerry St. Amand

Public: Peter Gagnon, Karen Gagnon, Bob Herley, and Deb Herley

Ways and Means Committee: Peg Bennett, Jim Jacobs

Other: Bruce Bowler, Tibor Farkas, Marinase Architects, Dana Redmond, Bill Overholt

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

Dwight Brew informed members of the board the administration would be presenting Draft 1 of the budget on November 21, 2006.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Dwight asked if a member or two of the board would be able to tweak the board goals and present them to the board at the November 21, 2006. Dwight asked if Deborah Cort and Pam Dudoff were willing to do this, and they said they would.

A. Public Time – Dwight Brew invited comments from the public. Karen Gagnon said you wished to address the board as well as other meeting attendees. Karen read a letter she prepared addressed to the school board as well as the administration. Karen said she wished to address the concerns of her husband, Peter Gagnon as well as Bob and Deb Herley. Karen said she believed building on the BLR site was not the most prudent solution.

**PUBLIC /  
PRESENTATIONS**

Karen said she understood the board was to pick the best option at tonight's board meeting based on public feedback at the presentation of the Master Plan on October 24, 2006.

A handout was provided to meeting attendees, which highlighted the Local Abutter Impact, and Community Impact.

Karen said they believed the vote should be tabled tonight to allow for more research.

Bob Herley presented the Local Abutter Impact as well as their concerns and Peter Gagnon presented the bigger picture to Local

Abutters.

- Immeasurable noise pollution impact to all residents south of Route 101 for an undetermined distance.
  - “Clear-cutting trees from 101 through Hurley property to Gagnon property will undoubtedly increase noise pollution on Village Woods Drive & TFI homeowners.
- Irreversible intrusion to rear boundary.
  - Athletic fields & retention pond would border Hurley (and Gagnon) stonewall property boundary.
  - Trees “clear-cut” to stone wall boundary
  - <40 feet from Hurley back door.
  - Unsightly retention pond (EEE concerns) on Hurley property border – which would be clear-cut with no trees.
- Irreversible intrusion to front Boundary
  - Entrance to abutter’s property will be impacted by traffic congestion, entering/exiting school drive, and cars parking.
- Impact of field use by town/school teams, and town residents to border of our property.
  - Spring, summer, fall
  - 7 days per week
  - noise, loss of privacy
- Effect of “clear-cutting” to rear boundary, and privacy loss to Hurley’s property will substantially impact their home’s value.
  - A realtor estimated the loss in value of >\$100,000.

Peter Gagnon said he attended the Public Hearing last week and also attended the Planning Board meeting. Peter said at the Planning Board meeting a lot of limitations were discussed which related to the BLR site however, they were not presented at the Public Hearing on October 24, 2006. Peter said the Planning Board meeting was far more detailed than the town meeting.

Peter highlighted the Community Impact:

Peter said more consideration of the traffic impact needs to be studied if the plans go forward to build on the BLR site.

- Traffic impact to commuters who use Baboosic Lake Road on and off ramps to access Route 101.
- Traffic impact to commuters who travel along Rte 122 South, use Rte 122 to access Rte 101A east or west.

- Significant cost overruns due to best-guess assumptions (i.e., construction due to ledge, water pressure issue requires fire pump and other booster pumps) (see Page BL-6.5/Site utilities/Bullet One)
- Danger to BLR site users (hunting occurs on privately owned land surrounding the BLR site)
- Wetland's is a mosquito attraction, which will create the EEE threat to area, especially around the school.
- Suggested solution to road noise is sound deadening barrier along Rte. 101's south shoulder.
  - Aesthetically displeasing for the Amherst area
- Solution to build at BLR site is quite possibly shortsighted and will significantly restrict Amherst from reacting to future growth needs, evidence follows:
  - Property's septic system limits will reach critical mass as soon as school is completed. (school can be expanded but septic system code will not allow growth of population)
  - Once BLR site facility is also outgrown due to limitations of the physical property, Amherst will be extremely limited in ways to resolve.
  - Statement regarding Wetlands size on property seems to be misleading (see page BL-6.5/Wetlands impact and mitigation/bullet one)
  - Although Dept. of Transportation indicated "it may be possible to obtain an additional access point into the site from Route 101, to be used in case of an emergency," Amherst's Fire Chief, John DaSilva, stated he would never recommend such a plan. (see BL-6.5/Site access/bullet six)

Karen Gagnon said the Fire Chief never said he would approve crossing Rte. 101 off of Baboosic Road.

- Limited relevant discussion by residents.

Dwight Brew thanked the Gagnon's as well as the Hurley's for taking the time to address the board.

A. Master Plan Options - Dwight highlighted the format they would follow for discussing the Master Plan Options.

- 1) Nancy has done a lot of research regarding the questions, which were posed by meeting attendees at the Public Hearing on October 24, 2006. Nancy will provide answers to these questions.
- 2) Board members will make comments on the Master Plan as well as the process.
- 3) Input will be provided from Ways and Means.

**DISCUSSION/ACTION  
ITEMS**

- 4) Board members will be given the opportunity to make motions to move the process forward.

Nancy Head provided the questions as well as the completed research as a result of the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

1. *Will there be unknown costs due to ledge problems?*  
The architects say that the geotechnical report that they have is a good one. It shows most of the ledge at the far side of the lot. It shows mostly gravel where the utilities will go. They may need more test pits near the Baboosic Lake Road area.

Tibor Farkas from Marinase Architects explained further.

2. *Does the town want the Brick School?*  
When master plan committee representatives met with town officials, the town did not express any desire either way. The town is not eligible for state building aid for renovations.
3. *Is the second access necessary on Baboosic Lake Road?* Having one access road has been given permission as long as certain safety criteria are met.
4. *What would you do if the executive council refuses the emergency access?* We don't need it.
5. *Would an emergency access require a u-turn on the highway?* The fire chief would have the say as to what is permissible. John DeSilva, Fire Chief, emailed that he is not pushing for an access off Route 101. He has concerns about apparatus making a left turn across the oncoming lane. He is not sure how DOT would take the request to widen Route 101 and add a center turning lane for an emergency access road that might never get used.
6. *Will 15 homes lose their 101 buffer?* In some instances the school will be a better noise buffer than the present trees. We will try to leave as many trees as possible although we were over there the other day and most of the trees are so tall that only the trunks are acting as buffers.
7. *How will the BLR site impact busing?* Betty Shankel spoke with First Student and they said they did not think that it would be difficult to integrate

BLR busing into the district routing especially if the start and finish times for Wilkins and BLR were slightly staggered.

8. *What is the maximum capacity of the present schools?* There are two capacities: classroom and core facilities. Wilkins was built for about 400 students. AMS was built for about 700. It is difficult to tell capacity in student numbers because classrooms can be used for different purposes. If you want the maximum number of students, you might get a rough estimate by taking the total enrollment and subtracting the number of children in portables, which gives an unofficial total capacity under very crowded conditions.

Superintendent Mary Jennings explained the two recognized ways of measuring capacity—core and classroom.

Principal Gerry St. Amand explained that capacities varied for different rooms such as the library, multipurpose room, etc.

9. *How come Weare, NH is getting 134,000 square feet for 18 million?* The architect looked into that and found the school was put out for bid 18 months ago. We have had as high as a 16% increase in school building costs in one year since then. Our building, if we build it, will go out for bid in 2008. We have to figure in at least an 8% increase per year in building costs. The other factor in price is the quality of the materials.
8. *What were the enrollment figures for 1984-1994?* Nancy could only find figures for '84 to '90. 1984-85 --1217 students; 1986-1987 -- 1131; 1989-1990 - - 1134.
9. *Other bond payments:* Amherst Middle School: Principal of \$190,000 plus interest ends FY 2022; Souhegan Building-uneven principal payments plus interest ends FY 2012; and Souhegan Expansion—Principal of \$580,000 plus interest ends FY 2012.

Nancy Head then thanked the people who have been involved in the this process, starting with members of the Master Plan Committee—Mary Jennings, Betty Shankel, Jim Miner, Deborah

Cort, Dana Redmond, and John Schwope; and administrators Gerry St.Amand and Porter Dodge. She also wanted to thank the Community Liaison Committee—Gil Hulme, Tom Grella, Bob Jackson, Shannon Gilanson, Louise Marley, Theresa Grella, Robin Hefflefinger, Jeanne Ludt, Kristin Desborough, and Tracey Hanlon. These people have been wonderful in giving their honest, sometimes blunt, opinions.

Nancy explained how she comes from two positions: as a retiree who does not want to see the taxes go up and as a retired teacher.

Nancy said as a teacher, she is terribly aware of the declining quality of education that overcrowding can cause. She said in her estimation, Amherst is beginning to fall behind. She said they have excellent teachers and administrators and bright kids, but we can't be innovative, we can't be technologically current, we can't take advantage of some of the newer curricula, we can't really implement some of the new special education initiatives that could cut down our special education costs—we can't keep up. In fact, some say we can't even keep our kids safe—we stick them in portables. We don't have the space needed to do what we have to do.

Nancy suggested doing a variation of Option 1. Nancy said she wanted to be able to justify one of the Wilkins addition variations as a retiree and friend of retirees, I wanted to think one of the cheaper options could work but in the long run I couldn't do it. She provided the following reasons:

1. An addition of any size puts too much stress on the already overburdened core facilities at Wilkins. There are too many things you can't change—the size of the hallways, the distance of the addition from core facilities, the size of the multipurpose room.
2. Moreover, the traffic situation through town and at the school is a serious concern at the present levels of involvement.
3. Research has shown that the optimum size for an elementary school is somewhere between 300-400 students when factors such as achievement, participation, teacher satisfaction, student self-esteem, and similar factors are taken into account.

Nancy made the following recommendations:

1. The SAU remain at the brick school. Nancy said we get

- 40% aid, which makes this a very attractive option. Nancy said she sees this as a separate warrant article in March.
2. Clark as grades K and 1 with the hope of making Clark an early learning center in the future.
  3. Wilkins as grades 1, 2, and 3 with the idea of eventually having it as grades 1 and 2.
  4. BLR site is made into a 400-student school for grades 4 and 5 with it eventually being a 600-student school for grades 3, 4, and 5.
  5. AMS as a separate entity for grades 6, 7, and 8. Without the fifth grade, the overcrowding will be solved.

Nancy said she does not like splitting grade 1 but thinks its necessary to give us the time to see what our demographic picture is going to be. Nancy believes it is leveling off but with demographics, the picture can change quickly.

The Baboosic Lake Road land is not a perfect site but Nancy sees it as having certain advantages: it is close to town and the other elementary schools thus making bus routes more efficient. It is close to a highway and does not clog up the middle of town with traffic. It has a long driveway and thus parent lineups won't clog up Baboosic Lake Road. It is close to emergency services—in case of an emergency, the police, rescue service, and fire will be first on the scene. It has the potential for bike and walking trails that the community can enjoy. It is on town water. We own the land.

Nancy said a few neighbors will be affected and for this she said she feels badly. We will do everything we can to mitigate the negative aspects. We would hope to be better neighbors than something like a housing development would be.

Deborah Cort provided some history and highlighted how we got to where we are:

In March 2000, a warrant article requesting approval to purchase property and build a 4/5 school on Baboosic Lake Road failed; however, voters approved purchasing the property to be used for a future school to relieve the district's overcrowding. In March 2001, in light of failed building proposals over the previous three years, the school board decided to put the 4/5 school on hold and instead they presented the voters with an addition to the Amherst Middle School, which passed. This less expensive plan assumed that the fifth grade would eventually be relocated out of the middle school.

In November 2001, my first year on the school board, I was asked by the Board to chair a committee that looked at our demographics and present to the Board a study that would assist in our moving forward with the districts space needs issues.

As I looked at how to best proceed with this project, I determined that looking only at space needs would not provide a true picture of our District's needs and included facility needs, i.e., building renovations and upgrades along with space needs in the project.

The Facilities Study committee, which was comprised of myself and 10 community members and the then director of Buildings & Grounds and the then Superintendent, spent untold hours during a 10 month span on the project and in September 2002 we presented our "Preliminary Report and Recommendations" to the Amherst School Board. The recommendations of this committee were: *"The committee recommends, based on enrollment projections and building assessments, that the Amherst School Board consider: using the Clark school for its kindergarten program, SAU offices; renovating Wilkins to improve functionality and to support program needs; provide space for increasing projected student enrollments along with attendant core facilities, parking, fields, etc.; and renovate spaces within AMS to improve functionality, upgrading the building's systems and increasing program space."*

The last paragraph of the executive summary reads: *"With this report as a foundation, the Study Committee encourages the Board to continue the work of this Committee through the hiring of a professional firm experienced in performing building analysis, educational program analysis, and school district master plans."*

The following March, voters approved funding such a study. The Board hired NESDEC, the New England School Development Council. This organization produced a Demography and Enrollment Projections study dated August 2003. They then produced a full "K-8 Long Range School Facilities Planning and Capital Asset Assessment" in August 2004. This report basically confirmed the 2002 findings of the Facilities Study Committee.

Taking this information, the Board requested from the voters the opportunity to prepare a master plan that would give us direction on how we might best proceed in solving the district's space needs and renovation needs. We hired the New Hampshire School Administrator's Association to update our demographics and enrollment projections and we hired Frank Marinace Architects to

prepare the master plan using the most current information from NHSAA.

All studies and research have resulted in similar conclusions as the Facility Study Committee in 2002, with the one difference being that we no longer need to address the projected increase in enrollments, but rather the overcrowding that has resulted from the increased enrollments over the years.

In looking at the options and weighing them against our needs, Deb said she believes it would be a disservice to the current and future students and residents of Amherst to conclude that an expansion of the Wilkins school would meet the needs of our school district.

Deb said Option 1a offers the school district and the residents of Amherst a well thought out solution that:

- Addresses our current space needs as well as providing space for future enrollment growth should it occur.
- Provides us with the opportunity to expand our educational programs to meet current and future needs.
- Allows us to finally address necessary renovations and upgrades for our schools.(I say finally because we have continued to put off doing most major projects in the schools while waiting for a plan. The Board has not wanted to expend funds in this area only to find that the renovations/upgrades would be torn out or found to be inadequate if an expansion were to be put onto any of the schools.)
- Provides a reasonably cost effective solution to the space needs of the SAU offices. (I know that some people believe that by moving the SAU out of the Brick School doubles the burden for the taxpayer because the Brick School will still need to be renovated. It is my belief that once the town determines what it wants the Brick School to be used for, it is possible that costs would not equal those necessary to keep the SAU offices in that building. It is also possible that funding for work done at the Brick School for uses other than SAU offices could come from sources other than taxpayers' dollars.)

While Option 1a is the more expensive option, in my opinion, it best meets the needs of the school district and provides the best return on the taxpayers' investment.

Jim O'Mara thanked members of the Master Plan Committee, Tibor Farkas, and the Marinase Firm for all their hard work on this project.

As a Member of the Amherst School Board Jim said he wanted the community to know from the outset that he knows, not thinks or believes, that our students are being educated in a less than ideal learning environment.

The creativity of our building heads, professional educators and our support staff has been laudable.

Parents of students in our three buildings are keenly aware of the space issues, which impact their children. But those citizens of our community who only venture onto school property for an annual Craft Fair, Pancake Breakfast, ski /skate sale or any other infrequent reason I believe are not convinced there is a space issue at all. Many believed the addition to AMS solved our problem. I would venture to say that even some parents of school age children who have not personally experienced space problems in the other schools are unaware of the extent of the issue.

Jim said this is his fault as a member of the Amherst School Board, a governing body which has insufficiently identified the space need and raised the communities awareness, and who is now looking to craft a multimillion dollar expansion or new construction project warrant article. In this regard I believe I/we have failed to avail ourselves of the media and technological advance in town so as to appropriately warn the citizens of our need.

There are far too many unknowns, tonight, right now, for us to reasonably expect the community to support a space needs warrant article this coming year. As I am sure we will hear other interested people express their own opinions, I will close by mentioning a single reason for deferring this project until next year and then offer a constructive option.

The town of Amherst School District was looking at a significant reduction in state education aid as part of the funding formula plan that passed the NH House of Reps and State Senate, despite the efforts of some of our elected reps it became law. A horribly expensive law for us here in Amherst.

This Board participated and helped finance a successful appeal to the Supreme Court along with other communities disparately treated by the biased formula. Again, had we not prevailed, the tax impact would have been substantial.

Therefore, this issue alone, this one unknown if you will, this absence of a lawful state education funding formula, causes me enough concern to respectfully ask my colleagues to join me in a one year deferral of any Capital investment action pending the outcome of state aid.

My constructive suggestion is to use this time to “over” educate ALL of our citizens about our need for more academic space in all of our buildings and to obtain some type of analysis of our current space to ensure we are efficiently and effectively using every square foot as a method of convincing those who do not directly benefit from the superior education system we have developed and sustained in our community.

Again, Jim offered his thanks to the Committee and everyone involved for their hard work.

Pam Dudoff said a lot of credit goes to Deborah Cort as well as other committee members for getting professional and expert advise.

Pam said Nancy Head provided wonderful leadership, which resulted in presenting these options to the members of the board as well as the public.

Pam said she believes they have an obligation to put something forward to the voters this year. Pam said she agreed with Jim, they should look at the recommendations of the voters, she said public input has been extremely helpful.

Pam said she received a suggestion from Bruce and Regina Kenney regarding the Wilkins School and said by everyone thinking together, it has been very helpful.

Pam provided the following recommendations:

- Renovate the Brick School and continue to house the SAU Offices at the Brick School. She said they would get 40% State Aid for the renovations. Pam said she does not think the SAU Offices should be in the basement of a

- school.
- Clark School becomes an Early Childhood Education Center for Kindergartners and Pre-School. Pam said by beginning to educate early, she believes they can save in the long run.
  - Wilkins for grades 1, 2 and Special Services. (also make the necessary renovations) Pam said if Wilkins was renovated to house more students, it would significantly change the look of downtown Amherst and it would never be the same.
  - AMS should house 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. (Amherst and Mont Vernon) Pam said making AMS a 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade school would be the best option for all. Pam said there might be some financial benefits if this was expanded to be a part of Souhegan.
  - BLR site – build a school to house 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Pam said she believes this is a nice grouping of students.

-

Pam said she had some questions and concerns but believes she is closer to picking an option. Pam said she thinks within a few weeks they would be able to put something in front of the voters.

Dwight Brew said he had received many answers to the questions posed however; he is not comfortable with voting on an option. He said he would rather continue working on the options.

Dwight Brew made the following comments:

- They need to revise the tuition agreement between Amherst and Mont Vernon.
- Need to find out how Mont Vernon will proceed. Mont Vernon has not yet held their Public Hearing to hear comments from the public. Dwight said Mont Vernon is in the process of creating a Master Plan.

Dwight said he is not comfortable with moving forward with any one of the options this evening.

Dana Redmond a member of the Master Plan Committee said he did not envision one warrant article to address all the issues. He said some of the schools have problems, which are way overdue

and have not been touched in over twenty-five years. Dana said some of these repairs would get the support of the voters since the schools are in violation and need to be fixed.

Dana said he recommends they try to address these issues this year, since it would be money well spent.

Bill Overholt, said he does not think they should abandon the Brick School. He said then it would be someone else's responsibility. Since it has to be maintained he thinks the SAU Offices should remain at the Brick School and it should be brought up to ADA standards.

Another member of the Ways and Means spoke and said he agreed with Jim O'Mara and Dwight Brew. He said he would like to find out what the funding situation would be prior to proceeding. He said as a taxpayer, and resident of Amherst, he would prefer to see any school additions as a separate warrant article and the costs broken out from renovations. This way, he would be able to determine what he would like to have versus what is necessary.

Peg Bennett said she agrees with Jim O'Mara, a proper PR campaign has not been launched and needs to be launched.

Jim Jacobs provided a comparison of Town Tax Rates dated 11/2/06. The analysis compared the rates of Amherst, Hollis, Milford and Bedford. It showed the percentage of the tax rate as it related to the schools. The highest of the towns was Amherst at 80.6%, next was Bedford at 76.0%, then Hollis at 74.5% and finally Milford at 71.5%.

Jim said Bedford has a new high school and middle school and their rate was 76%. Jim said there was quite a disparity in the percentage of taxes that goes to the schools.

Jim Jacobs said he agrees, the board should do more PR. He said just this year the community has gone through a reassessment, they are in the process of renegotiating the teacher contract which will have an impact on the town this year, he's not sure what will happen with state funds, and all the other normal increases that come up year after year. Jim said he agrees, they should postpone any decision on the Master Plan for a year.

Another member of the Ways and Means Committee asked why the Master Plan Committee didn't look at the 12.5 acre Bean site. He said another possible site was the 40 plus acres where the pumpkin patch is located, he said there are a lot of wetlands there, however, he believes it could be a possibility.

He said his pet peeve is the tuition agreement between Amherst and Mont Vernon. He agreed with Dwight and said the agreement needs to be redone. He said Mont Vernon needs to pay their fair share.

Jim O'Mara said the options presented by Marinase are a great starting point, however; he said we shouldn't confuse improvements with solving the problem.

Jim said we should get our needs addressed and the funding approved through the Expendable Trust Fund. He said he is concerned if we spend \$3 million for renovations will citizens say we don't need another school because we just spent \$3 million on renovations. He said he has not abandoned any of the proposals, but a PR campaign is needed over the next twelve months.

Pam Dudoff said the time to do a PR campaign is now, they still have a lot of time between now and March. She said educating the public is important, but there is still plenty of time to do it before March.

Nancy Head said she has trouble separating out the renovations since they are tied to space needs. She said if they tried to separate out the maintenance items, she doubts they'd get state aid.

Dwight Brew gave Nancy Head as the Master Plan Committee Chair the opportunity to offer a motion.

Nancy said she would like to have the board come back to vote on a recommendation in two weeks.

Board members discussed Nancy's recommendation and determined a motion was not necessary.

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Nancy Head to ask the Master Plan Committee to further develop the option that focuses on Clark as an Early Childhood Learning Center, Wilkins grades 1-2, BLR site 3-4-5, and the SAU to deal with the other districts regarding AMS with Mont Vernon and present their findings at the next board meeting on November 21, 2006.

Discussion amongst board members followed.

Pam said she was cutting out the SAU and Souhegan because she believed they needed to be separate.

Pam suggested they get more specific regarding the financial aspects of the proposal, address the concerns of the BLR site, jot down what they investigated at the BLR site. She said they did a really good job addressing all the questions/concerns that were presented at the Public Hearing and this needs to be continued.

Dwight said he would have to vote against the motion because Pam only took out a very small percentage of the proposal. (\$900k)

Pam Dudoff withdrew the motion, which was seconded by Nancy Head.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Deborah Cort to ask Dwight Brew to obtain permission from the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen's Office to use the Selectmen's Office for the purpose of holding our school board meetings in front of the cameras and television in order to start our PR campaign.

Bruce Bowler, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen was a member of the audience during the School Board meeting.

Discussion followed amongst board members.

Dwight Brew asked Bruce Bowler, if the School Board could get permission to hold their meetings in the Board of Selectmen's Office for the purpose of using the television to begin their PR campaign.

Bruce said he would be happy to give Dwight a key so they could utilize the Selectmen's Office for their future meetings. Bruce said he was not sure if he could get any volunteers to run the cameras in order for the board to hold their meetings via television.

Members of the audience volunteered to run the cameras.

Board members discussed the financial impact of holding their meetings at the Selectmen's Office and agreed there was no financial impact they just needed volunteers to run the cameras.

Dwight said he was not opposed to holding future meetings at the Selectmen's Office but it should be looked into, and put on as a future agenda item.

One member of the board voted in favor of the motion, Jim O'Mara, and four members voted against the motion, Dwight Brew, Deborah Cort, Pam Dudoff, and Nancy Head. The motion failed.

Jim O'Mara said he is not in favor of presenting a knowingly doomed warrant article.

Pam Dudoff said the board needs to take some steps forward, and she is looking at getting some help from her colleagues. Pam said the voters gave the school board permission to spend \$125,000 towards the Master Plan Proposal and school board members should not give up on November 2, 2006, to presenting something to the voters in March, 2007.

Nancy Head said she agreed with Pam, they need to get something on the ballot in March.

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Jim O'Mara to have the Master Plan Committee come back with a recommendation on what they'd put on the warrant in March.

Discussion followed amongst board members.

Pam said the MPC should address as many of the outstanding questions and issues as possible.

Pam said unfortunately, every time questions are addressed, there are more questions. She said they are not going to have a consensus but they are very close to presenting an option and it would be a shame if nothing is put before the voters. She said a lot of people are expecting to see something on the ballot this year.

Jim O'Mara said he has no intention of letting this issue fall by the wayside. He suggested they have the Master Plan as a stand in item on all future agendas.

Three members of the board voted in favor of the motion, Deborah Cort, Pam Dudoff and Nancy Head. Two members of the board voted against the motion, Dwight Brew and Jim O'Mara. The motion passed.

In three weeks, November 21, 2006, the MPC will present an option to the school board.

B. Assumptions and Guidance for FY08 ASD Budget – Dr. Jennings said the administration was to begin the process of presenting the budget at tonight's meeting.

Dr. Jennings said they will present Draft 1 of the budget on November 21, 2006.

Dr. Jennings presented the following Amherst School District FY08

Enrollments – Tied to supplies, materials, educational initiatives and staffing. Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, and Dr. Jennings sat down and came up with the projections for FY08.

FY07 Actuals (October):

Clark/Wilkins	814
AMS	835

FY08 Budgeted:

Clark/Wilkins	822
AMS	825

Dr. Jennings highlighted the current class size and said they would be working with the same numbers for next year.

- Elementary
  - Kindergarten-Grade 1 18:1
  - Grades 2-3 20:1
  - Grade 4 22:1
- Middle School
  - Teams: Grade 5-6 60:3
  - Teams: Grades 7-8 80.5
  - Specials 20-25:1

Staffing:

- *Administration:* Staff & student supervision
- *Special Education:* Case loads
- *Custodial:* Facility square footage
- *Support Staff:* Staff support and special education individualized Education Plans
- *Teachers:* Class size and special programming

Benefits:

- Health Care – they are anticipating a 7.2% increase in health care however, they are budgeting 8.2% to cover the possible shift in plans from single to family.
- Dental – 1.0% increase
- Other insurances – 5.0% increase

Staffing:

- Contracts
  - Negotiations are taking place with the AEA Teachers.
  - AEA support staff is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 2-year contract.
  - Non-union staff: raises are to be decided by the board.
- New Hires
  - The administration is recommending new teachers be hired at the Masters Step 5 rate.
- Retirements
  - NH Retirement went from 6.81% to 8.74%

Operations:

- Cost of Living Increase: 3.5% increase
- Delivery and shipping costs 10% additional cost per order
- Utilities – 6.4% increase in electricity; \$.250/gallon heating oil (same as FY07)

Maintenance and Repairs:

- Capital Items: Long term capital plan
- Replacement needs: Rotational basis
- Repair and Maintenance/Operational – Master Plan Options
  - Dr. Jennings said they will have a list of improvements that would be necessary to do next year in case the Master Plan does not pass as well as additional repairs in future years.

Master Plan Repair/Maintenance Items:

- Clark  
\$25,300, future years: \$267,000
- Wilkins  
\$22,900, future years: \$335,000
- Middle School  
\$53,200, future years: \$277,500

Dr. Jennings highlighted the assumptions for the Operations as follows:

- Transportation – 2<sup>nd</sup> year of 3 year extension
- Amherst School Board Meeting Minutes for November 2, 2006

- Number of buses remain the same
- Food Service in Amherst is operating a break-even program.

The following educational initiatives were presented:

- K-12 English/Language Arts
  - Literacy coaches at sites
- Curriculum Review Cycle
  - Social Studies textbook purchase –was originally
  - Mathematics programming
- Health and Science – Phase I of revision cycle, no purchases are necessary this year.

Educational Initiatives included:

- EIPP Program to Middle School – would like to expand the program to include the 5<sup>th</sup> grade – will present the costs to you.
- Middle School Evaluation – a proposal to do a self-evaluation of their program. (long-term project)
- Professional development
  - RTI
  - Assessments
  - Differentiated Instruction

Since it is difficult to determine what will be received in Federal and State Grants, the administration will project conservatively.

The administration does not foresee a change in State Aid.

The administration will not know what the district will receive in Catastrophic Aid for Special Education until the end of the year therefore; they will budget conservatively.

Dr. Jennings said the district is holding to no tuition students accepted, since they don't have the room.

Currently Amherst has an existing Expendible Trust for Capital Planning but the administration is suggesting they need one for Special Education as well as Unfunded Benefits. Dr. Jennings said they believe they will be receiving several requests for retirement this year.

Dr. Jennings asked board members for some directives.

Pam Dudoff asked if they would be addressing the lack of freezer space at the Middle School. She suggested they get input from Franceen Lupa. She said the Food Service program should be tied to the Budget so that the needs of the Wellness Policy are adequately addressed.

Porter Dodge said he wasn't sure if the freezer space was addressed, but will look into it.

Deborah Cort said the district pays a lot of money for textbooks and an often time hears from staff and students they don't use the textbooks. If they are not being used, why are we buying them, she said she would like to know if they are necessary.

Pam Dudoff said they should also look into the book size and weight as more and more issues have arisen from students carrying too heavy a backpack.

Nicole agreed to look into both issues addressed by Deborah and Pam and report back to the board.

Deborah Cort asked if the Professional Development initiatives were also a focus of the teachers.

Dr. Jennings said teacher's goals are tied to their building however; the Professional Development Committee embraced several of these initiatives.

Jim O'Mara suggested they review the need for textbooks in Math as well.

Jim O'Mara said he felt they were projecting too low an increase in electricity.

Jim Miner said they had a reduction of 14% in August and are projecting a 6.4% increase as of January 1, 2007.

Pam Dudoff requested the Consent Agenda be placed at the beginning of the meeting on future agendas.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Pam Dudoff requested the draft minutes be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Jim O'Mara requested Budget Transfer request number 200702 be removed from the Consent Agenda and Dwight asked to remove Budget Transfer request number 200705 from the consent agenda.

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Jim O'Mara to approve Consent Agenda Items A. Approval of Minutes–

October 10, 2006, and B. Budget Transfers 200703, 200704, and 200706 and C. Support for NHSBA Proposed Resolutions for 2007. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Deborah Cort and seconded by Nancy Head to approve the minutes of October 10, 2006, as amended. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Jim O'Mara wanted Kathy Skoglund to explain why they were moving around the funds in Special Education. Kathy Skoglund explained the reasons for the changes/transfers to Jim.

A motion was made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Pam Dudoff to approve Budget Transfer number 200702 as proposed. All board members voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Dwight Brew asked how Budget Transfer number 200705 worked as it related to the Tuition Agreement.

Betty Shankel agreed to look into how things have been done in the past and determine if they should be done the same way in the future or move forward and correct them.

A motion was made by Dwight Brew and seconded by Nancy Head to approve Budget Transfer number 200705. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Jim O'Mara to go into Non-Public Session per RSA 91 - A:3, II (a).

**NON-PUBLIC  
SESSION**

By a roll call vote, Brew-yes; Cort-yes; Dudoff-yes; Head-yes; and O'Mara-yes; the board went into Non-Public Session at 9:00 p.m.

The board discussed personnel contracts.

A motion to come out of non-public session made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Nancy Head.

By a roll call vote, Brew-yes; Cort-yes; Dudoff-yes; Head-yes; and O'Mara-yes; the board came out of Non-Public Session at 10:15 p.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Nancy Head and seconded by Pam Dudoff. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

**REVIEW OF  
MEETING /  
ADJOURNMENT**