

MINUTES
AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD
March 1, 2007
Amherst Town Hall Meeting Room

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Chair Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Present:

ATTENDANCE

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

Administrative Team: Porter Dodge, Dr. Mary Jennings, Elizabeth Shankel (left 6:30 p.m.) and Gerry St. Amand.

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A. Recognition of Board Member – Dwight Brew took time to recognize Deborah Cort who had served on the Amherst School Board for six years and of those six years served as Board Chair for three years. On behalf of the Amherst School Board, Dwight presented Deborah with a resolution, which he read aloud.

Nancy Head presented Deborah with some flowers.

Deborah thanked the board and administration and said it was a busy six years and six years she will always remember.

Dr. Jennings told members of the board at the last Mont Vernon board meeting, board members voted unanimously to enter into a continuation of the Tuition Agreement with Amherst.

- B. Administrator's Reports – Board members were given a copy of the AMS Administrator's Report addressed to the School Board and dated March 1, 2007, by Porter Dodge. Board members received a copy of Gerard St. Amand's Report dated March 1, 2007, regarding the Clark and Wilkins Schools in their board packets.

Board members were given the opportunity to ask questions of either Porter or Gerry's School Board Reports however they had none.

Dwight Brew invited comments from the Public but none were forthcoming.

PUBLIC TIME

CONSENT AGENDA

Dwight Brew asked board members if they wanted anything pulled from the Consent Agenda.

The C 1. Minutes of January 4, 2007, and C 2. Minutes of January 15, 2007 were pulled from the Consent Agenda.

The D. Transfer of Funds was pulled from the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Deborah Cort to accept A. Treasurer's Report – January 2007, and B. Manifest – January 2007 from the Consent Agenda. 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 accept the C. 1. Minutes of January 4, 2007, as amended. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion to approve the minutes of C.2. January 15, 2007, as amended was made by Nancy Head and seconded by Pam Dudoff. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion.

Dwight said he wanted to be able to review the minutes from the Budget Public Hearing and the meeting immediately following the Hearing at the same time, therefore, he was requesting the board table the Minutes of January 15, 2007.

A motion to table C. 2. Minutes of January 15, 2007, was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Jim O'Mara. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Jim asked why a transfer of \$6,000 was needed from Psychological Services and Speech Therapy. Betty Shankel said the transfer was needed because of the additional costs that were not identified at the time of the original budget.

A motion to approve D. Transfer of Funds – Budget Transfer No. 200711 in the amount of \$6,000 was made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Pam Dudoff. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion to approve D. Transfer of Funds – Budget Transfer No. 200712 in the amount of \$6,957.91 was made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Pam Dudoff. All members of the board voted in favor

of the motion and the motion passed.

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- A. Quarterly Report FY07 – Board members received a copy of the Amherst School District Fiscal Year: 2006-2007 7/1/06-12/31/06 Revenue and Expenditure Report.

PRESENTATIONS

Betty asked board members for comments and suggestions with regards to the format of the report.

Betty said they have more revenue than anticipated, an estimated \$145,106 which will be turned back to the taxpayer. Betty highlighted under local revenue, interest income was higher than expected; in state revenue, Catastrophic Aid was higher than expected; and in Federal Revenue, Medicaid was higher than expected.

Betty said she expects expenses to be under by approximately \$276,094 at year-end. Betty said this was a conservative estimate. Betty's handout provided a detailed explanation as to where the budget came in lower than anticipated. The handout showed savings occurred in the 1100 Series – Teachers Salaries – Middle School, and Title I Salaries; 2100 Series – Guidance Salary and Health Salary; 2400 Series – Secretary – Wilkins; Secretary – Middle School; 2600 Series – Custodian Salaries; and 2900 Benefits.

Betty said they hadn't looked at the Electric and Fuel costs for the year yet.

Jim O'Mara said he was very appreciative of the level of detail the report provides and he likes the format of the report.

Pam asked whether the districts Fuel and Electric contracts offer any protection should the price end up lower than the lock-in rate. Betty said she wasn't sure, but would check on it. Dwight Brew said he was pretty sure they committed to buy at a certain price and there was no other protection offered since they utilized a bulk type purchase program.

Dwight said he agreed with Jim's comments and finds the format very helpful. Dwight said if they end the year with an increase of \$100,000 in revenue and under spend in the expense side, they could have \$300,000 to offset the taxes.

Betty said board members could e-mail her if they had any comments or suggestions regarding the report format.

- B. Report on Amherst Capital Improvement Plan – Dwight explained to members of the board at the Souhegan Deliberative Session there was a question about the School Districts participation in the Capital Improvement Plan. Dwight said the Amherst School District has been participating ever since the Capital Improvement Committee was put together so Dwight thought it would make sense for Nancy to give the board an update as to what has happened and what she sees happening in the future as far as the Capital Improvement Plan Committee and the Capital Improvement Plan.

Nancy explained the Capital Improvement Committee is a town committee, which she attended along with Susan Ward and Janet Phelps on a regular basis for about a year as the liaison for the Amherst School Board. Nancy said the idea behind the Capital Improvement Committee was to spread out major capital improvement expenses of the town including the school. Another important factor involved in the plan is the ability to charge impact fees on new development, once the town has an impact fee plan approved by the voters as she understands it, it would be able to use the information from the Capital Improvement Plan to assess impact fees. Nancy said the school district was somewhat at a disadvantage in giving information about their capital expenditures because they were in the middle of the Master Plan process and really didn't have a good understanding of what their expenditures would be.

Nancy said she did meet with Carl Webber and others to give them the information they did have and Deborah Cort did spend a day or two or more consolidating all of the NESDEc information and giving that to the committee as well but, the committee decided not to use the information because the Master Plan was still in process.

The Capital Improvement Plan was presented to the Selectmen before the school board Master Plan was completed, but Nancy said the Master Plan has now been completed and they will also have Bruce Chakrin's Technology Plan as well as Jim Miner's plan for the Buildings and Grounds so they should be able to be full participants in the Capital Improvement Plan process when the meetings start again.

At the present time Nancy said she is attending the meetings of the Amherst Master Plan Committee, which is involved in preparing a comprehensive Master Plan for the Town of Amherst. Nancy said

it is the hope of the Committee to develop a process of inclusiveness where the residents, business owners, employees, and town employees have ample opportunity to express their views on town development.

Nancy said so far, they have developed a logo, a tag line, and sub-committees.

Nancy said the first of the three public meetings will be held at the Amherst Middle School on Tuesday, March 27, 2007, and she said anyone interested is welcome to come.

Dwight thanked Nancy for her update and asked board members if they had any questions for Nancy. Board members had none.

C. Amherst District NECAP Results – Dr. Jennings welcomed Nicole Heimarck back from maternity leave.

Nicole said at the SAU Board meeting she provided an overview of the District results and this week she would present an overview of the Amherst results.

Nicole emphasized to members of the board they have two years worth of data results and they should really look at three years worth of data to analyze for trends. Nicole said they should be able to make more solid curriculum and instruction decisions next year.

Nicole explained to members of the board the teachers were responsible for tracking only those students who Amherst was responsible for educating.

Nicole showed how teachers would be able to use the data. Nicole said they would use the data as a gateway for determining their weaknesses.

Nicole presented a slide, which detailed the Amherst 2005-2006 Comparison by Cohort Showing Statistical Significance in Reading and Math.

Nicole provided examples of results for the Amherst students in Mathematics in Grades 3 and 4 when the tests were administered in the Fall of 2005 and the Fall of 2006.

Nicole provided an example of the Item Analysis Report for the Amherst students in Grade 4, which was administered in the Fall of 2006.

Nicole said they want to talk through the Item Analysis Report with the teachers; however, they don't want to overburden the teachers with too many areas of improvement. They want to focus on Literacy.

Pam Dudoff asked if there was a way to take the results and map them to the curriculum and the different instructional strategies used to see if they are working or not. Nicole said she thinks this is possible, because it goes back to using multiple data points.

A slide was presented detailing the Amherst and State 2006 NECAP results. In Reading, Amherst was at 83% Proficient or Above, the state was at 71%; in Math, Amherst was at 80% Proficient or Above, the state was at 65%; in Writing, Amherst was at 57% Proficient or Above, the state was at 46%.

A comparison of the Amherst NECAP Results for 2005-2006 was provided. In Reading, Amherst was at 85% Proficient or Above in 2005 and in 2006, Amherst was at 83% Proficient or Above. In Math, Amherst was at 83% Proficient or Above in 2005 and in 2006, Amherst was at 80% Proficient or Above. In Reading, Amherst was at 64% Proficient or Above in 2005 and in 2006, Amherst was at 57% Proficient or Above. Amherst students saw the most significant decline based on the two-year comparison in Writing.

Nicole provided a comparison of the 2005 and 2006 Writing Results by Gender for grades 5 and 8. In 2005, for the 8th graders, 51% of the males scored Proficient or Above as compared to 71% of the females. The most noticeable difference is in 2006, for the 8th graders, only 35% of the males scored Proficient or Above as compared to 71% of the females scoring Proficient or Above.

Nicole said the problem is figuring out what information to look at in writing and determining how to use the results. The demographic results for Writing are provided only by Gender and Special Education. Nicole said the advice from the state is once they have three years worth of data, they should look at a three-year average, but prior, they should begin looking at trends.

Nicole provided a comparison of the 2005 and 2006 Writing Results by Special Education Identification for grades 5 and 8. In 2005, for the 8th graders with IEP's, 11% scored Proficient or Above as compared to the students coded as "Other", they scored 65% Proficient or Above. In 2006, for the 8th graders with IEP's,

18% scored Proficient or Above as compared to the students coded as “Other”, scoring 60% Proficient or Above.

Pam Dudoff asked Nicole if there was any data to compare to other districts to see if this kind of difference is typical or not. Nicole said that was an excellent question, they could use state reports within Gender and Special Education to determine if these results were typical.

Nicole provided examples of the Writing results for Amherst students in Grade 8 when the test was administered in the Fall of 2006.

Nicole provided an example of the Item Analysis Report for the Amherst students in Grade 5, which was administered in the Fall of 2006.

Nicole provided an example of a NECAP 2006 Released Item in Grade 5 Writing.

Board members were given a copy of the Rubric the State uses to score the Students for Grade 5 Writing.

Nicole concluded her presentation by presenting her Implications and Recommendations for Creating a More Data-driven School Culture.

- Best Practices for Using Data Strategically.
- Use a Data-based Inquiry Process for Decision-Making.
 - Set a Vision, Collect and Analyze Data, Identify Challenge Areas, Create a plan, Assess.
- Collect and Analyze Data from a Variety of Sources.
 - Triangulate between NWEA, NECAP and District/School-level assessments. Nicole said this is vitally important as we look at the results.
- Make it user-friendly.
 - Create a high ROI for teachers. (time/impact)
 - Put in place structures to create alignment and efficiency
 - Provide the necessary support and coaching to teachers.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Master Plan Committee Report – Nancy Head told members of the board the Master Plan Committee met on February 16, 2007, and February 20, 2007. Nancy said the discussion centered on the Building Committee process, and the makeup of the Master Plan Committee.

Nancy said the Publicity Committee has been very active with the following: hosting public forums, booklet developed by Deborah Cort and hosting coffees that had been set up for next week.

Nancy said attendance at the forums has been very sparse. Nancy said not a lot of people have signed up for the tours either.

Nancy provided a list of the tasks that still need to be completed:

1. Hiring an architect.
2. Charge to committee overseeing renovations.
3. Charge to Master Plan Committee.

Dwight said he understands the committee is very pleased with Marinase so far and believes they are the firm to get them up and running the fastest. Dwight said they have a proposal from Marinase and it is within the range they should be in.

Jim O'Mara asked why the project wasn't being competitively bid. Nancy Head said they have a relationship built up with Marinase and Marinase has a knowledge of all the buildings needs, a \$5 million dollar project is not considered a large project, and renovations are not a favorable project for architects to work on.

Dr. Jennings said the bidding process would take about three months.

Deborah Cort said by the time you competitively bid the project, you would probably end up with what you have already .

Dwight said he is usually very much in favor of competitive bidding however, in this case if it was done, they would miss out on getting any work done over the summer, which would result in delaying the project for a year.

B. Charge to Building Committee – Board members received a copy of the Amherst School Board Charge to the Building Committee.

- C. Recommendation to hire architect, contingent upon election
 - Board members received a copy of the Proposed Additions & Renovations at the Amherst Schools. The document was last revised on February 23, 2007.

The project total was \$5,009,000. Sitework and Demolition was estimated at a total cost of \$86,000; General Construction, \$3,838,000; Administrative Costs \$613,000; Asbestos Abatement Allowance \$70,000; Construction Contingency \$277,000; and the Owners Contingency \$125,000.

Jim O’Mara asked where the numbers came from for the Construction and Owners Contingency Fees. Nancy said the Construction Contingency amount was the figure Marinase wrote into their contract. Nancy said the Owners Contingency figure was the interest on the bond used in the Warrant Article.

- A. Vote – Recommendation for architectural contract (Phase I) **ACTION ITEMS**
 – A motion was made by Nancy Head and seconded by Jim O’Mara to hire Frank Marinase as the Architect to do the renovations for the Amherst Schools contingent upon the vote on March 13, 2007, with the fees totaling \$504,000 and the project total being a guaranteed maximum of \$5,009,000.

All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Jim O’Mara and seconded by Pam Dudoff to authorize the School Board Chair, Dwight Brew to enter into an agreement with Frank Marinase Architects contingent upon a favorable vote on March 13, 2007.

All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Jim O’Mara and seconded by Pam Dudoff to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II (a) By roll call vote, O’Mara – yes; Dudoff- yes; Brew- yes; Cort- yes; and Head – yes. The board entered into Non-Public at 8:15 p.m. **NON PUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3 II (a)**

Pam Dudoff moved, seconded by Nancy Head to come out of Non-Public session. By roll call vote, O’Mara – yes; Dudoff- yes; Brew- yes; Cort- yes; and Head – yes, the board voted to come out of non-public session at 9:05 p.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Deborah Cort. All members voted in favor of the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

**REVIEW OF
MEETING /
ADJOURNMENT**