

MINUTES
AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD
November 21, 2006
Amherst Middle School Music Room

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Chair Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:04 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, Kathy Skoglund, and Gerry St. Amand.

Ways and Means Committee: Peg Bennett, Jim Jacobs, CJ Butler

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

Minutes Recorder: Lyn Jennings

Dr. Jennings said she wanted to wish the staff a Happy Thanksgiving.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dwight Brew requested A. Minutes of October 24, 2006, and B. Manifests get pulled from the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Pam Dudoff and seconded by Deborah Cort to approve A. Minutes of October 24, 2006 as amended. All members of the board voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.

Board members were unclear as to what they were approving on the Amherst School District Manifest. (Under Consent Agenda Item B.) It included data from July 06 – Oct 06. Dwight Brew requested just providing the manifest data for the month that needed to be approved. The Manifest will be placed on the Boards next agenda for their approval.

C. The Treasurer's Cash Journal will also be placed on the Boards next agenda for their approval.

Since all items A. Minutes October 24, 2006, B. Manifest and C. Treasurer's Report were all pulled from the Consent Agenda there was nothing to approve under the Consent Agenda.

A. Public Time – Dwight Brew invited comments from the public however none were forthcoming.

**PUBLIC /
PRESENTATIONS**

B. Report on FY 2007 – Q1 Budget – Board members received copies of the Amherst School District FY 07 Fund 10 Revenue

Report dated 9/30/06.

Jim O'Mara asked if on future Revenue Reports the brackets could be removed from the report. Jim said it would make it a lot easier if the brackets were taken off of the report. He said to him it looks like a deficit even when it is not.

Betty said she would be happy to remove the brackets from the report in the future.

Board members received a copy of the Amherst School District FY 07 Fund 10 Monthly Budget Report at 9/30/06.

Betty Shankel said the Regular Education costs are less than budgeted because some teachers retired and the new teachers that were hired came in at a lower rate. Betty said Interscholastic Activities are on target and so are Guidance Services and Standardized Testing. Betty said she thinks there will be some savings in Benefits.

Betty Shankel presented the report titled Amherst School District Preliminary Budget Balance Analysis Deficit Accounts as of 9/30/06.

The last report Betty Shankel presented was the Amherst School District Operating Statement with Encumbrance for the Period 9/1/06 through 9/30/06 for Food Service. Betty said the Food Service is operating on target, currently they are operating at a deficit of \$10,000 however, she expects them to break even at the end of the year.

Dwight Brew said he thought the reports presented were very easy to follow, and he especially liked the revenue report.

Dwight said some of the grants they have can be drawn on over a few years and he asked if the Revenue Report shows the entire amount or the budgeted amount of the grant expected for the year.

Betty said the entire amount of the grant is shown in the Revenue Report the first year and the unspent amount is the amount that shows up on the following years revenue report.

CJ Butler said the reports were presented in a great format, very readable and she loved the subtotals. CJ asked if the transfers that were approved at the last meeting were incorporated in the report subtotals. Betty said the approved transfers would be reflected in the next quarterly report.

Betty said she wanted to thank Lisa Ambrosio for preparing these reports.

A. Master Plan Committee Recommendation - Dwight asked Nancy Head, the Master Plan Committee Chair to present the Master Plan Committee's recommendation.

**DISCUSSION/ACTION
ITEMS**

Nancy provided meeting attendees with a handout titled Master Plan Committee Proposal, which was dated November 20, 2006.

Nancy provided some background information on the project.

In March of 2005, following a vote of the town, which gave the Amherst School Board money for a master plan to address facility needs for the next ten years, a Master Plan Committee was formed. The architectural firm of Frank Marinace Architects was hired to complete a study of educational and building needs, and a demographic study was completed. The study was completed in September 2006 and a report was issued to the Amherst School Board.

The school board on November 2, 2006, voted to ask the Master Plan Committee for a recommendation on how to proceed.

Nancy Head summarized the Master Plan Committee's recommendations:

The Master Plan Committee is recommending phasing in Option 1b as presented in the Master Plan report.

A. Phase I:

1. Form three master plan subcommittees to report back to the Master Plan Committee with recommendations by September 2007.
 - a. Study SAU/Brick School Situation
 - b. Study Mont Vernon Situation
 - c. Further study the present building site at BLR and investigate possible new building sites.
2. Present a warrant article to the voters on the March 2007 ballot to fund all the renovations for Clark, Wilkins, and the Amherst Middle School as set forth

in the Master Plan Report. The total cost would be \$4.9 million.

Work would begin in the summer of 2007 and end the fall of 2008 with the least amount of impact on school functioning as possible. Two additional portables at Wilkins School would alleviate overcrowding caused by renovations beginning in September 2008 and continuing until additional new space is built.

B. Phase II:

Place a warrant article on the March 2008 ballot, which would fund renovations to the Brick School and the building of a new school. Construction would begin in spring 2009 and be completed by the fall of 2010.

Nancy Head provided a timeline for Phase I of Option 1B. Nancy emphasized the two portables needed in September of 2007 would be to alleviate the present overcrowding, not due to the proposed construction work. Nancy also stated one portable is equal to two classrooms.

Also presented was a Comparison Chart for Option 1B/Phased Option 1B for the March 2007 Warrant.

Option 1b:

\$20.8M (IF PASSED IN 2007; \$22.9M IF 2008)

Brick School	\$900K
Clark School	\$958K
Wilkins School	\$2.3M
AMS	\$637K
400 student BLR	\$16M

Pros:

- Smaller Price tag
- No interim portables; resulting in a savings of 4 current and 2 additional portables.
- The district owns the BLR property.
- Relieves overcrowding in all three schools.

Cons:

- Lack of Board consensus; lack of Ways & Means support.
- Perceived rushed time frame.
- Unresolved SAU and Mont Vernon issues.

Option 1b PHASED:

\$23.4M TOTAL COST

Brick School	\$990K
Clark School	\$1.2M
Wilkins School	\$2.89M
AMS	\$796K
400 student TBD	\$17.6M

Pros:

- Time to study issues: SAU and lease; Mont Vernon; building sites.
- Time to study demographics & actual enrollments.
- Time for public relations/educational campaign.
- Cost of Phase I to be on March 2007 Warrant is \$4.9M versus \$20.8M.

Cons:

- 25% increase in renovation costs.
- 1 year behind – costs to increase 8-10% per year on Brick School and new school.
- 2 additional portables from end of 2008 renovations to building of new school.
- Overcrowded conditions remain for an additional 3 years.

Following Nancy’s proposed recommendation from the Master Plan Committee Dwight Brew offered board members to make a motion.

A motion was made by Nancy Head and seconded by Deborah Cort for the school board to phase in Option 1b by presenting a warrant article to the voters on the March 2007 ballot to fund the renovations for Clark, Wilkins, and the Amherst Middle School as set forth in the Marinace Architect’s Master Plan Report with the total cost of \$4.9M.

Nancy presented the following advantages for this approach:

- There will be time and opportunity to settle the Mont Vernon and SAU issues before voting for a new school and Brick School renovations.
- There will be time to further investigate the Baboosic Lake Road site and any other possible sites. We are not tied into any one site.
- There will be time to publicize our space needs.
- There will be an opportunity to follow demographic trends for another year.
- Badly needed renovations will not be held up.
- The cost of \$4.9M will be easier on stressed taxpayers than \$20M.

Pam Dudoff thanked everyone from the Master Plan Committee. Pam recognized the amount of work that was done to come to this type of agreement. Pam asked if the \$4.9M included the cost of the portable classrooms.

Nancy Head said the \$4.9M did not include the cost of the portables that would be needed during the renovations in September of 2008.

Pam asked if the record could reflect board members understood they were planning and committing to add two portables in 2008 due to construction.

Deborah Cort said she was perfectly comfortable with the Master Plan Committee's recommendation of a two-phased approach. She said she thinks this is a very responsible way to move forward.

Jim O'Mara asked if Marinase Architects could in one sentence best describe what spending the \$4.9M would accomplish.

Frank Marinase of Marinase Architects said the \$4.9M would be used for infrastructure improvements, for a Middle School addition that will help alleviate their lack of space, and the renovations will also address safety code issues and accessibility code issues.

Pam Dudoff said the only reservation she had was that this was probably not the most cost effective approach.

Pam suggested Ways & Means offer their opinion before the school board voted on the motion.

Ways & Means asked why the cost of the project would increase by 25% if the project were done in two phases.

Frank Marinase said there are a number of issues that affect the costs of the project. Mr. Marinase explained one of the issues is the size of the project. Mr. Marinase explained the costs start to increase on the smaller projects. He said the markup on smaller projects is quite significant. Mr. Marinase said you still have overhead on a small project and it is actually more cost efficient to do one \$5M project rather than five \$1M projects.

Jim O'Mara asked if this 25% increase was industry wide or just specific to Amherst. Mr. Marinase explained it is industry wide, not just in Amherst.

CJ Butler asked what the affect would be on State Building Aid if the project were completed in phases rather than all at once.

Nancy Head said by doing the project in phases, it would not affect their State Building Aid. Nancy said the project cost must exceed 25% of the replacement cost of the building. Therefore, the Amherst Middle School would not qualify but Wilkins and Clark should qualify.

Jim Jacobs from the Ways & Means Committee said he attended the Master Plan Committee Meeting so most of his questions were answered already. Jim said the NESDEC study mentioned a lot more than \$4.9M be spent on the schools. Jim asked if the Marinase Firm did not include a lot of the NESDEC recommendations.

Tibor Farkas said some of the work had already been done or what was in the report was not accurate. Some of the NESDEC figures were a lot higher than actual costs.

Dwight Brew asked board members to vote on the motion as presented by Nancy Head.

Jim O'Mara asked if Nancy Head could repeat her motion.

Nancy stated her motion again - For the school board to phase in Option 1b by presenting a warrant article to the voters on the March

2007 ballot to fund the renovations for Clark, Wilkins, and the Amherst Middle School as set forth in the Marinace Architect's Master Plan Report with the total cost of \$4.9M.

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

Deborah Cort said she wanted to thank the Board for their support and thank Nancy Head for all her hours of work and support.

Nancy Head thanked members of the school board, Ways & Means, and the Administration for their support.

Dwight Brew thanked members of the Master Plan Committee as well as Frank Marinase and Tibor Farkas.

B. First Draft of FY08 Budget – Board members received Draft 1 of the FY08 Budget dated November 21, 2006.

Dr. Jennings said they included the assumptions from the last meeting.

Dr. Jennings said the budget does not include professional staff increases because they are still in negotiations therefore, they just include their current salaries.

The Master Plan proposal for the Amherst facilities will be a separate warrant.

Dr. Jennings summarized the Budget Process:

- All the administrators met together and separately with the superintendent and business administrator.
- The District and school budgets were developed.
- District costs were also allocated to the schools for future budget format. Dr. Jennings said the district costs are still separate but in the future they will divide the district cost between the two schools.

Dr. Jennings said the Budget was being presented in the following format:

- FY07 Budget

- Where we're starting from
- What we're doing with the current budget

- FY08 Budget

- Will include the proposed Key Programs
 - Line items associated with these

Dr. Jennings said the overall budget represents a 1.11% increase.

- District Budget = 4.46% increase
- Clark/Wilkins = .47% increase
- Middle School = .21% increase

Dr. Jennings explained the budget increase is entirely due to the changes in retirement.

Dr. Jennings highlighted the District Budget. She said the contribution to the State Retirement for Certified Staff has increased by 59.55% and the Non-Teacher increase is 20.80%.

Longevity/Early Retirement/Retirement Benefits have increased by 81.27%.

Gerry St. Amand presented the Clark & Wilkins Schools Budget for Fiscal Year 2008.

Gerry provided some highlights to the Current Budget.

- Addresses ongoing communications to early intervention, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and integrated arts.
- Focuses on appropriate instructional materials in all curriculum areas, including special subjects and special education. Gerry said he feels comfortable with what they've received this year.
- Continues our commitment to update and replace technology equipment and software.
- Meets the instructional needs of staff members and students.
- Provides for optimum student/teacher ratio at all grade levels and across curriculum areas. Gerry said this has been the best student/teacher ratio ever. Gerry said the suggested class size for Grades 1-2 are 18 students and for grades 3-4 it is 22 students. This is the first time they've achieved the recommended student/teacher ratios at all grade levels.

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Gerry highlighted the current enrollments and projections. Gerry said last year they budgeted for 830 students. They have 818 students enrolled, therefore they are 12 students under their projection.

Next year they are projecting 822 students. Gerry said they would have eight fourth grade classes next year.

Gerry highlighted Educational Programming for FY08.

- Implementation of new Social Studies curriculum, with textbook and supporting materials.
- Ongoing commitment to early literacy intervention. Gerry said the primary task of the Literacy Coach would be to work with the teachers on literacy instruction.
- The technology plan addresses replacement of equipment, software purchases, and expansion of portable laptop units.
- Separate line item for NWEA assessments, to be administered to grades two through four.

Gerry offered some Additional Considerations:

- New technology lines separate technology requests from other curriculum areas.
- Supplemental Instruction Account reflects actual costs of Peabody Mill Environmental Center programs without grants.
- Adjustments in maintenance line items reflect necessary repairs, replacements, and improvements.
- Budget includes funds to improve and maintain safety needs of each building. Gerry said they will be looking at ways to maintain safety specifically at the Portables.
- Overall reduction between Clark/Wilkins of one regular educator.
- Reduction of six special education para-educators at Clark/Wilkins. There will be a reduction of two para-educators at Clark and four at Wilkins.
- ASSA staff members in budget at negotiated CBA rate.
- “Angel Software” purchase includes all schools and districts.

Gerry provided the Staffing Comparisons for 2007 and 2008, with the following changes expected:

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In Non-Certified Special Education Staff they had 23.5 positions in 2007 and they are going to have 17.5 in 2008.

Gerry said they have 50.7 Regular Education Teachers in 2007 and in 2008 they will have 49.7. They are anticipating losing one full position in 2008.

Gerry summarized his presentation with the following information:

- His overall budgetary change is less than 1%.
- Overall reduction of one regular educator.
- Overall reduction of six para-educators.
- Purchase of new social studies textbooks and supporting materials in grades 2 to 4.
- Literacy coach to support all staff members.
- NWEA funds budgeted to support continuing initiative to assess all students in reading and mathematics.

Gerry said it is an on-going effort to consolidate staff resources as best they can to be more efficient.

Nancy Head asked what the focus of a Literacy Coach was if it wasn't Special Education.

Kathy Skoglund said the Literacy Coach is a resource to help classroom teachers expand their repertoire in instruction or reading.

Porter Dodge presented the Amherst Middle School Budget for FY08.

Porter thanked Mary Jennings and Betty Shankel for all the work they did on the budget.

Porter thanked Deb Martel for the tremendous work she did on the budget, he said he could not have put the budget together without all her help.

Porter provided some information about the Current Budget:

- Adequately supports curriculum needs.
- Adequately supports educational goals. Porter said it supports reading, writing, and literacy.
- Maintains student load of 80 or fewer per teacher.
- Provides full-time Special Education Coordinator. Porter

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said she's done an excellent job.

- Adequately supports Special Education needs.
- Expands library hours of operation. Porter said with the expanded library hours the library is back to being a library, a place where the kids can do their work again and it's very exciting.
- Expands NWEA testing to grades 6 and 8. Porter said the NWEA test is a great test; you are able to find out the true level of a child.
- Increases availability of technology for students and staff. Porter said the carts they requested last year are used all the time.
- Provides safe environment. Porter explained how the School Resource Officer is invaluable to the building. Porter said he is proud of the work Mike Knox does for the school.
- Reflects a reduction of two professional staff and four paraprofessional staff. Porter said they have done okay.

Porter provided the following School Budget Assumptions:

- Actual enrollment increased by 36 students (5%) for current year.
- Expectation is the actual enrollment for FY08 will be slightly over projected enrollment.
- Teaming structures will remain the same for FY08 with a student load of 80 students or fewer per teacher.
- Integrated Arts remain crucial to the Middle School philosophy of providing all students with a variety of hands-on learning experiences.

Porter said last year they budgeted for 809 students, they currently have 835 students enrolled. They have projected 825 students next year.

Porter highlighted the following Educational Programs:

- New: Early Integration Partnership Program (EIPP)
- Interscholastic: Fully funding all interscholastic sports, new Cheerleading Program. Porter said there are currently 300 kids in the Cheerleading Program. Porter recommended funding the cost of the interscholastic sports next year. He said the fundraising to aid in the cost of this program is a massive undertaking and it is a burden on he and Deb Martel.

- Student Activities: One new program – Theater Club
- NWEA: Testing of all students grades 5-8
- Social Studies Textbook Adoption
- Curriculum Revision & Professional Development – Porter said 10 teachers are scheduled to work on curriculum revision.
- Middle school evaluation by regional consortium team – Porter said this evaluation would indicate what they are doing well and what can be improved.
- Decrease of five Special Education Assistants – Porter said one Special Education Assistant will be moved to the EIPP Program, and they will be eliminating 3 Special Education Paraprofessional Aids and two grade level Special Education Assistants.

Porter highlighted other items the Middle School would like to accomplish during the 2008 Budget.

1. Technology – replace 20 desktop computers as part of five-year replacement cycle.
2. Utilize early intervention to reduce Special Education costs in the long term.
3. Make necessary repairs to building in plumbing and electrical.
4. Continue maintenance on utilities, elevator, equipment, and supplies.

Porter provided a Staffing Comparison for FY07 and FY08. Porter said they would have an overall reduction in staff costs. Based on Porters presentation of the proposed FY08 Budget, they are recommending Special Ed Teachers go from 10.8 in FY07 to 11.8 in FY08 and Special Ed Aides go from 30.6 in FY07 to 25.6 in FY08.

Porter provided a summary of the Amherst Middle School Budget. Porter said the current budget for FY07 represents a 4.42% increase over the previous year. (FY06) Porter said the proposed FY08 budget represents only a .21% increase over the current budget. Porter said with this .21% increase they are still able to include new programming – EIPP, the Social Studies Text Adoption Program as well as conduct a Middle School Evaluation.

Dwight Brew said it looks like the Administration took a good look at the budget from the ground up and he appreciates all their efforts.

Pam Dudoff said she was glad to see they were expanding the NWEA testing.

Pam commented that they should consider the weight of the Social Studies textbook when they were deciding on which book to use. Pam asked if they know what textbook they are going to use yet. Porter said they are not sure.

Jim O'Mara asked if the administration is considering a couple of other clubs that are not geared towards athletes. Porter said yes, they are trying to find niches for all of the students.

Pam Dudoff commented on a letter written by a student that was published in the newspaper. The student commented on the number of educational tests they are required to take. Pam asked if there was a way to cut down on the amount of tests being given and Porter said there are already discussions going on regarding this issue.

Dr. Jennings summarized the District Budget.

- Overall increase – 1.11%
- Addresses normal increases in cost of living; utilities and fixed costs
- Provides for continued educational improvements
- Supports District and SAU goals
 - Literacy Initiative
 - Phased facility, technology and capital plans

Dr. Jennings thanked the Administrators for all their hard work on putting the budget together.

C. Preliminary Approval of June 2008 Early Retirement Requests - Board members received a memo dated November 17, 2006 regarding Early Retirement. Dr. Jennings asked board members to refer to page two of the handout, which was sorted by location.

In the memo, Dr. Jennings notified the Amherst Board that seven teachers had applied for early retirement, six of which are eligible according to the collective bargaining agreement.

Board members received the names of those eligible for this benefit, their years of service in Amherst, their ages, and the costs associated with each retirement.

Dr. Jennings said per the contract, they must notify each applicant by January 15, 2007 whether or not the retirement has been granted.

Dr. Jennings said the budget they presented at tonight's board meeting includes five teachers for retirement. Dr. Jennings said the budget includes what we are required to do, accept 5 employees for retirement. Dr. Jennings asked if the board wanted to go over and above what is required. Board members agreed to leave the budget as presented.

Board members were asked to review the materials provided by Dr. Jennings and this topic would be on the next agenda for the board's approval.

D. Amherst School District Goals – Dr. Jennings said she was supposed to meet with Pam Dudoff and Deborah Cort to go over the Amherst School Board Goals however they did not get to it.

Deborah Cort, Dr. Jennings and Pam Dudoff will get together prior to the next school board meeting on December 7, 2006, to discuss the Amherst School Board goals.

Pam Dudoff suggested under Goal #1 – Amherst School Board focus to be more policy centered they include work on getting policies in order by hiring the NHSBA to review the current policies.

Dwight asked Pam and Deborah to put together a proposal to present to the board on December 7, 2006, which would detail what the NHSBA could do as it related to reviewing the board policies and the cost.

It was agreed at the next board meeting, board members would be prepared to discuss the Amherst School Board Goals. Board members are welcome to provide Board Pursuits prior to the meeting if they have any.

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 (c).

**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 8:15 p.m.

The board discussed a personnel issue.

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A motion to come out of non-public session was made by Jim O'Mara and seconded by Deborah Cort.

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 8:35 p.m.

Nancy Head asked if it would be okay for the Master Plan Committee to have an Open House in the Community Room during the Christmas Tree Lighting on December 10, 2006. Nancy said the Committee would be available to discuss the details of the proposed \$4.9M in renovations for Clark, Wilkins, and the Amherst Middle School. **OTHER**

Board members thought this would be a good idea to have the Master Plan Committee at the Holiday Open House.

Motion to adjourn made by Nancy Head and seconded by Pam Dudoff. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

**REVIEW OF
MEETING /
ADJOURNMENT**