

AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD

June 4, 2009

FINAL MINUTES

Chairman Head opened the public hearing at 6:12 p.m. and noted that Dr. Jennings was unable to attend the meeting and Ms. Heimarck, Ms. Shankel, and Ms. Sparks are representing the SAU this evening.

I. PUBLIC HEARING

A. To accept donation – PTA Funds

Khrista Hanks, of the Amherst PTA, appeared before the Board to present the 2009 spring teacher and school grants. She explained that the Amherst PTA is a 650 member organization founded in 1931 that is dedicated to enriching the education of Amherst students. She noted that this year the PTA has provided curriculum enrichment programs, a number of family and student events, and the spring grants. She explained that the PTA invites the teachers to apply for grants and then a committee reviews the applications and prepares recommendations, which are then presented to and voted on by the general membership. Ms. Hanks stated that that this year they had more than \$41,000 in requests and were able to provide 25 grants totaling \$13,720. She reviewed the criteria the group uses for evaluating the requests including that the tool requested be for broad usage, supplemental in nature, and non-perpetual. Ms. Hank then reviewed the chosen grant winners' requests. The Board thanked the PTA and Ms. Hanks thanked the community for their generosity.

B. To accept funds through The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Ms. Sparks explained that each district needs to have a public hearing to discuss and accept the funds from the American Recovery and Investment Act. Ms. Sparks reviewed the guiding principals for the ARRA and the different types of ARRA grants including Special Education (IDEA) from which the Amherst School District will receive a total of \$338,194. She explained that the funding requires a public hearing and more accountability. She further explained that the district plans for the funding include assistive technology, professional development, transition coordinators and job developers, expanding the availability and range of inclusive placements, and targeting Educational Disability AYP interventions. She noted that the funds must be obligated by September 30, 2011 and spent by December 30, 2011. She also noted the any members of the public can go to the ARRA Act website for more information.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Ms. Sparks confirmed that the Amherst

district will be receiving \$338,000 but they have to fill out a grant request to access the funds. She stated that she could have the application 80-90% complete at the next meeting for the Board to review but she is still waiting for information from the state in order to complete the application fully.

Chairman Head closed the public hearing at 6:41 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING

Chairman Head called the regular portion of the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Present

ATTENDANCE

Amherst School Board: Dwight Brew, Peg Bennett (arrived at 6:50), Peter Maresco, Rob Graybill and Nancy Head.

Administrative Team: Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Elizabeth Shankel, Renee Sparks, and Nicole Heimark.

Minutes Recorder: Heather Loewy Nichols

Chairman Head called for public comment and heard none.

II. PUBLIC TIME

A. Principals' Reports

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Head noted that the Board received the principals' reports in their packets and asked if there were any comments or questions and heard none.

In response to a question from Chairman Head, the Board asked that the minutes of May 7, 2009 and the retirement item be removed from the consent agenda.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

A MOTION was made by Mr. Graybill and SECONDED by Mr. Brew to approve the consent agenda as follows:

B. Treasurer's Report – April 2009

C. Donations to General Fund

1. Garden Club

2. PTA Grants

D. Donations to the Activity Fund

1. AMS Marching Band

Voting: 4 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A. Minutes

The minutes were accepted as corrected.

E. Rescind Retirement

In response to a question from Mr. Maresco, Mr. Dodge stated that they were in

the process of having interviews to fill the position but it has not been filled yet.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Maresco and SECONDED by Mr. Brew to rescind the retirement request of Carolyn Bowman.

Voting: 4 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

A. FY09 Assessment of Goals

Ms. Heimarck explained that the district is ending year two of a five year strategic plan with the mission of engaging, challenging, and supporting all learners. She stated that year one was a professional development year and in year two the district switched from focusing on professional development to focusing on school wide achievement.

Ms. Heimarck explained that the district uses NWEA to test the instructional level of students and create goals for the students. She stated that the goals need to be ambitious and achievable. She reviewed a national norming chart prepared by NWEA noting that grade 2 score in the 75th percentile and grade 8 scored in the 95th percentile nationwide for achieved target growth in reading. She reviewed a similar chart for math noting that grade 3 scored in the 50th percentile and grade 5 scored between the 60th and 70th percentile nationwide for achieved target growth in math. She noted that the NWEA norming study is useful information for establishing year 3 goals. Ms. Heimarck then opened the floor to the Clark/Wilkins literacy team.

1. Clark/Wilkins

Mr. St.Amand introduced the literacy team including himself, Kathleen McIntyre, Susan Blair, Franna Eaton, Amy Anson, Jen Eccleston, Meg Trainor, and Becky Ladeau. Mr. St. Amand explained that in year 2 of the strategic plan 80% of students in Kindergarten and first grade reached their DIBELS growth benchmark and 60% of students in grades 2 through 4 reached their NWEA target growth in reading and 66% of students reached their target growth in math. He then compared 2007-2008 scores to 2008-2009 scores noting that all areas showed and increase in growth. Mr. St. Amand then reviewed a graph that broke down the percentage of students by grade that reached their target growth in reading noting that Wilkins hit its goal for growth. He also showed a graph charting the overall growth in reading versus target growth, per grade in Wilkins, noting that many more students made overall growth. This was also the case in math.

Moving forward, Mr. St. Amand, stated that the schools will continue their collection and analysis of data, response to intervention team, coaching, targeted

V. PRESENTATIONS

professional learning, and increased district wide collection of data. He also noted that the use of technology has expedited the placement of students. He also stated that the next steps include transitioning from a literacy leadership team to an instructional leadership team, strengthening the knowledge of response to intervention, continuing to track and analyze data to inform instruction, and planning student center, goal driven professional learning opportunities for all the staff.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, the Math Coach stated that the students who didn't make their target were across the spectrum and in many instances the children who did not reach their target were children who had already scored high in the fall.

In response to a question from Ms. Head, Ms. Eccleston explained that the test is individualized.

Mr. St. Amand noted that some of the kids who made the greatest jumps were receiving significant interventions.

In response to a question from Ms. Head, Mr. St. Amand explained that flexible grouping will be mandatory in grades 1 through 4 and also next year the third and fourth grade will not take the NWEA in the fall due to over testing but grade 2 will still take a fall NWEA.

In response to a question from Mr. Graybill, Ms. Blair explained that the staff has started to put together a spread sheet so there will be a data capture for all students in Kindergarten through fourth grade including NWEA scores, reading levels, math levels, and DIBELS scores. She explained that the spreadsheet will be used while making placement decisions and every classroom teacher will get the spreadsheet when the placement is finalized.

Ms. Heimark noted that she has received many requests from middle school teachers for summer work around learning about data analysis.

In response to a question from Ms. Head, Ms. Blair stated that the district has summer programs for children at risk for summer knowledge loss.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Ms. Heimarck stated that nationally there is conflicting data on whether children regress in the summer.

2. Middle School

Mary Westwater and Patty Wons appeared before the Board and explained that in year 2 of the strategic plan the goal was that 65% of the middle school

students met their reading growth targets and 66% of the students did so. They presented a break down by grade to the Board. Ms. Westwater noted that the middle school students were able to get instant feedback when taking the NWEA which made the testing process more meaningful. Ms. Wons noted that she reviewed the scores with the students individually and worked on setting goals for the June testing.

Mr. Dodge noted that 64% of the students reached or exceeded their target growth in math although there was not math goal established in the school goals. He then broke down the percentage of students who reached their target growth per grade noting that the NWEA representative stated that 50% of students making their growth was a good goal to start with. He also noted that the staff has taken the data seriously and are getting better at using it to inform their instruction and that they will be able to collaborate more due to the new schedule.

Ms. Wons reviewed a graph illustrating the percentage of students who achieved target growth versus those who achieved overall growth noting that 76% of the students showed growth in reading and 92% showed overall growth in math.

Ms. Westwater reviewed the tools used this year to achieve the goal including the literacy leadership team, literacy coordinator, and professional development.

Ms. Wons reviewed the next steps including formulation the year three goal, continuing to analyze data, Response to Intervention, staff development, and differentiated planning.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Ms. Heimarck explained that the targets are on the spring report cards but they are not printed on the fall reports however some staff did share that information with parents and the administration has discussed making the scores more available for grade two through ten.

In response to a question from Ms. Head, Ms. Wons explained that there is a growth calculator built into the test based on the student's RIT score. Ms. Heimarck noted that all the target scores are determined by NWEA in accordance with their normed data which is recalculated every three years. She also noted that NWEA has the largest normative pool beyond the PSAT and SAT data.

In response to a question from Mr. Maresco, Ms. Westwater stated that the issue with the NECAPs is timing of the test for instance NECAPs are taken in

October, the school gets the results later and they are not measured the same way. Ms. Heimarck cautioned that the district has to be careful how much weight is put into each assessment. She further explained that one has to triangulate different points of data and different types of assessment and it is important to have different types of tests to get a broader picture of the student.

Ms. Head thanked the teams for their work.

B. FY09 Budget Surplus

Ms. Shankel stated that last month she presented the quarterly report which showed that the district should have \$400,000 in undesignated fund balance at the end of the year but since then the number has increased to \$460,000. She further explained that during the budget season the staff and Board struggled to create a budget for next year that would meet the needs of the children but did not tax the citizens to a great degree. She noted that this required a lot of cuts and at this time she is asking for the Board to re-considering some items.

Bruce reviewed a list of technology that was cut from the 2010 budget and two new requests including new desktops for a computer lab that was built in February. He explained that it is more efficient to bring students into a fixed lab and with the new schedule moving to a full technology integration model there will be less computer instruction and more activities based on core curriculum. He explained that one of the items is a wireless control for Clark/Wilkins.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Bruce stated that he thinks the wireless access points will cover all of Clark and Wilkins but if they don't another can be added next year.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Bruce stated that there are still classrooms without carts.

In response to a question from Mr. Graybill, Bruce stated that all the technology items originally cut from the budget are included in this request.

In response to a question from Ms. Head, Bruce stated that there are five carts currently one of which only has 16 computers.

Ms. Heimarck noted that next year technology will be fully integrated in the curriculum and this year the computer room is booked 65% in a non fully integrated model. She also noted that carts are good for research based projects but more application based work is better done in the computer lab.

Jim Minor reviewed a list of maintenance repairs that were cut from the budget

originally.

In response to a question from Mr. Graybill, Mr. Minor explained that the district took out a \$4 million bond for the renovation but they have to spend \$5 million in order to qualify for the 40% state aide. So far they have spent an extra \$750,000 towards the difference. These projects would also qualify. Ms. Head explained that it was part of the original master plan; get a bond for \$4 million and find the other items to fund out of surplus funds.

In response to a question about Ms. Head, Mr. Minor explained that he is proposing sealing cracks and resealing the surface of the pavement around the back of the elementary school by the playground as this was the only area that was not repaved.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Minor explained that when the last snow guards were installed a few areas were missed such as back by the boiler room.

In response to a question from Mr. Maresco, Ms. Shankel explained that the list presented this evening includes all the projects cuts from the 2010 budget for maintenance and technology.

Ms. Heimark noted that there were also curriculum projects cut but the administration did not feel that these needed to be brought to the board as well.

In response to a request from Mr. Brew, Ms. Shankel stated that she will bring a new calculation to the next meeting.

A. Master Plan

1. AMS Guaranteed Maximum Price

Mr. Minor explained that in March the Board approved the Phase II guaranteed maximum price for Clark and Wilkins and now he is looking for approval of the guaranteed maximum price for the middle school in the amount of \$130,500. He reviewed with the Board the reasons why the price was higher than originally budgeted; mainly due to structural deficiencies and structural improvements necessary to handle the new equipment. He stated that he feels that the \$8,700 difference is well justified and since there is currently a surplus of \$13,526 the increase can be easily absorbed.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Maresco and SECONDED by Mr. Graybill to accept the guaranteed maximum price for the Amherst Middle School of

VI. ACTION ITEMS

\$130,500.

Voting: 5 ayes; motion carried unanimously.

2. Conversion Costs – Natural Gas

Mr. Minor presented a plan to the Board to convert the boilers to natural gas. He stated that he has not considered it in the past because he thought running the line would be too much but National Grid will install the gas line at no charge and will give the district \$5,000 to supplement the conversion costs. He explained that this change would make a 10% energy reduction as well as the schools CO2 emissions by 7%. He also noted that the market stability will allow the Board to lock in three or four year contracts. He reviewed the comparisons of oil vs. natural gas costs, the benefits, and two cost options, one which replaces both boilers and converts water to gas water heating for \$160,000 and the second which replaces one boiler and converts another boiler for back up use and converts to gas water heating for \$116,000. He noted that the remaining phase I and II contingency is \$265,040 which would still leave \$100,000 after the boiler conversion.

In response to a question from Mr. Graybill, Mr. Minor stated that there is no gas line to Clark or Wilkins but the biggest consumers would be gas.

In response to a question from Mr. Brew, Mr. Minor stated that it would take less than 10 years to see the investment back as the district would probably save \$15,000 a year.

Mr. Brew noted that he is interested in some data showing the payback time.

The board decided to wait until their June 22nd meeting to make a decision.

A. Non-public Session RSA 91- A:II (a)

A MOTION was made by Ms. Bennett and SECONDED by Mr. Graybill to enter into non public session.

Voting: 4 ayes motion carried unanimously.

The Board went into non-public at 8:38 p.m. Porter Dodge presented Kristie Sanfacon-Gray for the position of Family & Consumer Science Teacher. Porter explained her credentials and positive attitude make her an excellent fit for this position.

Mr. Brew motioned to come out of non-public, which was seconded by Ms. Bennett. The Board voted to come out of non-public at 8:44 p.m.

Mr. Brew made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to

**VII. NON-PUBLIC
SESSION RSA
91-A: II (a)**

VIII. Professional

hire Kristie Sanfacon-Gray for the position of Family & Consumer Science Teacher. Ms. Bennett seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion unanimously.

Nominations

Mr. Graybill motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Brew. The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

**IX. REVIEW OF
MEETING/
ADJOURN**