

1 **Amherst School Board Meeting**
2 **Thursday, April 19, 2011**
3
4

5 **Attendance**
6

7 Amherst School Board:

8 Peter Maresco, Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, James Manning, Andrew Zell
9

10 Administrative Team:

11 Nicole Heimarck, Elizabeth Shankel, Porter Dodge, Gerry St. Amand, Renea Sparks,
12 Patty Wons
13

14 Minutes Taker

15 Beth Penney till 7:50pm; Lucienne Foulks from 7:50pm till the end of the meeting.
16

17 **Call to Order**

Call to Order

18
19 Ms. Bennett called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.
20

Announcements

21 **Announcements**
22

23 Principal's Report
24

25 Ms. Foulks asked for clarification on how kids can get into advanced math groups.
26

27 Mr. Dodge stated that the presentation by SHS to parents showed the points at
28 which kids could advance in math.
29

30 Ms. Bennett asked for the cultural exchange program to be explained in more detail.
31

32 Mr. Dodge stated that Dr. Ken Hood approached him because in years past AMS had
33 an exchange program with Bangkok, Thailand. Dr. Hood was wondering if the school
34 was willing to have a program again. Mr. Dodge stated that AMS was not ready as a
35 school, but two teachers are planning on running the program independently this
36 summer. They will be paying for the use of the school and giving out information to
37 students to bring 30 kids from China to the US. The previous exchange to Thailand
38 was great. Kids never went to Thailand, but teachers went including Peter
39 Desnoyers. The program will be in July.
40

41 Ms. Bennet asked Mr. St. Amand about the Pioneer program.
42

43 Mr. St. Amand stated that the program is a husband and wife that present about
44 colonial artifacts and times. The presentation ties into the history of Amherst unit.
45
46

47 Committee Reports

48

49 Ms. Bennett read off the new Committee assignments.

50

51 Reports

Reports

52

53 SRO Position at AMS

54

55 Dr. Jennings asked for clarification from the Amherst Police Department after the
56 last school board meeting where Mr. Dodge announced the SRO, Officer Knox, may
57 be reassigned and AMS will have a new SRO next year.

58

59 Dr. Jennings stated that the school has an agreement with the police department for
60 how the SRO position would be staffed.

61

62 Dr. Jennings read a letter from the Chief of Police dated April 13th clarifying his
63 decision to open up the SRO position.

64

65 Dr. Jennings stated that the agreement states that the Chief of Police gives the
66 Principal a list of candidates from the department. Those candidates are
67 interviewed by administration, the principal, and others designated to the
68 committee.

69

70 Mr. Zell asked why is the SRO being replaced now.

71

72 Dr. Jennings stated that there is nothing in the agreement with the school about
73 timing.

74

75 Mr. Manning asked what happens if Officer Knox is not on the list selected by the
76 police department. He also stated that the SRO position is 50% funded by the
77 schools, so the school and board should have some say.

78

79 Dr. Jennings stated that the agreement states that the school can choose amongst
80 the candidates brought forward by the police department.

81

82 Ms. Foulks stated that the candidates need a certain skill set.

83

84 Mr. Manning asked if the list of people is not as qualified as Officer Knox then why
85 would you replace him.

86

87 Ms. Foulks stated that the police chief might be considering other issues with in the
88 department.

89

90 Mr. Manning stated that he would like to see the Chief of Police come to talk to the
91 school board.

92

93 Mr. Zell agreed because the board needs to understand why the replacement is
94 happening.

95
96 Ms. Foulks stated that the board might be putting the cart before horse because no
97 one has seen the list of candidates.

98
99 Mr. Dodge stated that the Chief of Police and the Principal would work in
100 collaboration for the SRO position.

101

102 **Public Time**

Public Time

103

104 Karen Tuthill asked why fix something that is not broken and if Dr.
105 Jennings was supporting this replacement.

106

107 Dr. Jennings stated that she does not know why the police are choosing to do this
108 now. There could be a lot of things including union concerns or cyclic rotation of
109 positions, she just does not know. Dr. Jennings stated that she is very
110 supportive of Officer Knox.

111

112 Ms. Tuthill stated that after 8 yrs of exemplary performance why would they replace
113 him.

114

115 Ms. Tuthill summarized an email from the Chief of Police that stated no disciplinary
116 actions had been taken toward Officer Knox and that Officer Knox remained as the
117 SRO for so long because of his great performance.

118

119 Mr. Dodge stated that he is very supportive of Officer Knox and fully supports
120 having him there. Mr. Dodge made it very clear to the Chief of Police that he wants
121 to keep Officer Knox in the school.

122

123 Ms. Tuthill read a statement from the public: The statement advocated for having a
124 SRO at AMS and having Mike Knox stay in that position. The statement reviewed all
125 of the roles Officer Knox fulfills at AMS. The statement also reviewed the courses
126 and work Officer Knox has taken and done to better himself in that role. The
127 statement also stated that a new officer would have to start at square one.

128

129 Ms. Tuthill stated that in this community kids do not think that police officers are
130 the bad guys because of the hard work Officer Knox and Officer Smith have done in
131 the schools.

132

133 Clare Foley, a student, stated that Officer Knox is a necessity to our school. He is the
134 right balance of friend and teacher. She also stated that his removal now would be
135 depriving the 7th grade Mont Vernon students because they would only get to know
136 him this year.

137

138 Tim, a student, stated he was comfortable with Officer Knox. He had heard stories
139 from his older siblings about Officer Knox. Officer Knox is not only a law
140 enforcement agent, but also a friend. A relationship with a new officer would not be
141 as strong.
142

143 Amber Swenson stated that she understands having a new police officer allows
144 children to grow new relationships with more officers in town, but why fix
145 something that is not broken. Officer Knox is a wonderful asset for kids, teachers
146 and parents. Kids continue to have a relationship with Officer Knox after leaving
147 AMS. If Officer Knox enjoys and believes in the position he should not have to leave.
148

149 Peter Desnoyers stated that the board is questioning the process and he is too. The
150 school pays half the salary of the SRO and the school should be involved in more of
151 the process. Mr. Desnoyers stated that he publicly apposed the SRO and having a
152 gun at the school at first, but the Mike Knox does an excellent job. Mike Knox needs
153 to stay.
154

155 Vanessa Foley stated the school is paying half the SRO's salary. She asked why the
156 board does not know the process. She stated the reasoning for the replacement of
157 Officer Knox has not been clearly articulated. She asked if the structure of the police
158 department changing is at the sacrifice of our kids. She stated that Mike Knox does
159 an excellent job.
160

161 Debbie Curran, teacher at AMS, stated she was on the committee that hired Mike
162 Knox, and she was not there willingly. From day one, Ms. Curran stated, that she
163 was impressed with Mike Knox and after 6 months she was very impressed. Ms.
164 Curran stated that a person couldn't work with middle school kids unless they have
165 great ability and charisma. Mike has shown his ability to relate to children and adapt
166 curriculum to fit our children's needs. She stated that Officer Knox has his class in
167 her room and that she watches him everyday and he is amazing. Ms. Curran stated
168 that it is Chief Lyons' decision, but she would hate to see him make the wrong
169 decision.
170

171 Debbie Hinrichs, teacher at AMS, stated that she is concerned because this seems
172 like an arbitrary decision to suddenly review the process and suddenly make a
173 change in procedure. She stated that 8 yrs has passed and that the good of the
174 Police department may not be for the good of the community. The Chief of Police is
175 under estimating the connections these officers have with our children. Ms.
176 Hinrichs asked would the younger children be as safe at AMS and SHS with new
177 officers.
178

179 Ms. Tuthill asked would Chief Lyons speak publically to us.
180

181 Dr. Jennings stated that Chief Lyons was invited tonight and that in order to speak to
182 Chief Lyons people should go through the town selectmen.
183

184 Mr. Maresco asked when can the board expect answers from the Chief of Police and
185 that the board needs to know soon. Mr. Maresco would also like to know what
186 criteria are used for the selection of the candidates for the SRO position and why is
187 this happening now; what is the timeline for this process.

188

189 Mr. Dodge stated that it is Officer Knox's wish to stay at AMS.

190

191 Ms. Foulks stated Mr. Dodge and Chief Lyons should have a conversation about
192 setting up a clearer agreement or expectations.

193

194 Debbie Curran stated that it is her understanding that the SRO position is no longer
195 Officer Knox's and that he has to reapply and be allowed to reapply. Officer Knox
196 must be nominated by the Chief and must be allowed to apply by the Chief.

197

198 Dave Cates stated that Chief has his own agenda and the school board's agenda is to
199 do what is right for kids.

200

201 Dr. Jennings stated that she would ask for the criteria used to select candidates for
202 the SRO position and for clarification as to why the Chief is choosing to move Officer
203 Knox.

204

205 Mr. Manning stated that the board needs more transparency from the Chief of
206 Police.

207

208 **Consent Agenda**

Consent Agenda

209

210 Mr. Maresco asked to pull the March 24th minutes.

211

212 Ms. Bennett asked to pull the renewal rates.

213

214 **Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda containing the**
215 **Treasures report and the Manifest. Mr. Zell seconded the motion and the vote**
216 **was unanimous.**

217

218 Mr. Maresco asked for clarification about the movement of math positions.

219

220 No changes were made to the March 24th minutes.

221

222 Ms. Bennett asked if the SAU has worked with the new company before and if they
223 would provide good service.

224

225 Ms. Shankel stated that when this went out to bid the SAU looked at rates and at
226 good service. The SAU asked for references and recommendations also.

227

228 Ms. Bennett asked about the 3-year rate guarantee.

229

230 Ms. Shankel stated that this is not unusual and that the SAU was not able to get
231 anything like this last time unless the SAU paid a high premium.

232
233 Mr. Zell stated that this is a good company.

234
235 **Mr. Zell made a motion accept the March 24th minutes and the Renewal Rates.**
236 **Mr. Manning seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

237
238 **Presentations** **Presentations**

239
240 Core and More Period at AMS

241
242 Mr. Dodge stated that the evolution of this program came when AMS administrators
243 and teachers visited a spotlight school in Barrington, Rhode Island. The idea was to
244 not pull students out of academics or out of Integrated Arts, but to have a 40 min.
245 block called Core and More. This block is not a study hall or a waste of time. It was
246 hard at first to treat this block as an academic period. This block continues to be a
247 work in progress, but is much more focused now. This year the focus is on Math.
248 Teachers offer students smaller focused interventions or enrichment for other
249 students. This block actively engages kids and is focused intervention for learning.
250 For students not needing specialized instruction a variety of things are done during
251 this time. The block is used for extending the current curriculum and no new
252 material can be introduced so students who are pulled out are not missing anything.
253 This block also offers time for literacy coaches to get into classes to work with
254 teachers and do smaller group work that focuses on reading, writing, and
255 comprehension skills. Core and More is a work in progress to give all students
256 enrichment.

257
258 The board discussed with Mr. Dodge their concerns that the Core and More block is
259 good for students who are struggling, but may not be time well spent if the students
260 who are not struggling. The board was glad to hear the time was interactive and not
261 just worksheet based. The board discussed how does the school determine if the
262 Core and More block is working and how this idea came about. Mr. Dodge continued
263 to explain the evolution of the Core and More block and how they are using it to
264 work on integrating curriculum, support students, and address the SINY
265 designation. The board asked for more standardization with how the teachers use
266 the Core and More blocks.

267
268 Ms. Wons stated that she could understand from the board's point of view. AMS has
269 discussed creating norms for Core and More, but there are a lot of struggles. For
270 example, consistency of when students are in the classroom is hard. AMS needs to
271 have a core standard program no matter the number of days kids are in the
272 classroom and the administration needs to do a better job supporting teachers in
273 prepping this block.

274
275

276 Ms. Wons and the board discussed using NEWA test score to assess the success of
277 the Core and More blocks for certain teachers. They also discussed how continued
278 collaborative dialogue between teachers helps teachers to be reflective, move
279 students forward and improve a teacher's practices.

280

281 Ms. Foulks gave a plug for the summer mathematics institute, which is an
282 opportunity given to all teachers. The institute is a week with an international
283 leader in mathematics. She hopes people attend because teachers can get PD hours
284 and the institute is free

285

286 The board and Ms. Wons discussed why and how the Core and More blocks are used
287 in the fall for NECAP testing preparation. They discussed how the preparation was
288 like giving practice tests so students learn and better understand how to take the
289 tests and what types of questions will be asked. They do this to give students
290 confidence.

291

292 Mr. Zell stressed that he is concerned that the administration is not measuring the
293 success of the Core and More program. He would like to see a plan in place to better
294 determine if the program is fixing the places AMS is struggling with.

295

296 Ms. Wons stated that the school would be working this summer on a baseline and
297 establishing some standards for the program.

298

299 The board and Ms. Heimarck discussed the state testing and how the New
300 Hampshire Board of Education is working to develop a fairer model at looking at
301 accountability rather than testing. The federal government has not approved the
302 state's ideas so far.

303

304 Ms. Bennett stated that she thinks Core and More can be remedial and she would
305 like to see more enrichment. She would also like to see students on the committee
306 reviewing the program.

307

308 Teacher Evaluations

309

310 Dr. Jennings gave an overview of how evaluations are done at AMS and
311 Clark/Wilkins. The only evaluators are principals and assistant principals.
312 Evaluations are done every 3 years for tenured teachers and 2 to 3 times per year for
313 non-tenured teachers. Having a preconference, the observation, a post
314 conference, a formative evaluation, and a summative evaluation are the different
315 parts of each evaluation.

316

317 Dr. Jennings showed the forms used for the different schools. Supervision and a
318 walk through are also done and there are checklists used for these.

319

320 Dr. Jennings reviewed the load on all principals and assistant principals.

321

322 A discussion ensued about the details of a walk through and what is on the checklist.
323
324 Mr. Manning asked how many times per year teacher get feedback.
325
326 Mr. St. Amand stated 2 to 4 times per year.
327
328 Mr. Manning asked if this was enough feedback to help teachers move students
329 forward.
330
331 A discussion ensued about how difficult it is to make time to get into classrooms, the
332 amount of time spent on disciplinary actions, and the roles of the new two assistant
333 principals. The board and the principals discussed what other schools do, like
334 blocking out two days a week to do formal and informal evaluations. Mr. Dodge and
335 Mr. St. Amand stressed how they both think more feedback for teachers is need and
336 how they would love to spend more time in classrooms.
337
338 Dr. Jennings stated that she believes this is an issue in all schools and that
339 evaluations are tied to threatening situations that do not lead to better teaching.
340 She stated that lots of people could be supervisors. This is an issue that the entire
341 SAU will be discussing.
342
343 **7:50pm Ms. Foulks took over taking the minutes for the meeting.**
344
345 Peter Maresco commented that he feels that Peter Warburton is going to be a good
346 resource to our administrators in reference to this area.
347
348 Gerry St. Amand stated that we are on the same page with instructional practices
349 but we need to get in and observe what is happening in math instruction.
350
351 Jim Manning stated that observations should not be a threatening time. We pay our
352 teachers well in this community and the pay level should reflect the performance of
353 our teachers.
354
355 Nicole Heimarck made two points -
356 We provide best practice of providing feedback with kids and we should do the
357 same with staff.
358 Additionally, while we are in math program reveiw mode, adult learning needs to
359 occur in teachers and administrators. We need to understand the math content as
360 well as a staff. This becomes more challenging as we move through our K-12 grades.
361
362 Lucienne Foulks asked why mastery of subject matter not part of the evaluation
363 checklist.
364 Porter said it isn't but it could be.
365

366 Mary Jennings mentioned the Obama money that is out there for districts where
367 teacher assessments reflect student performance.

368
369 We will be looking at this in a future meeting before the SAU because this subject
370 impacts K-12.

371
372 FY11 Quarterly Report

373
374 Betty Shankel reported that there is a change in revenue section of budget. The
375 interest revenue is lower than anticipated and the cat aide will be higher than
376 anticipated.

377
378 It is \$10,000 shorter than anticipated in revenue.

379
380 On the expenditure side, we have savings in professional services, salaries, benefits
381 etc.

382
383 We are looking at revenue of \$70K from capital reserve fund. This is remaining
384 interest and it will be returned to taxpayers.

385
386 Betty mentioned that a spending freeze was put into place on all spending outside of
387 necessities and we don't know what that savings will look like yet.

388
389 Drew Zell requested that administrators communicate to teachers that talking to
390 students about the freeze on spending is not necessary or appropriate.

391
392 AYP
393 Nicole gave a presentation on AYP and what the fundamentals of this are.
394 See handout provided by Nicole.

395
396 **Action Items** **Action Items**

397
398 FY11 Calendar Review

399
400 Mary Jennings gave updated information. Mont Vernon re-voted and agreed to have
401 their new last day as Friday so as to be aligned with Amherst. The last day is now
402 Fri. June 24 for students in all 3 districts.

403
404 She requested authority to go to the DOE for a waiver on any additional
405 cancellations in the next 7 weeks in order to keep all 3 districts aligned on the last
406 day.

407
408 **Jim Manning motioned to give Mary permission to go to DOE to seek a waiver.**
409 **Peter second. Unanimous vote.**

410

411 Naming Facilities Policy
412 3rd Reading
413 No discussion from board.

414
415 **Foulks made a motion to accept Policy FF as written. Manning second.**
416 **Unanimous vote.**

417
418 Review of Meeting **Review of Meeting**

419
420 Maresco acknowledged that the SRO issue was a very important topic to a lot of
421 people and that he wants communication to remain constant and timely so that
422 everyone can remain informed.

423
424 Peg requested that in order to keep things moving in the meeting as smoothly as
425 possible, that anyone who would like to comment or participate in the discussion
426 seek recognition to speak from the chairperson.

427
428 Meeting was adjourned at 8???

429
430
431
432
433