

**MINUTES
AMHERST SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY DECEMBER 14, 2010 6:00 P.M.
SOUHEGAN COOPERATIVE HIGH SCHOOL INFO CENTER**

Present:

Amherst School Board: Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, Rob Graybill, Nancy Head, Peter Maresco

Administrative Team: Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Nicole Heimarck, Mary Athey Jennings

Budget Advisory: Betty Shankel, Mark Vincent, Ted Landon

Minutes Recorder: Melissa Spicer

Ms. Head called the board meeting to order at 6:05.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Principal's Report

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Head asked if there were any announcements, however there were none.

Ms. Head urged the board to attend the Oxfam event.

III. PUBLIC TIME

Ms. Head asked if there were any comments from the public, however there were none.

Minutes

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Foulks asked to pull the minutes from November 30, 2010.

Ms. Bennett asked to pull the retirement request.

Mr. Graybill motioned to accept the consent agenda containing the treasurer's report, manifest, and unanticipated funds. The motion was seconded by Ms. Foulks. The consent agenda was accepted unanimously (5-0-0).

Mr. Maresco motioned to approve the November 30th minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Ms. Foulks. The minutes were adopted as amended unanimously (5-0-0).

Ms. Bennett motioned to accept the retirement request. The motion was seconded by Ms. Foulks. The retirement request was accepted unanimously (5-0-0).

Auditor's Report

V. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS

Jared Vartanian presented the auditor's report. He explained that a main difference from last year is that this year the district had a requirement for Federal A-133 compliance. He said there were no findings of compliance issues. Mr. Vartanian complimented the district's finance department and said they do an excellent job.

Some of the highlights Mr. Vartanian discussed:

- The district's assets increased by \$333,000 from last year
- The total liabilities decreased from last year
- There was an increase of \$517,000 in total assets from last year
- The unrestricted net assets balance was reduced to \$500,000 this year
- The general fund increased by \$339,000 from last year, which was better than anticipated
- Overall, the district performed very well and stayed well within all line items for the expenditure budget

FY12 Budget- Draft 2

Dr. Jennings reminded the board that the draft has changed a bit, and this is the second draft. She said that there is now a .64% increase in the budget.

Dr. Jennings said that the state's money is potential revenue of \$109,503 for Amherst if accepted at the January meeting, which will also affect the tax rate.

Ms. Shankel explained changes made from Draft 1 to Draft 2.

Ms. Shankel passed out a revenue sheet. She said we don't see many differences, but are expecting catastrophic aid to decrease by a fair bit, but the exact amount is not clear yet. She said the other number that may change is tuition by Mont Vernon because the number of students they send each year fluctuates.

Ms. Shankel explained the tax change of \$0.14. She said that if the board accepts those revenues next year, the tax increase would be brought down by \$0.03 or \$0.04.

Ms. Shankel then went over the warrant articles. She explained that Article 11 discusses the positions open for the election. She said Article 12 will be the operating budget. Article 13 has been reserved for the collective bargaining agreement. The agreement has not yet been reached. Article 14 is a normal article asking the voters for a special meeting if Article 13 fails.

Mr. Graybill pointed out that the date in Article 15 was incorrect and should be changed from 2007 to 2011.

In response to a question from Ms. Bennett, Ms. Shankel explained that the amount from the year 2011 would be put into the operating budget for 2011/2012 year.

Ms. Head gave the committee report for special education. She explained that on the draft budget summary, special education had decreased by 2.37%, and the enrollments are down. She said enrollments can be down, but the budget is not simply based on enrollments. She explained that most of the major increases in the special education budget are from teacher and paraprofessional benefits.

Mr. Maresco discussed the curriculum and professional development budget and said costs were driven by either enrollment or contractual costs. He explained that the staff development is by contract. He said these were costs that could not really be reduced. He said the curriculum items are costs associated with plans of operation and that these were necessary costs.

Mr. Maresco also gave the report by the technology committee. He said the expenses were associated with developing the infrastructure. He brought up the active classroom technology. He said there is an investment with the RM Easiteach boards. He explained that the budget has allocated \$24,000 for the middle school to purchase, install, and maintain these. He discussed some of the educational benefits of having these machines in the classrooms. He also said there might be some additional training required for teachers to learn how to use these boards to maximize their use.

Mr. Graybill asked for summary information of technology budget changes. Mr. Maresco said throughout the budget the technology costs were \$138,181. Last year they were \$145,735. This number does not include salaries, however.

Mark Vincent, chair of the Ways and Means Committee, reminded the board that in the first draft there was an increase of .83%, and after making corrections, the increase is down to .64%. He explained that the Ways and Means Committee scrutinized everything in order to bring down the budget. He said this budget includes increases in health insurance by 9.7%, plus other benefits, including retirement, with only a .64% increase overall—meaning these costs are not being passed on to the taxpayer directly. Instead, other costs have been cut to make up for these increases. He complimented Ms. Shankel and the committees.

Ted Landon briefly discussed maintenance costs. He mentioned cost increases from Pennichuck Water Works. He explained that the natural gas projections were way off this past year, and this year there is a huge decrease in that number in the budget. He said Jim Miner, Director of Buildings and Grounds, is coming up with a well thought out budget, with an expected return within the next 2 or 3 years.

In response to a question by Ms. Head, Mr. Landon explained that site improvements in the budget include landscaping and maintenance of the front of the buildings.

Mr. Maresco mentioned some concerns from the public about the reasoning behind the site improvement expenditure.

Mr. Dodge explained that the landscaping at Clark-Wilkins was not just for aesthetic purposes and that there were also some drainage issues. He said these improvements would help to reduce maintenance costs.

Ms. Bennett discussed the Amherst Middle School budget and said it has decreased in almost every line item. She said most of the increases were from benefits.

Mr. Dodge added that one cost came from moving someone to the administrative department.

Ms. Bennett also gave the report for the food service budget committee and said that decreases in food costs for the district are expected in the future.

Dr. Jennings said at the next meeting the board needs to vote on the budget and warrant articles. She said January 6th would be the last time to suggest any other budget cuts.

Policy JICK – Pupil Safety and Violence Protection Policy

VI. ACTION ITEMS

The policy was unchanged.

Ms. Foulks made a motion to accept Policy JICK as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Graybill. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Policy JH – Attendance, Absenteeism and Truancy

The policy was unchanged

Mr. Graybill made a motion to accept Policy JH as written. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bennett. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Policy JKAA-Restraint-Use of Physical Restraint-2nd Reading

VII. DISCUSSION

Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept Policy JKAA as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Maresco.

Dr. Jennings said there were some changes she wanted to make the board aware of. She explained the changes; on pg. 48 under Introduction, the term restraint was clarified. Under Definitions, “physical restraint” was moved to number one. In number six, the definition of parent was changed to include a student who is 18 years of age.

Ms. Foulks said that she believed some parts of the policy were subjective. She pointed out some of the terminology that she thought were open to interpretation.

Dr. Jennings explained that there is training that will help staff execute the policy. She also said that by making the policy too specific, the school could increase its liability.

Ms. Foulks suggested that the term “regain emotional stability” in the policy be changed to “until the student is no longer a risk to himself or others.”

Ms. Head suggested bringing this issue back to the policy committee.

Ms. Bennett agreed and said she would bring it to the committee.

Ms. Foulks also pointed out that under VII., it should not say that the principal should make “reasonable efforts” to verbally notify the student’s parent or guardian, but that the principal should be *required* to report the incident.

Dr. Jennings concluded the discussion by saying that the policy would be brought back for a third reading.

VIII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION

Ms. Foulks motioned to move to a non-public session RSA 91-A:3 II (a) at 7:37pm. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bennett. The vote passed by roll call vote (5-0-0) Foulks: yes, Bennett: yes, Head: yes, Maresco: yes, Graybill: yes.

Chairwoman Head presented an update regarding the request for hardship transfer that was previously submitted to the Board for consideration. The Board authorized Ms. Head to respond to the most recent letter from the parents regarding the hardship transfer request.

The Board also discussed the ongoing negotiations with the AEA.

Mr. Maresco motioned to come out of non-public session, which was seconded by Ms. Bennett. A unanimous roll-call vote was taken and the Board entered public session at 8:26 p.m.

Ms. Bennett motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Ms. Faulks. The Board approved the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.