

**AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
FEBRUARY 3, 2011**

Present at 7:00 p.m. were Thatcher Kezer, Chair, Debra LaValley, Bonnie Schultz, Stanley Schwartz, Tom McGee, Gale Hanshaw, Ann Connolly King, David Jack, Superintendent of Schools and Courtney Ouellet, SAC Representative.

The Chair called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. McGee.

II. PRESENTATIONS

1. Principal's Award

This award will be put on the March 1st meeting agenda.

2. Parent Portal in X2 – MIS Staff

Anne Verret Speck, Manager of Information Systems for the Town as well as the school department, introduced her staff; Susan Lang and Kathy Fowler, Technology Technicians and Martine Fabre, Network Manager. Anne gave a PowerPoint presentation showing parents how they will be able to access their child's classes, location, grade in any subject, etc. This will be available to middle and high school parents first and the hope is to open it to the elementary level available as well. Parents will be getting letters with a login ID and a copy of the school department's Acceptable Use Policy.

3. EPIMS – Telen Imel

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires that each school department in Massachusetts supply them with an enormous amount of information that is uploaded to the DESE from the database Amesbury uses, X2. The data collection is called Employee Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS). EPIMS is a tool that the DESE can use to ensure that teachers are highly qualified in the subject area that they are teaching. This data is a snapshot of who is where and doing what on October 1st. The DESE is expanding the upload of this date from one submission on October 1st to an additional submission in June. Susan Lang, Technology Technician is working concurrently on the Student Course Schedule (SCS) which is the combining of EPIMS and SIMS, Student Information Management System data.

III. COMMENTS BY VISITORS, DELEGATIONS

None.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. Superintendent's Report

The superintendent informed the committee that two additional high school students have qualified for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship; Emily Curran and Tyler Smith. Four middle school students were selected to participate in the MA Northeastern District Junior Music Festival: Haley Gendell, Holly Gilday, Meagan Meagher and Amy Snyder. The concert will be held on Saturday, March 19th at Lowell High School.

The superintendent stated that the AHS Drama Club, which includes approximately 20 students, will be participating in the MA Educational Drama Guild's One Act Play Festival on Saturday, March 5th.

Mr. Jack reminded the school committee that there will be a special meeting of the committee on February 28th when Mike Gilbert of MASC will give a report of all the information he has gathered while meeting with focus groups throughout the district. He will also have the results he received from the superintendent survey.

The superintendent told the committee all of the work that is being done by the DPW, the Mayor's office and the school department staff to remove as much snow as possible. The school department has been working closely with Dennis Nadeau, building inspector, particularly regarding the weight of the snow and ice on the school roofs. Mr. Nadeau was present at the meeting and spoke briefly about how much weight the roofs are probably holding and the possibility of a safety issue if some relief is not forthcoming. Mr. Jack told the committee that the cleaning company, S.J. Services, will be providing the school department with the man power needed on Friday, Saturday and Sunday for roof snow removal. The number of snow days, including, tomorrow, February 4th, taken is six. The last day of school, at this time, will be Monday, June 27th.

Discussion ensued regarding the excessive snow days and their effect on the students and teachers time to prepare for the upcoming MCAS testing. Ms. LaValley suggested moving MCAS testing back at least a week to give students and teachers more time. Principals indicated that they would support this action. Ms. LaValley explained that the school committee can support other school systems in advocating moving MCAS testing back at least one week.

Mr. Schwartz suggested that the testing be moved to the end of the school year so as to give everyone a level playing field. He also stated that there are much more important issues such as jobs and local aid.

Ms. Schultz suggested that the support of moving the MCAS testing dates be put in writing for future years as it may be too late to change the dates for this year. The state uses a national company to score the tests and any date changes would delay scoring and school improvement plans.

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Bonnie Schultz, that due to the excessive snow days taken, the Amesbury School Committee advocates moving MCAS testing back one week. Vote: 6, Yes; 1 Oppose (Schwartz).

It was suggested that a letter from the superintendent to the DESE be sent expressing the Amesbury School Committee's advocating moving the dates of the MCAS tests.

SUPERINTENDENT'S FY12 BUDGET

Mr. Jack made a PowerPoint presentation explaining the budget that he is recommending to the school committee. He presented a "level service budget". This budget just moves everything that is currently in place forward one year. No new positions will be added but contractual agreements will be fulfilled. He showed that Chapter 70 used to pay 62% of the school department budget it now pays 28%. He said that we have had a level funded budget for the last three years but FY12 is a level service. This budget proposal is a starting point. The superintendent stated that he needs more direction from the school committee, municipal council and the Mayor as to a target number for the budget. It is a bare bones budget at this point.

The Mayor explained that this is the beginning of a long process. The final dollar amount has not been set as yet. School Choice is closed from Kindergarten through Grade 6 so there will be no additional funds through that venue. The budget sessions that have been posted were discussed.

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Bonnie Schultz to suspend the rules so the committee may conduct business after 9:00 p.m. Unanimous, Yes., Student Rep., Yes.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR EARLY CONSIDERATION

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Tom McGee to approve the school committee minutes dated January 18, 2011. Vote: 6, Yes, 1 Abstain (Connolly King), Student Rep., Yes.

B. BUSINESS

1. Vote on Quarterly Report

Motion by Stanley Schwartz, seconded by Gale Hanshaw to accept the quarterly report as presented. Unanimous, Yes.

2. Vote on Budget Transfers

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to approve the budget transfers as presented. Unanimous Yes.

3. 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 School Calendars

Mr. Jack shared some statistics with the committee regarding the issue of starting school the week before Labor Day or the day after Labor Day. A parent survey was done and 25% of the parents surveyed, 600 parents; 425 wanted an after Labor Day start and 173 wanted a before Labor Day

start. Surrounding districts were polled and two of those polled started after Labor Day, all of the others had a before Labor Day start to their school year. Also, since 1992, Amesbury only had four after Labor Day starts. Due to the fact that a new superintendent would be taking over for the 2011-2012 school year, the consensus of the committee was to only vote a one year calendar.

Motion by Stanley Schwartz, seconded by Gale Hanshaw to approve the school calendar for 2011-2012 which shows an after Labor Day start to the next school year. Unanimous, Yes, Student Rep., Yes.

C. WARRANT

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Gale Hanshaw to approve the warrant dated January 27, 2011 in the amount of \$375,093.78. Vote: 6 Yes, 1 Abstain (Schultz).

Motion by Stanley Schwartz, seconded by Gale Hanshaw to approve the warrant dated February 10, 2011 in the amount of \$121,905.54. Unanimous, Yes.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Subcommittee Reports

1. **Budget/Finance Subcommittee**

Ms. LaValley gave a report from the meeting that took place prior to this school committee meeting. The subcommittee voted to increase the So. Hampton tuition rate from \$10,075 to \$10,377 per student.

Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to increase the So. Hampton tuition from \$10,075 to \$10,377 per student. Unanimous.

The subcommittee also discussed an increase to the Pre-K tuition but decided to hold a decision until other communities were polled for comparisons. The budget meeting dates have changed to 2/10 and 3/7 at 6:00 p.m. at the Horace Mann School.

2. **Policy Subcommittee**

Ms. Hanshaw stated that this subcommittee will meet on February 10, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. in the Superintendent's office.

3. **Personnel Subcommittee**

Mr. Schwartz stated that the subcommittee will be having negotiations on 2/8/11.

B. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Student Advisory Council

Courtney reported that the officers of SAC and the Student Council met with Mike Gilbert in a superintendent focus group. The students talked about the importance of hiring quality teaching staff to replace the good teachers that will be retiring at the end of this school year. They would like to keep the great communication and respect they have with the current administration.

Mayor Kezer spoke to the committee about the packet included with their materials regarding Kids As Peacemakers. His question to the committee was do they want the schools involved in this project and, if so, to what extent? The consensus of the committee was to hold this discussion for another meeting or discuss it at the workshop on February 15th.

Ms. LaValley commended the Amesbury Academy for the great turnout at their Open House on January 31st. She also commended Mary Beth Exner and Kathy Scott for their work at a college goal bowl to help parents fill out the FAFSA forms required for college financial aid. She reminded the committee that the MASC Day on the Hill will take place on March 29th this year. Ms. LaValley recommended that the committee take a look at the MASC community awards when they meet to review their goals on February 15th.

The Superintendent's Evaluation will be added to Future Agenda Items as well as the requirement of the Mayor to reappoint a Whittier school board representative.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Date for Goals Review (2/15/11)
2. Recognition of Recipient of "Excellence in Foreign Language" (3/1/11)
3. Principal and Superintendent's Awards (3/1/11)
4. Superintendent's Evaluation (5/11)
5. Whittier Representative Appointment
6. MASC Day on the Hill (3/29/11)
7. FY12 Budget Hearing (3/15/11)
8. Vote on School Choice SY11-12 (4/5/11)
9. Student Handbooks (5/11)

VIII. PRESS CONFERENCE

None.

Motion by Stanley Schwartz, seconded by Gale Hanshaw to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. Unanimous, Yes. Student Rep., Yes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom McGee, Secretary

Amesbury Public Schools Mission Statement

The Amesbury School District is unconditionally committed to every child, ensuring that all students experience success through the development of attitudes and skills necessary for lifelong learning by providing the highest quality staff, meaningful learning experiences, and a vitally involved community.