

**AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL  
APRIL 5, 2011**

---

Present at 7:00 p.m. were Thatcher Kezer, Chair, Debra LaValley, Stanley Schwartz, Tom McGee, Gale Hanshaw, Bonnie Schultz, 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 Ms. Schultz.

**II. COMMENTS BY VISITORS, DELEGATIONS**

The Chair explained to the attendees that each person's comments must be limited to three minutes.

Citizen #1, Jane, 4 Woodwell Circle

Concerned about keeping class sizes down. Son is in Kindergarten accessing special education services. AES feels like a family. Thanks to Kathy Glennon. Why don't we know more about Futures Health? She is looking for stability and consistency. Will there be an "opt out" clause if the school department contracts with Futures? Amesbury has an excellent special education program.

Citizen #2, Patricia

Her daughter is in the OPTIONS Program at the high school. This program is not in the budget for next year but through this program her daughter has made great strides. Kathy Glennon has helped her daughter. Requested that the OPTIONS Program continue.

Citizen #3, Greg Noyes, 8 Clark's Road

This is a budgetary decision. Many of the staff involved have institutional knowledge. Doesn't agree with choosing the "Race to the Bottom" by going through contracted services.

Citizen #4, Jordan

Works with special education kids in karate. If the services are contracted and a student has a different teacher every day, it will be harder for students to have a personal connection with one teacher.

Citizen #5, Cameron

Her sister has autism and works with a few good employees in the school system. She thinks that changing her sister's assistant would not be good. Wants it to stay the way it is.

Citizen #6, Lynn Follansbee

Has a son who receives special education services. He has Down's Syndrome and uses a communication device provided by the school department. He is also a diabetic. He has had great assistants working with him since he was three years old. Concerned that bringing in outside service for students disrupts consistency.

Citizen #7, Vedrani

Worked in a hospital where the caregivers change all the time but this for students doesn't make sense.

Citizen #8, Allie, 9<sup>th</sup> grade

She knows assistants since first grade and all of the assistants she has known are the best and nicest people.

Citizen #9, Holly Jarond

She is a member of another school board. Last year she decided to choose her child to the Amesbury Middle School for the excellent special education services. She will be moving to Amesbury because it is a community about children.

Citizen #10, 6 Kendrick's Court

15.8% of kids in Amesbury are special education students and he is one of them. He doesn't see how it will help kids to have different assistants.

Citizen #11, Nina Henderson

Parents of special education children should have been told before this. She thinks this was kept under the radar. The special education students won't trust people if they aren't the same every day.

Citizen #12, Leesie Hartman

Questions: Length of outside contract? Training, education, safety? How will these people check in and out of our schools? What % per assistant will be spent with our children? What about choice students? She has three children at the same age, who will do the testing, APS or this company?

Citizen #13, Dawn Field current Paraprofessional at CES

She did not like the comment that Dr. Bittel made about the paraprofessionals not being trained properly. A lot of the paraprofessionals had training and went to school and majored in early childhood.

Citizen #14, Jen Meagher, 5 Tuxbury Lane

She has lived here for six years, used to live in Lowell. She has children at both the CES and AMS. Her children do not require special education services but she thinks this decision affects all parents. The bus drivers know all of the students that live on the street. We are employing our neighbors.

Citizen #15, Dale Wadsworth, Market Street

She is a teacher in another school system. She understands how it works, the paraprofessionals make good things happen for these students.

Citizen #16, Rita O'Neill, Amesbury Middle School Nurse

She relies on the paraprofessionals to be her eyes and ears in the classrooms or any other part of the building. Students with diabetes are watched by the paraprofessionals carefully and when a student is just not acting right, they bring them right to the nurses office.

Citizen #17, Kathy Richards, current paraprofessional

Stated that she has gone through hundreds of hours of professional development, assisting her with her skill development. The paraprofessional jobs are filled with challenges, the students enrich her life.

Citizen #18, Jean McCarthy, Orchard St.

Son at CES with autism. She and her son have to depend on consistency. How will this new company know what her son needs?

Citizen #19, Gail Brown

She stated that the staff in the Amesbury Public Schools is fabulous. Concerned with the increasing class sizes by not replacing retiring teachers also concerned with increase in study halls at the middle school and the use of administration to sit in these study halls.

Citizen #20, Kirsten Keller

She sees students with assistants at the middle school all the time and without these assistants these students would take a step back.

Citizen #21, Karen Iworsky

The APS outsourced the cafeteria to Chartwell's, outsourced the custodial staff but these two departments are not responsible for the direct care of the students. She sees paraprofessionals get to work early, hours that they don't get paid for, they are very passionate about their jobs. The paraprofessionals are committed to the APS.

Citizen #22, Solstad

She said that she has human resources experience. What are the metrics for success? What questions you ask and how you ask them determine the answer you get. What are the administrative costs to outsourcing company, 5-25% will be going into the pockets of a private entity.

Citizen #23, Deb Murphy, 131 Pleasant Valley Road, APS paraprofessional

What will the pay be from Futures in this year, next year, etc.? What are the cost savings? How involved will Futures be in determining the needs of APS kids? Found it disturbing that Futures said that there was poor communication between teachers and paraprofessionals. What is the turnover ratio for Futures? When will professional development days be provided? Will Futures be hiring 80% of the APS paraprofessionals? Explain the "untrained" part that Futures referred to in their report. It was offensive. Futures considers us untrained but they are willing to hire us? What is the connection between Maximus and Futures? Maximus is having problems that are in the news.

Citizen #24, Allison

Stated how lucky we are and how special we are with our current staff, it would be a shame to lose them.

Citizen #25, Joseph Greaney, Orchard St.

Amesbury has a great reputation for education and we can't forget to love and care for our children. He said he is willing to pay more taxes to keep this program as it is in Amesbury. He has a grandson who is in special education.

Citizen #26, Lawrence, 6 Kendrick's Ct.

Kids are our future.

Citizen #27, Melinda Hart, APS employee

Very impressed with the Amesbury Public Schools' staff and their concern for their students.

Citizen #28, Nicholas Coleman, AMS student

He stated that having different teacher assistant every day would be like coming home to different parents after school.

Citizen #29, A. Diamond

Her brother is special and he loves his teacher assistants.

Citizen #30, Tony Stewart, Beacon St.

If the paraprofessional positions are outsourced and the new company doesn't hire them, those people will be collecting unemployment. He doesn't understand the bottom line, He is not sure that the students would get the quality of service they currently enjoy.

Citizen #31, Mike (Joseph) Greaney, additional statement

He stated that we cut teachers but the administration never shrinks, only the working staff does.

The Chair ended the public comment at 8:20 p.m. The Mayor stated that he saw patterns in what people are concerned about such as, ensuring the quality of service for the students and are the savings justifiable as well as questions about the company that would be supplying these services. Mr. Schwartz stated that he didn't like the use of the word SPED because every child is special. He would like to see no lines drawn between special education and regular education. He thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Mr. Jack stated that this is not an expense problem, this is a revenue problem. He also stated that none of what was discussed at this meeting is a done deal. This is far from finished. Collective bargaining is in process and we need more time to answer the questions that have asked. This is not a quality of work issue.

Ms. LaValley thanked everyone for coming and thanked the students who spoke as well. There is still a lot of business happening. Ms. Connolly King asked the superintendent if he had any idea what the process is from this point. He said that he would get answers to the question asked tonight and would ask Futures to come back to the committee's May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and will be early on the agenda. The school committee budget goes to the Mayor and the Mayor gives the total town budget to the Municipal Council and they have 45 days to vote on the budget.

A member of the audience asked if we would be asking for an override. The Mayor explained that the school department has been at the same bottom line for the last three years. Proposition 2.5 created \$800,000 plus Amesbury has \$300,000 in new construction giving the town \$1.1 million in new money. The Mayor has given the school department \$900,000 of that money and \$200,000 to the City side. He is not sure what the Municipal Council's response to this plan will be and he won't know until the budget is submitted to the Council.

The Chair called for a recess at 8:50 p.m. The committee was called back in session at 9:05 p.m.

*Motion by Tom McGee, seconded by Debra LaValley to suspend the rules so that the committee could continue to conduct business after 9:00 p.m. Unanimous, Yes.*

### **III. PRESENTATIONS**

#### **A. Superintendent's Search Committee Lottery**

Mayor Kezer read the list of filled spots on the superintendent's search committee and stated that there were some groups that had more than one applicant for a spot on the committee so there would be a lottery to pick names to fill the spots. Courtney Ouellet drew the names per group.

Elementary Level Parent – Jen Meagher

Middle School Level Parent – Patricia Lowell

High School Level Parent – Jennifer Hawrylcw

Community Representatives (2) – Peter Hoyt

and Harry Lucier (an alternate was chosen, Mario Pinierio)

The alternate will only be added to the committee if a member drops out BEFORE the committee's work begins (April 25<sup>th</sup>)

All chosen members will be notified by Mike Gilbert of MASC.

### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

#### **A. Superintendent's Report**

Due to the lateness of the hour, the superintendent kept his report short. He stated that Mark Casto, AHS teacher, received the North Shore Science Teacher Award. He will be honored at a banquet on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR EARLY CONSIDERATION**

#### **A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Bonnie Schultz to approve the school committee minutes dated March 15, 2011. Unanimous, Yes, Student Rep., Yes.*

**B. BUSINESS****1. Whittier Reappointment – Charles La Bella**

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Tom McGee to reappoint Charles LaBella to the Whittier School Board as the representative for the Amesbury School Committee. Unanimous, Yes, Student Rep., Yes.*

*Motion by Stanley Schwartz, seconded by Bonnie Schultz to take voting on the warrants out of order. Unanimous, Yes.*

**C. WARRANT**

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to approve the warrant dated March 24, 2011 in the amount of \$429,396.04. Unanimous, Yes.*

*Motion by Bonnie Schultz, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to approve the warrant dated April 7, 2011 in the amount of \$132,377.39. Vote: 6, Yes; 1 Abstain (LaValley).*

**Return to the Business Items****2. Review and Vote on FY12 Budget**

Ms. Connolly King asked the superintendent to review the process on the budget that has already taken place. Ms. LaValley reported that each cost center manager worked with the budget/finance subcommittee and discussed the impacts of any recommendations. During this time they were waiting for financial numbers from the Mayor. The Public Hearing was held on March 15<sup>th</sup>. A finance meeting of the whole was held on Thursday March 31<sup>st</sup> to discuss the budget further. Once voted on, the budget goes to the Mayor who submits his budget to the municipal council by May 10<sup>th</sup>. The MC can change the bottom line figure of the budget but they can't tell the school committee what to cut just how much money to reduce their budget. The final MC vote on the budget takes place in June.

This part of the budget began with a PowerPoint presentation by the superintendent. Ms. Connolly King suggested that the last three graphs be added to the website for the public to see.

The current level service budget figure is \$2,779,540  
 The Mayor has given \$900,000 for the town budget  
 The reduction changes the total to: \$1,879,540, additional revenue of \$167,000 leaves and a reduction of \$399,282.59 to get to the number that the Mayor wants the school department reach.

Mr. Bergeron read through the budget by cost centers:

**COST CENTER 010 – No objections**

**COST CENTER 012 – Ms. LaValley flagged 11241151 Elementary Custodians Salaries**

**COST CENTER 013 – Ms. LaValley flagged 11341151 Cashman Custodian Salaries**

**COST CENTER 014 – Mr. Schwartz flagged 11423251 AMS SPED Tutors**

**COST CENTER 015 – Mr. Schwartz flagged 11523251 AHS Teaching Salaries**

**COST CENTER 015 – Ms. Schultz flagged 11525051 Library Tutors**

**COST CENTER 015 – Ms. Schultz flagged 11535152 Athletic Expenses**

**COST CENTER 015 – Ms. LaValley flagged 11541151 AHS Custodian Salaries**

**COST CENTER 015 – Ms. LaValley flagged 11541152 AHS Custodian Expenses**

**COST CENTER 018 – Ms. LaValley flagged 11823052 Curriculum**

The committee returned to the items that were flagged while going through the budget pages. Ms. LaValley asked what the impact would be on Multi-Purpose Facility Technicians (MPFT's) if the Horace Mann School is closed. Mr. Bergeron explained that there was a part-time custodian at Horace Mann who is no longer employed by the school department. One of the MPFT's comes part-time to Horace Mann to clean. Ms. LaValley also asked if the schools were to close early, how would that impact the MPFT's. Mr. Bergeron stated that any over-time paid to MPFT's would be paid by the renter of the school. Ms. LaValley withdrew all of her flagged items dealing with the MPFT staff.

Mr. Schwartz shared his concern for eliminating the In-School Suspension Tutor position at AMS which would leave kids out of school. At this time, he has no suggestion as to where to take money from in order to fund this position. Mr. Schwartz passed on this item for further discussion later in the meeting.

Ms. Schultz expressed her concern regarding not replacing retiring teachers at the high school. Mr. Murray, Principal, stated that the high school can do without the teaching position. The high school accreditation could be compromised if the two library tutor positions are eliminated. Also the tutor in the cafeteria works as a permanent substitute and a cafeteria monitor. Ms. Schultz said that the middle school would love to have a library assistant. The library tutors allow the high school library to be open in the early morning and the late afternoon.

Ms. Hanshaw expressed concern regarding not replacing the position of the English teacher who is retiring. The class sizes will be 24-26.

Ms. Schultz still wants to eliminate the AHS library tutors.

Mr. Schwartz asked if somehow we could keep the OPTIONS Program going. It was a two-year ARRA funded program whose funding has run out. There was a discussion between the committee, Mr. Murray and Ms. Georges regarding how some of the students in the OPTIONS Program could join the Academy. Mr. Schwartz asked if we had data about the success of the OPTIONS Program. It was the consensus that some of the students in this program would have dropped out of school if it weren't for the help and direction they received while in this program. Mr. Schwartz asked if this item could be discussed again later in the meeting.

Ms. Schultz asked if Mrs. McAndrews, Athletic Director, has decided how to cut the additional \$25,000 out of her budget. Ms. McAndrews stated that she tried to make decisions that would impact kids the least. Freshman Softball does not have enough students to run the program and Freshmen Baseball will also not run in the upcoming year. She also would eliminate Boys and Girls Tennis which impacts approximately 34 students. Ms. Schultz requested a detailed athletics budget. She also stated that she withdrew her objection.

Ms. LaValley referred back to curriculum expenses. What are we mandated to supply teachers in the area of professional development? We are required to offer some professional development. \$125/teacher/year. Ms. LaValley withdrew her question.

Mr. Schwartz asked questions about the position of Attendance Officer. The superintendent explained the many aspects of this position. Mr. Schwartz withdrew his question.

Ms. Schultz returned to the high school library tutors and the non-replacement of a retiring English teacher. The Chair stated that the objective of this process is to get to the bottom line number and in this case he would defer to the administration who have been working on these budget cuts for quite a while and have made their recommendations. Ms. Schultz stated that she would take Mr. Bergeron's suggestion and will wait to hear the final number from the state, circuit breaker, etc.

Ms. LaValley stated that at the last budget/finance meeting the consensus of the committee was that the school committee could not cut an additional \$399,000. Cutting anymore than has already been cut would have too much of a negative impact on education. She said that the committee should stand firm with what the school committee is voting on tonight and give it to the Municipal Council as it is now. Ms. Connolly King and Ms. Schultz stated that the school committee needs the support of the unions and all the other balls that are in play with the state. The community and unions need to show their support for this budget as it goes to the Municipal Council with \$400,000 not cut.

The Mayor stated that he will have to vote against the budget if it doesn't show the dollar amount that he said he needed.

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to send the budget in the amount of \$26,232,778 to the Mayor for presentation to the Municipal Council. Vote: 6, Yes, 1 Opposed (Kezer).*

**3. 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Policy CBA Qualifications, Duties & Evaluation of the Superintendent**

Ms. Hanshaw explained that this policy was a combination of three separate policies that all spoke to the superintendent's evaluation. It will be added to the next meeting for a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading Policy IMG Animals in School**

This policy came from amended Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We are required to put this policy in place. It will be on the next agenda for a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading Policy JFABC Admission of Transfer Students from a Commonwealth Charter School**

This policy is a required policy according to Chapter 12, Section 11 of the Acts of 2010. It speaks to the placement of a student coming into a public school in Massachusetts from a Commonwealth Charter School.

**4. Vote on Budget Transfers**

This item will be added to the May 3, 2011 agenda.

**5. Vote on School Choice**

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to open the Amesbury Public Schools to Choice in grades 5 and 6 and grades 9 through 11. Unanimous, Yes.*

**6. Business Administrator Contract**

Mr. Jack explained that the contract was for three years and did not include an increase for the current year.

*Motion by Tom McGee, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to approve Michael Bergeron, Business Administrator's 3-year contract. Unanimous, Yes.*

Ms. Connolly King stated that she was glad that Mr. Bergeron desired to stay on board, Tom McGee agreed. Ms. Schultz stated that Mr. Bergeron has exceeded her expectations. Mr. Schwartz told Mr. Bergeron that the committee supported him in his professional goals. Ms. Hanshaw agreed with no indecision. The Mayor and Ms. LaValley concurred with every statement spoken by the members of the committee.

## VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

### A. Subcommittee Reports

#### 1. **Budget/Finance Subcommittee**

Ms. LaValley stated that the subcommittee discussed a plan to help parents and the schools with regard to transportation fees. Mr. Bergeron will hold two night sessions in August so that parents can come into the high school lobby and pay their transportation fee. Payments that are made in full by September 15<sup>th</sup> will be eligible for a 5% discount.

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Stanley Schwartz to approve giving a 5% discount to parents/guardians who pay their transportation fee in full by September 15<sup>th</sup>. Unanimous, Yes.*

Ms. LaValley also told the committee that the Institution for Savings Bank has given a \$2,000 donation to the Windrush Farms Program.

*Motion by Debra LaValley, seconded by Bonnie Schultz to accept the \$2,000 donation from the Institution for Savings Bank for the Program at the Windrush Farms. Unanimous, Yes.*

#### 2. **Policy Subcommittee**

Ms. Hanshaw stated that the subcommittee will meet on April 8<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.

#### 3. **Personnel Subcommittee**

Mr. Schwartz stated that negotiations are ongoing.

### B. COMMUNICATIONS

#### 1. **Student Advisory Council**

Courtney Ouellet, Student Representative, had to leave the meeting before her report because it was so late in the evening.

Ms. LaValley and Ms. Schultz praised the Amesbury Middle School's performance of Once Upon A Mattress. The students did a fantastic job.

## VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Mayor read the future agenda items aloud and asked the committee if they had anything to add.

1. Superintendent's Evaluation (5/17/11)
2. Student Handbooks (5/17/11)
3. Retiree Reception (6/7/11)

**VIII. PRESS CONFERENCE**

None.

**IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Chair announced that it was necessary for the committee to go into executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy. He also announced that the committee will not be coming back into public session. The committee will adjourn from executive session.

Roll Call Vote at 11:55 p.m.: Kezer, Yes; LaValley, Yes; Schwartz, Yes; Schultz, Yes; Hanshaw, Yes; McGee, Yes; Connolly King, 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.*