

**AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL
OCTOBER 18, 2011**

Present at 7:00 p.m. were Mayor Kezer, Chair, Debra LaValley, Stanley Schwartz, Bonnie Schultz, Tom McGee, Gale Hanshaw, Peter Hoyt and Michele Robinson, Superintendent of Schools.

The Chair called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by newly appointed school committee member, Peter B. Hoyt.

II. COMMENTS BY VISITORS, DELEGATIONS

None.

III. PRESENTATIONS

A. Business Administrator's Report

Mr. Bergeron handed out the budget timeline for the 2013 budget year. By November 1st the administrators and department managers will be forming their budgets and will work for the following two months, on a tiered approach. By February 7th the Superintendent's budget will be presented to the budget/finance subcommittee for further discussion with a target date of March 20th for the Budget Hearing. In April, the budget will be submitted to the Mayor. It is hoped that the Mayor will have more information from the State regarding the total amount of revenue that Amesbury will be receiving for the 2013 budget by this time.

Ms. Schultz stated that during last year's budget process, the budget/finance subcommittee met separately but that there was also a meeting of the full school committee as a whole to discuss the budget. Ms. La Valley stated that she thought that this process used last year was effective. Mr. Schwartz suggested that the first meeting of the whole on the budget should take place in December, after the budget/finance subcommittee has had a chance to speak with the administration. He stated that if the full committee could look at the budget with the administration, they could set priorities as a committee; an informal process as a group.

The Mayor first has to look at the process on delivering services to the whole community and then involves the committee in the initial phase of bringing the school committee up to speed on town/school financials and then they can discuss as a committee of the whole.

Mr. Schwartz asked if there was a demarcation date between the administration discussions and the school committee discussions.

Mr. Bergeron stated that January would be the time to put the budget document together. Mike stated that they are building a broad-based budget on information coming from the state. He said that December is really too early. Mr. Schwartz expressed his concern for the superintendent having time to create a five-year plan also considering that five of the seven members will still be on the board no matter what happens in the election. Ms. LaValley stated that a five-year projection has always been an important guide for the school committee and maybe they can see where to fit that in.

The Mayor stated that what is helpful is that the superintendent's budget defines what are the total needs of the school system – not a total wish list.

The superintendent needs a benchmark and then we gather the state's financial contribution. Then at some point look at total revenue source but establish here is the bottom line per department. Then money comes in from the state and each department goes through how they can meet that number. There needs to be decisions and choices using a healthy exercise.

B. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Robinson stated that the DESE and the MASC have put together a three-year program for coaching/mentoring new superintendents. Due to its success, however, it is now open to all superintendents. She introduced Dr. Rose DiTullio as her coach while she goes through this new program. Dr. DiTullio said that the program was in its second year. The program is in its second year and she coached one superintendent last year and has two this year. The program is funded through federal and state grant funds through DESE.

Dr. DiTullio explained that the coaching is an intense program that focuses on the Superintendent as the instructional leader. Coaches and superintendents meet eight times during the year for eight hours per week. They don't focus on the budget process but they do discuss it while spending more time on curriculum leadership.

Mr. Schwartz asked if MASC or DESE has begun to look at any definition as to what student achievement means, any benchmarks been established? Dr. DiTullio has been going over MA law with Dr. Robinson as well as educational reform. There is not a particular model but coaches have to talk about student achievement. Dr. DiTullio said that they can only discuss the numbers that are available to them at the time during the program discussions. The Superintendent works on a strategy of action which focuses on student achievement. It involves many groups. She stated that in order to improve student achievement, the whole school system has to buy into the effort. The Mayor stated that it sounded like a great program.

The superintendent announced that she has been asked to be the guest speaker at the National Honor Society Induction on October 19th. She also announced that during the month of November, all of the schools will be presenting their School Improvement Plans, two schools per school committee meeting. The superintendent has been attending school council meetings in preparation for these presentations.

AMS received a generous donation from Mark and Dee Cote that included a matching donation in software from Microsoft. The student council have brought Rachel's Challenge to AHS. Rachel's Challenge is a program created to honor Rachel Joy Scott, the first young woman killed in the Columbine shooting. The program was started by her family to honor Rachel who pledged to start a chain of kindness around the world. We will be hearing more about how our students are working to accept the challenge both in our school and community.

Motion by Gale Hanshaw, seconded by Peter Hoyt to request the school improvement plans for the AMS and AHS at the first meeting of the month, November 1st and the two elementary schools at the November 15th school committee meeting. Unanimous, Yes.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR EARLY CONSIDERATION

A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ms. LaValley, seconded by Mr. McGee to approve the school committee minutes dated October 4, 2011. Unanimous, Yes, Student Rep., Yes.

B. BUSINESS

1. Policy EEAA School Bus Transportation

Ms. Hanshaw explained the changes recommended by the Policy subcommittee as requested by Mr. Bergeron. The first change would be to use a standard measurement tool to determine the distance from a student's home to the school. The tool used by the town will also be used by the school department for this purpose.

Also, there is a new incentive for parents to pay the transportation fee in total by October 1st. There will be a 5% discount if this fee is paid in full.

Motion by Ms. Hanshaw, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to approve the proposed changes to policy EEAA School Bus Transportation. Unanimous, Yes, Student Rep., Yes.

2. Pre-K Tuition for Families of Multiple Children

Mr. Bergeron explained to the full committee that the budget/finance subcommittee has had several discussions

regarding a possible cap on fees for a family with multiple children applying for Pre-K in Amesbury. Mr. Bergeron is suggesting using the same formula that is used to determine other fees in the school district. Amesbury's Pre-K tuition is still lower than any school department in the local surrounding school systems. Ms. Hanshaw read aloud the Pre-K tuitions of local school districts.

Ms. Schultz expressed her concern that the proposed reduced fees were more aggressive than in other Pre-K programs.

Ms. LaValley stated that the budget/finance subcommittee accepted this proposal and agreed to send it to the policy subcommittee for a policy to be created stating the Pre-K tuition plan for multiples. The school committee continued to debate the pros and cons of the proposal. Mr. Hoyt expressed his approval of the proposal presented from the budget/finance subcommittee.

Mayor Kezer gave the background for the necessity of this proposal as he had met with two parents with multiple children who wanted a discount for their second and third child to attend Amesbury's Pre-K Program. The Mayor also pointed out that the number of incidents of this occurring would be extremely small.

Motion by Ms. LaValley, seconded by Mr. Hoyt to adopt a policy for families of multiple children accepted into Amesbury's Pre-K tuition, for a decrease in the tuition for a second and third child. Unanimous, Yes.

This proposal will be sent to the policy subcommittee for creation.

3. Vote a Delegate to the MASC/MASS Joint Conference

Ms. LaValley pointed out that the delegate assembly used to take place on the Wednesday of the conference but has been moved to Friday.

Motion by Ms. LaValley, seconded by Mr. Schwartz to nominate Mr. McGee as voting delegate from the school committee to the Delegate Assembly at the MASC/MASS joint conference. Unanimous, Yes.

Motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Ms. LaValley to nominate Ms. Schultz as the alternate delegate. Unanimous, Yes.

C. **WARRANT**

Motion by Ms. Schultz seconded by Ms. Hanshaw to approve the warrant dated October 20, 2011 in the amount of \$328,899.57. Vote, 6 Yes, 1 No, (Bibeau).

VI. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

A. **Subcommittee Reports**

1. **Budget/Finance Subcommittee**

Ms. LaValley stated that this subcommittee will meet prior to the November 1st meeting. They will be going over the budget timeline. She suggested that members check their calendars with the budget timeline for any conflicts.

2. **Policy Subcommittee**

Ms. Hanshaw stated that there is a scheduled meeting on Wednesday, October 26th in the superintendent's office.

3. **Personnel Subcommittee**

Mr. Schwartz stated that the personnel subcommittee met briefly prior to this school committee meeting and discussed open positions at the Cashman School that are being filled.

B. **COMMUNICATIONS**

1. **Student Advisory Council**

Jon Tedford told the committee that all students in SAC and the Student Council were profoundly affected by Rachel's Challenge and that there would be more to report at a future meeting.

The Mayor stated that SAC met with 2 wounded soldiers to present a \$6,000 donation for army members wounded overseas. This money is the proceeds from the September 11, 2011 ceremony. The Mayor thanked Rosie Werner for all of the work she did in preparation for the 9/11 ceremony.

Ms. LaValley said that the school committee should meet together with the Student Advisory Council and the Student Council in an upcoming school committee meeting to have a dialogue regarding Rachel's Challenge. She also stated that this could be combined with an open house for the new superintendent, the new location of the central office and to let the community see the newly renovated high school.

AEFI's Evening of Giving will be held at The Ale House from 6-10 p.m. on October 24th. The \$10,000 Jordan Shay Scholarship will be given out that night. Tickets can be purchased online or by calling Carol Bartlett at the superintendent's office.

Mr. Schwartz added that perhaps SAC and STUCCO get together during one of the meetings when the school improvement plans are being presented.

The Jeannie Geiger Event received praise. Peter Hoyt is a member of the Board of Directors.

Ms. Schultz suggested that the elementary schools and the secondary schools switch the dates of their school improvement plan presentations.

It was suggested that Senator Baddour and Representative Costello be invited to a meeting in December.

Ms. LaValley also asked about meeting with the South Hampton School Board.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. MASC/MASS Conference Resolutions (11/1/11)
2. MASC/MASS Conference (11/9/11-11/12/11)
3. School Improvement Plans (11/1/11 & 11/15/11)
4. Superintendent's Award (11/15/11)

VIII. PRESS CONFERENCE

None.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Ms. Schultz, seconded by Gale Hanshaw, to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 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.