

**AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
AMESBURY HIGH SCHOOL  
April 2, 2015**

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Present at 6:30 p.m. were: Mayor Ken Gray, Chair, Debra LaValley, Stanley Schwartz, Peter Hoyt, Christian Scorzoni, and Michele S. Robinson, Superintendent of Schools.

Absent were: Bonnie Schultz (arriving at 6:48), Tom McGee (arriving at 7:27) and Jill Hadwen, SAC Representative.

Mayor Gray called the meeting to order at 6:40 and Mr. Hoyt led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Mission Statement aloud.

**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.***

**II. COMMENTS BY VISITORS AND DELEGATIONS**

- Mr. Thivierge spoke about the recent article in the Daily News regarding the evaluation of the school system. He stated that he was disappointed in the report. He asked that the policy makers work together and get better at their job.

**III. PUBLIC HEARING FY16 - AMESBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The Chair turned the meeting over to Mr. Schwartz who called the public meeting to order. Mr. Schwartz recognized the City Councilors that were in attendance at this meeting. Mr. Schwartz spoke regarding the newspaper article on the evaluation of the school system. The newspaper in only a snapshot of what is going on. He spoke about the financial audit that the Mayor got into place and embraced the information and will work on that. He thanked everyone for coming out tonight and looking forward to listening to the concerns of all. Mr. Schwartz stated to the audience to approach the podium; state their name and address and to speak into the microphone. Before turning it over to Dr. Robinson, he concluded with stating that this budget is a draft budget and work in progress with the best interest of our children and families.

Dr. Robinson thanked Mr. Schwartz for getting the public hearing started and presented a power point on the FY16 budget that will focus on the children.

- Accomplishments (2) of all 4 school
- Budget process –
  - input from all sources (staff, parents, community, administration);
  - level service budget
  - school achievement plan – school priorities.
  - Goals
  - Inquiry process
- Enrollment consideration
- Level service budget – removed all “revenue offsets”
- Level Service “Revenues”

- Level Service “Expense”
- District Priority items – top Two Priorities \$484,932
- Recommended Budget – Percent over FY15 = 4.56%

Public Hearing began – in all, 16 community members, teachers and parents approached the podium and spoke about the budget.

- The 3 community members that spoke expressed their concerns about the negativity of the newspaper articles. Need to move forward and invest in our community. Looks like there is no help from the state so we need to rely on ourselves. Look beyond mandates and work around them. Looking at getting 2 task force – district vision and innovation.
- The 7 parents that spoke asked the committee to support the superintendents’ proposed budget. They stated that this budget is at least moving forward with no cuts. Need to invest in the schools and the children’s future of Amesbury. Need to work as a team, collaborations and dig deep. One parent asked for a show of hands for the support of the budget (most hands went up). Amazing teachers in the system that work long hours and use their own resources for the kids in the classrooms. One parent did agree on the recent report in the newspaper and stated that her child was left behind and is struggling because of that. If we don’t keep on moving forward we will lose families to other districts. We need to move forward.
- The teachers that spoke about investing into the school system. Decades of cuts, will lose families to other districts. Need to look into school choice, making Amesbury more appealing and opening up more grades, which will need more staffing. Need to open up more non-core classes. The administration is supported by the AFT union. Need to continue to financially support the athletic.
- City Councilor Lavoie spoke about the logistics of the monies in the city/school. He stated that 80% of the budget is to education. Lost a lot of state aide which is not the tax payers fault. The community needs to put more pressure on the state. Amesbury is not the only district struggling, all communities are. Councilor Lavoie commended the principals and administration for the great job this year in the budget process and for the recommendation of their 2 top items. If money was not an issue, Amesbury would have the best schools around because of all the amazing teachers.

The public hearing was then closed and the members of the committee spoke:

- Mr. Hoyt stated off by commenting on the article in the newspaper – he thanked Dr. Robinson and Ms. Farrell for their response in the newspaper. Mr. Hoyt stated that he was disappointed that the article was in the front page of the paper. He stated that with the several years of painful reductions, it is time to rebuild. Mr. Hoyt commented that Senator O’Connor-Ives and Representative Kelcourse are working hard to try to get some aide to the towns. He thanked everyone for this years process and their hard work and working together. Mr. Hoyt stated that he supports this budget.
- Mrs. Schultz echoed Mr. Hoyt’s comments and stated that we need to work together, be respectful and kind to each other.
- Ms. LaValley stated that with ten years of reduction, the article is not a reflection of the school committee, even though she did not read the article.

She sees growth in the community. She stated that the committee strives to do the best that they can with what they have and applauds the community for their involvement in the process. Ms. LaValley supports this budget.

- Mayor Gray thanked everyone and stated that this is a difficult process.
- Mr. Scorzoni stated that he was disappointed on the brand of APS, seeing a low morel, frustrated and negative comments in the past few months. Has heard there are parents looking into other schools for their families with administrations looking at other districts as well. Mr. Scorzoni stated that we need to offer up numbers (\$800,000. to \$900,000.) that can be worked with having limited resources.
- Mr. McGee thanked everyone for coming out and sees more and more support from the families. He commented on the disappointing article. Mr. McGee agreed with Mr. Scorzoni on the numbers.
- Mr. Schwartz stated that this has been a crossroads for all – need to look at all resources. He thanked the Daily news for the article, unfortunately need resources to fix what is in the report. We need to stand up to the state, enough testing. Need to educate all children. It is time to look at what happens if we don't fund the mandates and/or what happens if we do and sustainable. At this point, we need to move the community forward.

Mr. Schwartz closed the public hearing and handed it back to the Mayor.

#### **IV. COMMUNICATION**

- Ms. LaValley congratulated the AMS DI Team and the AHS Robotics Team for their accomplishments and winnings.  
FY16 budget will be voted on Monday, April 6, 2015.
- Mr. Scorzoni stated that on March 27<sup>th</sup> the Green Grant (\$216,502.00) was submitted. If APS is awarded the grant, it will go towards 4 energy projects at AMS with a cost savings of \$55,000.

#### **IX. PRESS CONFERENCE**

None

#### **X. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

*Motion by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mr. Hoyt to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 PM.*

*Vote: Yes, Unanimous.*

Respectfully Submitted,



Tom McGee, Secretary