MINUTES

AMITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Julie Altman, William Blake, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Jr., James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

AMITY BOARD MEMBER ABSENT: John A. Grasso, Jr.

Staff Members Present: John Brady, Charles Britton, Kathleen Fuller Cutler, Warren Gohsler, Kevin Keller, Jack Levine, Marianne Lippard, Marie McPadden, Mary Raiola, Jim Saisa

Also Present: Thomas Falcigno, Sheila McCreven, Tom Handler, Sandra Wallen, Brad Marcus, other members of the Public

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A meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, September 10, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at the District Offices.

1. **Call to Order:** William Blake called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.

   Motion to move Student Report, Item #8 on the agenda, to #3 (Mr. Stirling, 2d Mr. Horwitz).
   Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

3. **Student Report**
   Thomas Falcigno reported that the High School's Link Crew welcomed more than 350 students. The Link Crew is a group of volunteers that work to provide a welcoming experience for freshmen. Thomas noted that plans are being made to recognize Veterans' Day and to highlight Election Day. On September 20th, students will be able to learn about clubs that are open to students. Thomas said that a PBS documentary talked about Amity's theater department.

   Thomas said that he has been gathering student opinions on the use of drug dogs at the High School. His research suggests strong support for changes to the policy that the Board has been considering. The students don't believe this will violate their constitutional rights. He added that students did express concern that people with allergies to dogs should be respected. Thomas noted that he more than 300 students were polled. The votes were divided, with 51 percent in support of the policy change and 49 percent against it.

Mr. Horwitz asked if the students polled were alerted to the large number of false positives.

Thomas said that he believed that information was shared with students. He did not feel that the students would be influenced. He said that he would be happy to provide the statistics that he gathered.

Ms. Russo said that it sounds as though students feel strongly about not wanting drugs in the school.

Mr. Blake asked whether Thomas whether he could see having kids patted down every day.

Thomas said that he believes the revision being proposed is as far as the policy should go. This is about student safety. He is basing his opinion on what he heard from students.

Mr. Stirling congratulated Thomas on an exceptional presentation on this topic.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Special BOE Meeting, August 20, 2012

Motion to approve the minutes as presented (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. DeMaio).
Vote in favor: Patricia Cardozo, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Jr., James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, James Stirling
Vote opposed: none.
Abstain: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Sue Cohen, Tracey Lane Russo
Motion passed.

5. Demonstration of Amity's New Web Site

Warren Gohsler gave a short presentation on the updated school website. The website allows Amity's Central Office to easily post Board minutes and notices. Mr. Gohsler noted that the setup of the old website was more difficult to navigate, however, people got used to the way it was arranged. People knew where to locate information and developed a comfort level with what was there. The new setup makes it easier to find information. Minutes from the last year are available. Counseling has its own website and it is now being updated. Users can choose the calendars that they want to see. College visitations are listed. Staff can have websites. The website is searchable.

Mr. Hurley questioned whether Board policies will be easier to search. Mr. Gohsler said that they will be.

Ms. Cohen asked if the mission statement is on the website. Mr. Gohsler said that he did not see the statement, but it is easy to add new information as the need arises.

6. Public Comment

Sheila McCreven of Woodbridge said that she has spoken before the Board previously and would like to address the policy that involves the use of dogs to search school property. She said that she agrees drug use is a serious issue among students, but is concerned that students aren't seeing that their constitutional rights are in jeopardy with changes to the policy. A civics class could discuss this issue. She noted that drug use is a big problem and research shows that early cigarette, alcohol and marijuana use increases the likelihood of other drug use. Every child with a pack of cigarettes is at risk and if there is anything that can be done to curb drug use, it should be done. She stressed that a broad approach should be used to combat drugs, rather than just law enforcement.

Sandra Wallen of Woodbridge said that she isn't aware of any student government meeting taking place since she presented information to the Board at a previous meeting. She addressed the high number of false alerts with drug dogs; one Chicago study showed up to 75 percent. She said that it is certain that students will be falsely accused. She noted that she looked for data showing that this approach would decrease drug use and could not find any.

Tom Handler of Woodbridge said that he spoke before the Board in June. While he feels that everyone is opposed to drug use in school, there is a high rate of false positives with drug dogs. A friend of his daughter had the experience of a dog pointing his nose at her locker and the girl was traumatized by that. If the searches aren't producing the desired results, he questioned why students be put through further trauma. Mr. Handler also addressed the design of the website. He suggested that the site wasn't designed with people who are unaware. Once he understood the logic, he could navigate the site. The order and logic are hard to understand.

Brad Marcus of Orange said that he is in favor of bringing the drug dogs into the school to serve as a deterrent. He asked some of his daughter's friends for their thoughts and none had a problem with the idea. Mr. Marcus also commented on the website, noting that he hopes that parents and students were invited to try out the site. The logic used by people who are in the know might differ from the users. He designs websites to be accessible to anyone. The website is only as good as the information it contains.

Tasia Kimball introduced herself as the newly elected Amity Education Association President. If anyone has any concerns, she asked them to e-mail her and she will respond within 24 hours.

Ms. Altman asked if the Amity Education Association has an opinion on the use of drug dogs. Ms. Kimball said no.

7. **Second Reading of Revision to Policy 5145.122(a) Use of Dogs to Search School Property**
   a. **Discussion and Possible Action on Policy 5145.122(a)**
   Motion to approve revision to Policy 5145.122(a) (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. DeMaio).

   Discussion:

   Mr. DeMaio said that he learned that students have told school security officers that they carry drugs on them when the drug dogs are present. The proposed revision to the policy states that individual(s) shall not be subject to a search by dogs "except as permitted by law." The revision is aimed to protect students. It is up to the administration whether to use the dogs and when to use the dogs. He does not want to be responsible for a student overdosing. Amity needs to keep drugs out.

   Ms. Cohen said that she appreciates the problem, but has concerns. Her feeling is that the schools are there to educate students and help them to become healthy adults. Counselors are best equipped to help. She would prefer an approach that is centered on helping people, rather than using dogs.

   Ms. Russo said that the revision is only there to clarify the policy. A student would only be searched by an administrative official. She is proud of the students for speaking out against drugs. The revision to the policy is common sense. The language does nothing but state that nothing can be done outside the bounds of the law.

   Mr. Horwitz said that he is opposed to having drugs in the school, but there is a much larger issue at stake. The idea of bringing in drug dogs to sniff children is disturbing. This is a big step and there is no science to support it. The evidence is contrary to the dogs doing any good. There is no data to show that this will solve the drug problem. There is only one parent here tonight to support this. The error rates can be 8 out of 10. There is an added problem of bias if the dog handler believes that a child has drugs. Dogs sniff for certain chemicals. A dog may light on snap dragons, petunias and perfumes. Vinegar, food additives, soap and aspirin could attract a dog. There is no evidence that this is an effective strategy. There is no need to make up policies that aren't based on science.

   Ms. Russo said that she questions why dogs have been let in previously, if what Mr. Horwitz is saying is true.

   Mr. Hurley said that he takes exception with Mr. Horwitz's comments. Law enforcement officials rely on these dogs. He questioned the presence of these dogs in airports and other public places. The Connecticut State Police will not tell you what the dogs alert on. Law enforcement agencies don't believe in

the studies Mr. Horwitz referred to. He doesn't buy the argument that children will be accused of drug possession just because they held a petunia. The dogs would not be entering classrooms. A student would be taken out of class if there is suspicion. The way the policy is written would not change this. The revision to the policy only states that it could be used. Dr. Brady has ensured that his staff knows the law. This is a small change.

Dr. Brady said that he would like to clear up any possible confusion and stressed that there are no strip searches at Amity.

Ms. Altman said that what has been presented is authority-based knowledge and not evidence-based knowledge. As a parent and social worker, there is concern about substance abuse at Amity. She is not convinced that these few words added to the policy will make a difference. She never thought of these searches as an effective deterrent.

Mr. Stirling said that he doesn't like dogs in the schools. It's the opposite of what we want to do by building an environment of trust. The District would not be randomly performing searches. This will probably not be used much. The addition of these words enhances the policy.

Ms. Cohen said these few words are a significant change from the original policy.

Mr. Browe said that dogs are used at airports and for other uses besides locating drugs. As with any tool, there are false positives and false negatives. Breathalyzers are used even though their accuracy has been called into question. He has spoken to a lot of people who are in favor of this change.

Mr. Blake said that, as chairman, he usually does not vote. He will be voting tonight. Everyone on the Board is committed to the safety and wellbeing of the kids. When a person gives up a civil right, they aren't getting it back. There is now the assumption that Amity has a huge problem, but he sees no need for this type of policy.

Mr. DeMaio said that he was alarmed to hear from law enforcement that some kids are so brazen that they talk openly about where to hide drugs to avoid detection.

Vote in favor: Christopher Browe, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling
Vote opposed: Julie Altman, William Blake, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Rita Gedansky, James Horwitz
Abstain: none.

Motion failed.

Mr. Browe asked Mr. Blake to explain when he votes. Mr. Blake said that Mr. Browe could discuss this with him after the meeting.

8. Principal's Reports – Opening of School

High School – Dr. Britton said that a number of new employees were welcomed. One recent hire was Mr. Waterman, who will serve as the director of the Career Center. The High School has an outstanding group of educators. A welcoming event for parents will take place this week. Another event is planned for the parents of seniors at Amity. He thanked Mr. Saisa and the IT departments for their great work.

Orange Middle School – Ms. Fuller Cutler welcomed everyone back, noting that Orange had a great opening. There are 187 boys and 184 girls at the Middle School. She thanked the Facilities Director and the IT employees. There are three new staff members who are new to Orange, but not to the District. With the initiative to have students "Bring Your Own Device" to school, 85 percent of students plan to bring in their handheld computer devices. There are IPads in classrooms for those without their own device. The first fire drill went well and the first PTO meeting of the year is scheduled for this week. Back to School Night is also planned to take place this week. The back parking lot looks great.

Ms. Russo questioned what happens when students have to use IPads in school, but don't have the opportunity to bring the devices home.

Ms. Fuller Cutler said that more than 85 percent of students have the connectivity at home.

Ms. Russo asked if there is any way as a community this can be helped.

Dr. Brady said that Bring Your Own Device is new. We can't make the assumption that when children don't have this technology, it is for economic reasons.

Bethany Middle School – Assistant Principal Thayer Doyle said that Dr. Dellinger could not be here tonight. There are 350 students in the school, with exactly 179 boys and 179 girls enrolled. The facilities crew did a fantastic job. The gym floor is in great shape. Back to School Night will take place this Thursday. Sports tryouts have begun. With the IPad rollout, 30 students will be taking the devices home.

Ms. Altman questioned why gender is being emphasized. She is aware of gender neutral students and sensitivity about gender should be stressed.

9. Facilities Report of Summer Projects

Mr. Saisa thanked everyone for their kind words. Members of the Board received copies of the 2012 Facilities Report. The new bleachers are excellent and roof

restoration at the High School is about 80 percent complete. The custodians did a terrific job. Corridor walls were repainted. He noted that page three of the report shows cost savings initiatives. The department would like to explore every concern. If someone notices a wet ceiling tile, he wants to know about it.

Mr. Hurley questioned with the connection of the gas lines whether the District could save on propane as well. Mr. Saisa said that he will be looking at that.

Dr. Brady said that Mr. Saisa's report will be submitted to CABE. He has previously been a runner up for an award.

10. Announcements of the Board and Administration
Dr. Brady said that he had no announcements to make at this time.

11. Correspondence
Dr. Brady said that this topic would be addressed under Item 12D

12. Superintendent's Report

a. Personnel Report
There was no discussion.

b. Impact of Sequestration on Amity
Dr. Brady noted that the administration was under the impression that the cuts would affect this school year. Mr. Hurley said that when preparing the budget, the Board thought that this would be available.

c. Efforts to Prepare Students for CMT/CAPT
Reading proficiency on the CAPT is a requirement for graduation. If a student doesn't pass, there is continued remedial support in reading. Dr. Brady noted that this involves a very small number of students (in the past four or five). Students are assessed on a regular basis. If a student struggles with writing as seniors, they can get support. We will only be seeing the CMT and CAPT for two more years. New evaluations will be given to students in 7th, 8th and 11th grades. The evaluations will be based on the Common Core Standards. Ms. McPadden will be working on transition plans for reading.

d. Information on Long Range Planning Study
Dr. Brady said that the city of Milford had a similar study done to determine the same type of information. He expects the study to be significant and controversial. The Board will require unbiased opinions. The administration is currently in the process of determining which firms do this type of study. Ms. Russo questioned whether Dr. Brady anticipates any staffing changes.

Dr. Brady said that enrollment staffing changes are expected in 2015-2016 based on the current data. He doesn't anticipate significant staffing changes.

Mr. Stirling said that it appears to be proactive to seek out the Request for Proposal. The District isn't committing to a specific vendor at this stage.

Dr. Brady noted that NESDEC is prepared to do an enrollment study.

13. Chairman's Report

a. Committee Reports

1. ACES – Ms. Cohen said that the schedule will resume on Thursday.
2. CABE – Mr. Stirling reported that two Amity Board of Education members will be recognized.
3. Curriculum – There has been no meeting.
4. Facilities – There has been no meeting.
5. Finance

a. Discussion of Proposed 2012-2013 Budget Calendar
The Board reviewed the budget calendar. Dr. Brady noted that he is proposing that a public hearing take place on April 1, 2013. The Amity Finance Committee will then discuss and make possible changes to the final 2013-2014 budget. The Amity Board of Education can also discuss and make possible changes to the final 2013-2014 budget the same day. This will afford time for extra work on the budget and final action on the budget on April 8, 2013. The Annual Public Budget Meeting will take place on May 7, 2013.

b. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposal to Extend and Blend Electricity Supply Contract
Move the Superintendent of Schools be authorized to "extend and blend" the District's electricity supply contract at a price of about $0.0831 per kilowatt hour with an extension of the contract to December 31, 2016. The Superintendent is authorized to determine if the market price is in the best interest of the District. The Board waives the Board's Purchasing Policy on bidding as this is with the same vendor and will benefit the District (Mr. Stirling, 2d Mr. Browe).
Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

c. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements
There were no questions on the statements.

d. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under $3,000
There was no discussion.

e. Discussion and Possible Acton on Budget Transfers
The Board agreed to vote on the two budget transfers together.

Move to make the following budget transfer of $11,300 to pay for special education transportation:

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
04-12-6130-5510	Pupil Transportation	$11,300	
04-12-6110-5510	Pupil Transportation		$11,300

Move to make the following budget transfer of $4,258 to pay for the dues of the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Southern Connecticut Conference (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Crocco):

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
03-14-2219-5611	Instructional Supplies	$4,258	
03-13-2400-5810	Dues and Fees		$4,258

Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

f. Discussion and Possible Action on New Funding Requests

Move to make the following budget transfer of $17,550 to pay Excavation Technologies, Inc. of Cheshire, Connecticut, to remove the oil tank and pump the oil/sludge from the oil tank at Amity High School (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Gedansky):

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
05-15-0000-5850	Contingency Account	$17,550	
03-14-2600-5720	Improvements to Site		$17,550

Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

6. Policy – There was no meeting.
7. Personnel
   a. Executive Session – Negotiations
   b. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the Contracts with Paraprofessionals, Administrative Assistant Employees and Nurses
      Motion to enter Executive Session at 8:47 p.m. (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Russo).
      Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

      The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:04 p.m.

      Motion to approve the contracts with paraprofessionals, administrative assistant employees and nurses (Ms. Crocco, 2d Mr. Stirling).
      V*ote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

   c. Executive Session – Superintendent's Evaluation
      Motion to enter Executive Session at 9:05 p.m. to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation (Ms. Gedansky, 2d Ms. Cardozo).
      Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

      The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:20 p.m.

Motion to authorize the Chair to finalize the Superintendent's evaluation (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Gedansky).
Vote in favor unanimous. ***Motion passed.***

14. Items for the Next Agenda

15. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m. (Ms. Crocco, 2d Ms. Gedansky).
Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marianne Lippard, recording clerk
Rita Gedansky, secretary

References/Attachments:

Minutes: Board of Education Regular Meeting, 8/20/12
Amity Finance Committee, 8/20/12

Reports: Personnel Report, 9/10/12
Amity Regional School District #5, Revenues and Expenditures FY 2012-2013
Amity Regional School District #5, Budget Transfers 2012-2013

Policies: 5145.122 (a) and 5145.122(b) Student, Search and Seizure, Use of Dogs to Search School Property
5145.12, Student, Search and Seizure, Desks and School Lockers

Memos: Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (9/4/12) re: Proposed 2013-2014 Budget Calendar
Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (9/4/12) re: Proposal to Extend and Blend Electricity Supply Contract
Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (9/4/12) re: Budget Transfers of $3,000 or More
Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (9/5/12) re: New Funding Requests for FY2012-2013

Misc. Recommendation to Remove Oil Tank at Amity High School by Facilities Director Jim Saisa