

MINUTES

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

AMITY BOARD MEMBER ABSENT: Steven DeMaio

Staff Members Present: John Brady, Charles Britton, Kathleen Fuller Cutler, Richard Dellinger, Yvonne Klansko, Jack Levine, Marianne Lippard, Marie McPadden, Mary Raiola, Jim Saisa

Also Present: Members of the Public

A meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, October 15, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. in the Media Center at Amity Middle School in Bethany.

1. **Call to Order:** William Blake called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.
3. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Regular BOE Meeting, September 10, 2012
Motion to approve the minutes as presented (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Gedansky).
Vote in favor: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Rita Gedansky, James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling
Vote opposed: none.
Abstain: John A. Grasso, Jr. ***Motion passed.***
4. **Recognition of National Merit Scholar Program Semi-Finalists and Commended Students**

Dr. Brady and the Board recognized students for participating in the National Merit Scholarship Program 2011. Semi-Finalists were Alan Peng, Skylar Spear and Douglas Wong. The Commended Students included Seo Choi, Eliza Dillaway, Caitlin Foster, Katherine Glusac, Daniel Grober, Jasper Han, Alexandra Hill, Kenneth Jackson, Tanay Lathia, Margot Leibowitz, Benjamin Levine, Zhangao Liu, Aaron O'Neill, Emma Platoff, Noah Safian, Ang Shi, Madeline Tremblay, Helen Zhao and Shiyu Zhuang.
5. **Report on Adult and Continuing Education**

Curriculum Director Marie McPadden reported that during the past two years, the District saw an increase in net income, despite a slight decrease in student

enrollment. It is believed that the program has been impacted by the economy. For example, Zumba started with robust enrollment, yet the numbers dropped significantly and she is looking into why that occurred.

She noted that the District is working hard to offer interesting courses. In Spring 2011, a couple of courses could not run due to a lack of enrollments, spring enrollments were down by 50 percent in some courses.

Ms. McPadden noted that one goal is to implement on-line registration. The number of courses offered has expanded. On-line courses are being offered. Credit recovery courses are also excellent for homebound students. A 3D graphics program, which is a 36-hour certificate class, is being offered this fall. Strategic partnerships have been formed.

For next summer, she would like to see a Lego camp offered. She is also interested in expanding the Amity on Stage program. Finally, the summer bus transportation has not been completely utilized.

Ms. Cohen questioned enrollment and asked where the income goes, whether into the general fund or into the program. She asked whether prices could be reduced.

Dr. Brady said that the money goes into a separate account called Adult Ed.

Ms. McPadden said that the course offerings will be looked at, along with the prices.

Yvonne Klansko said that Amity's pricing is competitive. In order to get good instructors, we have to have the money to pay them. Instructors aren't paid for preparation, gasoline, etc.

Ms. McPadden said that it is difficult to be competitive in certain areas. At The Edge, for example, unlimited classes are offered and Zumba would be much cheaper than what Amity can offer. The New Haven Manufacturers Association is writing a grant and would like Amity to partner with them.

Ms. Altman questioned the transportation situation.

Ms. Klansko said that parents have been calling because they would like transportation so that they can get their kids to summer school on time, however, parents want a full-day program. Busing is pretty expensive. Parents have said that they have to come home to open the door, etc. Programs that can go all day, such as the Lego program, are preferable. Ms. McPadden said that the Lego program is promising because of what it teaches and it will probably run all day.

6. Public Comment

Andrew Shee and Calliope Wong, students at the High School, asked the Board to keep the dark room. Calliope said that the dark room teaches discipline and leads to a thorough understanding of the techniques used for developing film. It is a very different experience than using a computer.

Andrew said that Amity is one of the last schools in the state to have a dark room. Amity should be a leader, not follow after what others are doing. Amity has been winning awards in photography.

The students' noted that the cost of change is no guarantee of greater benefits. They started a petition and 375 people agree.

7. Student Report

Zach Babbitz, a student at Amity Middle School in Bethany, reported about the latest happenings at the school. He reported that mid-marking period was on October 2nd. The eighth grade fitness test is scheduled to take place this week. At the end of the week, the seventh graders are traveling to Sleeping Giant for a field trip. Team building activities are planned for the Gold Team at Empower in Middletown on October 23rd. Picture retakes are scheduled to take place on October 25th. A Career Day is scheduled for November 2nd. The sports teams are doing well so far.

8. Announcements of the Board and Administration

Reports were given by Dr. Britton, Ms. Fuller Cutler and Dr. Dellinger.

High School - Dr. Britton said that there will be a whole school election on Election Day. For Veterans' Day, a number of veterans will visit the High School. Students can participate during study halls or during their social studies classes. There will be a moment of silence to remember veterans. Dr. Britton said that he looks forward to hosting the group and showing appreciation to the veterans.

Dr. Britton noted that there would be a senior assembly this week about the dangers of texting and driving. Seniors can do simulator activities. The freshmen, sophomores and juniors will have other activities.

Orange Middle School – Ms. Fuller Cutler said that the school will also have a focus on veterans. An Iraqi war veteran will meet with seventh graders. He plans to spend the day with small groups of students. He brings his uniform and shows students the items that he carried with him. For the eighth graders, there will be a presentation to each team. The veterans bring artifacts and a video. The day will help students grasp the meaning of Veterans' Day.

Bethany Middle School – Dr. Dellinger said that he is planning to bring in a new speaker to address the eighth grade in recognition of Veterans' Day. There are

plans in place for each team. A speaker who has visited in the past will be making another trip to the school this year.

9. Correspondence

a. Letter Regarding Results of Fire Marshall Inspection

A letter from the Woodbridge Fire Marshal was contained in the Board packet. An inspection at the High School took place on August 28, 2012. No major violations were found. Minor violations found were a misuse of an extension cord in an office, storage in an exit backstage in the auditorium, and lockset installed in an incorrect direction in the band room. The issues were all addressed and corrections were made. There was no discussion by the Board on this topic.

Dr. Brady noted that an anonymous letter was received about the use of computer applications with the iPad pilot. He noted that there is a need for parents to monitor the use of electronic devices to make sure students are doing what they're supposed to do. The parent was referring to a situation where students didn't have the applications to complete their assignments. Two teachers were mentioned in the letter. The applications mentioned were available on the Internet. The other teacher mentioned four applications, none of which students were required to have. None of the applications mentioned were required to complete homework assignments. The parent described these as special applications. If a class requires the use of the tool, it will be provided to students.

Ms. Russo said that the parent's questions are similar to questions raised by the Board. If a child does not have access to technology that could help them, then she would like to look into ways to see that they can obtain what they need. Having technology at home can really help. Students without access can be shortchanged. We need to be sensitive looking ahead. She acknowledged that at this point she doesn't know how you do that or afford it.

Dr. Brady and Ms. Raiola said that the District has been able to get this technology for the students who can benefit. It's a challenge to provide all students with the same advantages.

Mr. Stirling questioned whether the District is presuming that each student has access to a computer. Sometimes essays need to be submitted in the evening.

Dr. Brady said yes, but not necessarily in the home. There are media centers. Computers can be accessed after school. The percentage of students without these devices at home is unknown.

10. Superintendent's Report

a. Dr. Dellinger – Conference in Portland, Oregon

Dr. Brady noted that Dr. Dellinger will be traveling to a conference in Portland and expects to gather information that will help the District.

- b. Personnel Report – There was no discussion.
- c. Update on Long-Range Planning Study – Dr. Brady said that RFPs are being received for the study. There seems to be interest from the towns, particularly Bethany, in being involved in the study. Dr. Brady would like to consider expanding the study and will see if there is a consensus.

11. Chairman's Report

a. Committee Reports

1. ACES – Ms. Cohen reported that Dr. Edmondson, the Executive Director of ACES, has offered to speak to the Board about ACES. This presentation should take about 20 minutes. The Board agreed that a presentation would be welcome at the regular meeting in November.
2. CABE – Mr. Stirling reported that the convention is on Friday and Saturday. The event offers a great networking opportunity and a chance to learn about best practices, setting the budget, etc. Mr. Stirling encouraged all members of the Board to attend.
3. Curriculum – Ms. Altman said that a lengthy meeting took place on October 4th.
 - a. Information on Atlas Curriculum Mapping Project
A detailed presentation was provided on Atlas at the Curriculum Committee meeting earlier this month. Ms. McPadden said that she is excited about the use of Atlas. There is a wealth of information on Atlas and reports can be generated. There are areas for integration and she will continue to update the Board on this topic.
 - b. Discussion and Possible Action on New Course Proposals
 1. Honors Ceramics and Pottery
 2. Advanced Ceramics and Pottery
 3. Reading Self and Society
 4. Marine Biology and Oceanography
 5. Physics for Engineering

Motion to approve Honors Ceramics and Pottery, Advanced Ceramics and Pottery, Reading Self and Society, Marine Biology and Oceanography, and Physics for Engineering (Mr. Browe, 2d Mr. Horwitz).

Discussion:

Referring to the reading course, Ms. Cardozo questioned whether something could begin sooner.

Dr. Britton said that there are supports in place to help students at an earlier age.

Ms. Cohen questioned whether Honors Physics is still available.

Ms. Altman said responded that it is. Physics for Engineering is the first STEM course being offered.

Mr. Hurley questioned what the staffing implications would be.

Ms. Altman said that there are none.

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

6. Information on Elimination of Landscaping and Set Design in Favor of Advanced Woodworking

Dr. Brady noted that the Advanced Woodworking course would have students learning to design and build sets and also learning the techniques of high level wood sculpture. The experience would be vocational.

The Board questioned the idea of replacing landscaping. There are a number of landscaping businesses in the area.

Dr. Brady said that landscaping is a one semester course and doesn't seem to offer sufficient experience. Financial considerations are part of the problem.

Ms. Altman said that limited resources did not make for a quality experience.

Ms. Russo said that the woodworking class should include carpentry.

Ms. Cardozo said that set design would seem to be a very small market. There is a lot of landscaping work.

7. Information on Digital Photography

There is a proposal to create a digital photography lab/digital music lab. Dr. Brady noted that this is very preliminary. There are students who enjoy the film photography experience. Kodak doesn't make film anymore. The curriculum wouldn't change. There would be costs involved in recreating the space. Dr. Brady noted that this would be presented to the Board through the budget process.

Mr. Blake said that it is important for people to be heard on this topic.

8. Information on Creativity Study

Dr. Brady said that the District should be promoting creativity. A Yale child study looks at the topic of creativity. The director of the study is from France. He is interested in looking at differences in creativity. In France, there is more opportunity for creativity and this minimizes destructive activity. Students will complete some on-line surveys and participation in the study is optional. The study will give a baseline for how creative Amity students are. The District would like to use this as a baseline for developing lessons and also for developing creativity.

9. Information on AMSB Blue Team Reorganization

Dr. Brady noted that the Blue Team teachers requested that the students be regrouped to provide a better quality experience to students. The State does not want classes with more than 50 percent special education students. Reorganization will create smaller class sizes and mix the students. This will maximize support. Dr. Brady received two e-mails from parents who had concerns about the restructuring. There has been positive feedback on the change. A meeting was held and ten parents came to learn more. Dr. Brady noted that the teachers know how to pace instruction.

Ms. Gedansky said that this appears to go back to when there were no levels.

Dr. Brady said that everyone benefits when class sizes are reduced, because the level of support improves. Class work is organized to suit students of different abilities. The same material is presented.

Ms. Cutler said that with a larger number of students with special needs, her school has to do a lot of split schedules. They struggle with the scheduling aspect.

Ms. Altman said that she is thankful to the Blue Team for putting this idea forward and to the parents who are cooperating in helping the District to advance education.

10. Information on PLAN Test Administration

Dr. Britton said that this test is becoming more popular. It is important to see that students are ready for this test. The two-and-a-half hour test will be administered this week. The cost of the test is \$12 per student, and it will be funded through the student activity accounts. It would be part of the budget request for next year if it goes well.

4. Facilities
Mr. Blake said that the District facilities look great.
5. Finance
 - a. Discussion and Possible Action on Revised 2013-2014 Budget Calendar
Dr. Brady noted that meetings have been added in April.
Motion to approve the Revised 2013-2014 Budget Calendar (Ms. Cohen, 2d Mr. Stirling).
Vote in favor unanimous. Motion passed.
 - b. Information on October 1, 2012 Enrollment Report
It was noted that the share for Orange is 50.1 percent; Woodbridge is seeing a four percent increase. The enrollment for Bethany is down .8 percent.
 - c. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements
There were no questions.
 - d. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfer Under \$3,000
There were no questions.
 - e. Discussion and Possible Action on Budget Transfers
In a memo to Dr. Brady dated October 2, 2012, Mr. Levine recommends the Amity Board of Education approve two budget transfers of over \$3,000. One budget transfer is needed to pay for a second intern rather than a bench sub.

Motion to take the following budget transfer of \$13,926 to pay for a second intern at Bethany Middle School (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Crocco):

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
05-15-1026-5111	Certified Salaries	\$13,926	
01-13-2400-5330	Other Professional/Tech.		\$13,926

Discussion:

Ms. Cardozo said that she thought that interns were always volunteers. Dr. Brady said that this pays for the intern's coursework. The District must give the intern a 10-week teaching experience.
Vote in favor unanimous. Motion passed.

Move to make the following budget transfer of \$27,000 to pay for substitutes/tutors rather than interns at Amity High School (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Altman):

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
03-13-2400-5330	Other Professional/Tech	\$27,000	
05-15-1026-5111	Certified Salaries		\$27,000

Vote in favor unanimous. Motion passed.

f. Update on Financial Operations

1. Update on Proposed Extend and Blend Electricity Supply Contract
At the September 10, 2012 meetings of the Amity Finance Committee and the Amity Board of Education, the administration had sought and obtained authorization 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. Dr. Brady was authorized to decide if the market price was in the best interest of the District.

The market price was \$0.0840 per kilowatt hour, or \$33,000 less savings than had been presented to the Amity Finance Committee and Amity Board of Education. Dr. Brady decided the market price was unacceptable, therefore, the District did not “extend and blend” the electricity supply contract.

Dr. Brady directed Facilities Director Jim Saisa to explore other alternatives. Mr. Saisa met with Mike Stein of United Illuminating and found that the District qualifies for the Last Resort Service Generation Services Charge for Amity High School. The High School is the only school that qualifies for the lower rate, because the minimum demand is 500 kilowatt hours. It uses about 67 percent of the District’s total electricity usage. At the end of the current contract on December 31, 2014, the District could benefit by switching to the lower rate offered by UI. For example, the rate was recently about \$0.059 per kilowatt hour. The rate does change quarterly; however, several years of data demonstrate the rate has never exceeded the standard rate. Dr. Brady would like to hold off on “extend and blend” and possibly implement the Last Resort Service Generation Services Charge at the end of the current contract or the District may decide to bid the supply contract.

It was noted that the audit of the District is going well and Amity is getting a more extensive audit done for no additional cost.

Mr. Hurley questioned whether anything had been heard from the State regarding an overpayment. Dr. Brady and Mr. Levine said that there was no new information to report.

6. Policy – There was no discussion.
7. Personnel – There was no discussion.

12. Items for the Next Agenda

It was noted that the Board self-assessment retreat will take place later this month.

13. Tour of the Building

Any Board member interested in seeing the Bethany Middle School was invited to take a tour after the meeting.

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:51 p.m. (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. Browe).

Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk
Rita Gedansky, secretary

References/Attachments

- Minutes: Board of Education Regular Meeting, September 10, 2012
Amity Finance Committee, September 10, 2012
- Reports: Amity Regional School District No. 5 – Budget Transfers 2012-2013
Personnel Report, October 15, 2012
Enrollment Report, 10/4/12
Amity Regional School District No. 5 – Revenues and Expenditures for
FY 2012-2013
- Memos: Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (10/2/12) re: Budget Transfers of \$3,000
or More
Jack B. Levine to John J. Brady (9/19/12) re: Proposed Revised 2013-
2014 Budget Calendar
John J. Brady to Members of the Amity Finance Committee and Amity
Board of Education (10/11/12) re: Update on Proposal to ‘Extend and
Blend’ Electricity Supply Contract
- Letters: Michael Cavanagh to John Brady (9/28/12) re: Inspection
- Misc.: Proposal for New Course / Unit or Course Modification