

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 MEMBERS ABSENT: None

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

Also Present: Craig Edmondson, Thomas Falcigno; other members of the Public

A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, December 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 6:30 p.m.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.
3. **Recognition of Computer Information Systems and Video Production Systems – Career and Technology Education Assessment Students – Amity #1 Ranking**

Dr. Brady announced that Amity was ranked #1 in Computer Information Systems and Video Production Systems on the Career and Technical Education Assessment. He noted that this was a significant accomplishment. Certificates were distributed to 17 students. Students receiving certificates for Computer Information Systems included: Haneesh Anumolu, David Dardik, Andrew Gusciora, Bryan Kirby, Jared Loewenthal, Peter Satonick, Alexander Slanski, Michael Yuan, and Noah Safian. Students recognized for their achievement in Video Production Systems included: Shae Belenski, Alexander Butler, Joshua Hess, Zachary Royal, Matthew Schatz, Mitchell Sopp, Jake White, and Matthew Prussin.

The Board took a short recess at 6:38 p.m. and continued the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

4. **Presentation of ACES Programs and Services**

Dr. Brady and Ms. Cohen welcomed Dr. Craig Edmondson, Executive Director and Superintendent of ACES, to provide information to give the Board a sense of the scope of the organization providing services to the District. Dr. Edmondson presented an overview of ACES, which is a public school system serving 25 school districts, including 58 communities, in South Central Connecticut. ACES

serves more than 2,200 total students. It is a non-profit business provides fee-based services. He noted that the majority of students served by ACES are challenged in terms of education, although other services are offered. ACES has five special education schools and three magnet schools. One of the magnet schools operated by ACES is Education Center for the Arts (ECA) in New Haven. ACES also coordinates a superintendent's group.

About 40 years ago, six regions of the state were divided. There is an infrastructure to look at every school district in terms of need. ACES has a governing board and Ms. Cohen represents Amity.

Dr. Edmondson said noted that ACES has about 130 vehicles on the road servicing the special education population. The organization also has a program development and marketing office. He showed pictures of each of ACES facilities and explained what population is served by each school. The non-profit also runs collaboratives for school districts interested in running a program in their home school. A program is also run at Yale-New Haven Hospital and St. Raphael's that provides tutoring to students there. Technology services also are offered.

ACES also runs a program where clients go out and work. The program is run in the greater North Haven area and currently serves 90 clients ages 22 to 65.

Amity has taken advantage of some of what ACES offers. The organization also has access to a lobbyist, so it has direct access to legislators.

Discussion:

Mr. Stirling questioned Dr. Edmondson about his perspective on the state budget crisis.

Dr. Edmondson said that he feels it is incumbent on all of us to be in touch with our local legislators due to the threat of additional money coming out of the education budget.

Another essential role for ACES will be to support the District with teacher evaluations.

Mr. Horwitz said that it is clear that ACES provides important services. He added that his son attended the ECA program and it was extraordinary for him.

Dr. Edmondson said that the ECA program is viewed as a different opportunity for students. He views ACES as offering complementary services to what a district already offers.

Motion to move Student Report from Item #9 to Item #5 on the agenda (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. DeMaio)

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

5. Student Report

Thomas Falcigno said that Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Daniel C. Esty, Commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Protection, recently visited. Amity's conversion from fuel oil to natural gas is something that they would like to see elsewhere. Later this week, SADD will bring awareness to their cause during Grim Reaper Day. Musical performances will take place soon. Thomas noted that the High School now has a new club called Amity Unified Theater. Blankets are being distributed to the needy.

6. Atlas Curriculum Software Demonstration

A presentation was given on Atlas at the recent Curriculum Committee meeting and Marie McPadden, Director of Curriculum and Staff Development, said that she felt it would be helpful to present the information about Atlas here as well.

The software allows teachers to work together and more easily communicate. Post-its can be sent via e-mail. Plans are to eventually include a parent portal.

There is a pacing guide that teachers have collaboratively worked on. The template is like a map helping teachers to find what they need. There is a section for activities, as well as a link to the math organizer.

Atlas offers multiple tools to help a brand new teacher. Ms. McPadden noted that assessments will be used toward the evaluations. She noted that ACES has been crucial in helping Amity with curriculum professional development, assessment and new teacher evaluation.

Dr. Brady noted that the Atlas program is not associated with the new assessment practices. He said that each administrator uses an iPad and can determine how on target the teacher is, resulting in a more rigorous evaluation.

Mr. Horwitz said that the curriculum map seems to provide an excellent road map for the teachers. He noted that as with any roadmap, you can miss the side roads. He questioned how this allows for the creativity and spontaneity of the teacher.

Ms. McPadden said that teachers will always have the opportunity for creativity. Creativity would never be taken from teachers. While they have a road map, how they deliver instruction is up to them. This is a sharing tool.

Mr. DeMaio questioned how secure the site is.

Mr. Gohsler said that this is one of the systems that are changed.

Mr. Stirling questioned whether there is freedom to do something else.

Ms. McPadden said that she needs to be aware of how the students are performing. The move is toward a common assessment.

Ms. Altman noted that with the Common Core Standards, there is less latitude for innovation.

Ms. McPadden noted that the standards are your base and there are 1100 standards.

7. Approval of Minutes

a. Regular Board of Education Meeting, November 12, 2012

Motion to approve the minutes as presented (Ms. Gedansky, 2d Ms. Cardozo).

Vote in favor: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Jr., James Horwitz, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

Vote opposed: none

Abstain: Thomas Hurley

Motion passed.

8. Discussion and Possible Action on School Calendar Revision

Dr. Brady noted that parents want to avoid the use of any vacation. The plan is to reduce the school year by two days. March 22nd will be used as a school day. If additional days are needed, Dr. Brady suggested beginning to cut at the end of the week when considering adding school days during the April vacation. The parents have overwhelmingly requested that the District not use the last week of June to make up school days. The last week might be needed for teacher days. Dr. Brady said that he discussed the school calendar with the other superintendents and this is the most popular alternative at this point. Over 100 students are going to Disney World in April.

Motion to accept the calendar revisions (Mr. Browe, 2d Ms. Cardozo).

Discussion:

Ms. Russo said that while this meets the letter of the law, it sends a mixed message. Technically, kids are not going to be in school for as many days. This seems to keep happening and it isn't fair to families or students.

Mr. Stirling noted that this would be the second year in a row that the calendar was reduced to 180 days. He is also concerned about shortchanging students. It's important to build in enough days.

Dr. Brady said that the town of Orange presents a real challenge this school year because work needs to be completed on their buildings.

Mr. Stirling said that it may be necessary to eliminate one of the vacations entirely.

Dr. Brady said that it is a challenge.

Ms. Cohen suggested that instead of having the last two days as half days, perhaps they can be changed to full days.

Dr. Brady said that professional development time is also very important.

Vote in favor: Julie Altman, Christopher Browe, Patricia Cardozo, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, Jr., James Horwitz, Thomas Hurley, Tracey Lane Russo, James Stirling

Vote opposed: none

Abstain: Sue Cohen

9. First Reading – Policy 4117.4 Technical Amendment to Non-Renewal/Suspension Policy

Dr. Brady noted that this is a mandated change. The only modification has to do with date changes. This provides an additional month. If Board members have comments, they should contact the legislature. This item will appear on the next agenda as well.

10. Public Comment

No members of the public addressed the Board.

11. Announcements from the Board and Administration

- a. State Department of Education Enhancement Grant – Amity Middle School, Orange Campus
Dr. Brady noted that this deals with issues of bullying. Students share their experiences.
- b. District Mission Statement
Mr. Blake noted that the Mission Statement is visible in the background so that the camera can capture the message. This visibility provides a clear focus for the Board.
- c. Update on Long Range Planning Study
Dr. Brady said that a Request for Proposals was put out to examine Amity's projected enrollment and future plan. After receiving about six proposals, he received a call from the first selectman in Bethany expressing interest in expanding the study. The first selectmen in Orange and Woodbridge also expressed interest. Dr. Brady said that there is a prescribed process for considering a regional school district. The process is cumbersome. The study being performed is very preliminary. A vote would eventually be required. Each town may individually pass the vote. Dr. Brady said that he could see holding off on the study until February. Dr. Brady noted that he doesn't sense support. Mr. Blake said that he thought that there was a lot of interest. The change would give the towns less direct control. Mr. Blake said that though Amity can provide a great education, this change is not an agenda of this Board at this time. Ms. Cohen said that the towns are still going to want to be in the study although they're not that interested in the idea. This will result in

a more costly study, requiring their participation. Mr. Blake said that this topic will be discussed again in February.

- d. Information on Student Management System
Dr. Brady said that iPass has not proven to be the best student management system. It was inexpensive and, in this case, you get what you pay for. PowerSchool has a lot of positive attributes. Another system also appears promising. Dr. Brady noted that iPass is not an intuitive system. Software adjustments have been needed. It is supported by a rather weak training staff. He added that this is being noted for forecasting purposes.
- e. Information on CAPT Achievement – Advanced Results
This year, Amity was #1 in the DRG. Ninety-six students will be recognized for their achievements.

12. Correspondence

- a. Correspondence to Board Chair
Mr. Blake noted that he received a letter from Dr. Brady announcing his plans to retire at the end of the school year. He said that the community has shown support for the work that Dr. Brady has done here. He would like to reiterate that sentiment. The Board wishes him well after nine years here. There is much work to be done before Dr. Brady's retirement.

Move to accept (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Gedansky)

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

13. Superintendent's Report

- a. Personnel Report

14. Chairman's Report

- a. Committee Reports
 1. ACES – The report was provided under Item #4
 2. CAFE – Mr. Stirling reported that CAFE held its annual two-day conference. The conference addressed numerous topics, including teacher evaluation and community involvement. It provided great professional development for the board members who attended. The topic of creativity was explored, contrasting creativity with relying on tests. Mr. Stirling said that Dr. Brady has moved our district ahead of the curve with respect to that.
 3. Curriculum – Meeting 12/13/12, 5:15 p.m.
 4. Facilities – Meeting 12/18/12, 5:30 p.m.
 5. Finance
 - a. Discussion and Possible Action on Extension of Contract of Audit Firm
Mr. Levine noted that CCR was awarded the contract for the fiscal years ending June 30 of 2009, 2010, and 2011 with the option of auditing the District's financial statements for each of the subsequent fiscal years. The Amity Finance Committee recommended extending

the contract with the current firm and bidding next year. The District had a more extensive audit done at no additional charge because the company has more recently merged with a larger firm. There would be a 2.5 percent increase if the contract were to be extended.

Mr. Blake asked Mr. Levine whether he felt that it would be helpful to bring in a new firm to give a fresh look at the District. It is a generally accepted practice to make a change periodically.

Mr. Levine said that members of the Finance Committee did not see a problem with extending the contract, while committing to bidding the following year. He said that it is up to the Board.

Mr. Hurley said that he has a problem with not having a fixed end date for an audit firm and going beyond five years with a firm. The bid was for three years and two one year options. He added that it is a generally agreed to practice to change, although he has nothing negative to say about the firm.

Mr. Stirling noted that the firm provided good value for Amity. Work performed by CCR was re-examined due to the merge with Grant Thornton.

Mr. Browe questioned whether the District would have the option to return to this firm.

Mr. Levine said that he would have no difficulty with bidding.

Mr. Browe asked if the firm's bid could be public.

Dr. Brady replied that it would not. That is not how the process works. The firm might not bid.

Mr. Levine said that what Mr. Browe is suggesting is not a good way to do business.

Move to appoint the audit firm of Grant Thornton to audit the district's financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013, at a price of \$35,363 (Mr. Stirling, 2d Ms. Cardozo).

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

- b. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements
No changes were reported.
- c. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under \$3,000

Mr. Browe questioned the storage fee for heating oil. Dr. Brady said that we must pay the storage fee. The heating oil will be used at the middle schools. Even with the fee, Amity is still saving money because the oil was purchased at a favorable price.

6. Policy

7. Personnel

a. Administrator Search – Executive Session

Motion to enter Executive Session at 8:48 p.m. (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Crocco).

Vote in favor unanimous.

Motion passed.

Executive Session concluded at 9:06 p.m.

15. Items for the Next Agenda

No items were added to the agenda.

16. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m. (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Gedansky).

Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Lippard, recording clerk
Rita Gedansky, secretary

References:

- Minutes: Board of Education Regular Meeting, 11/12/12
Amity Finance Committee, 11/12/12
- Correspondence: John Brady to William Blake (12/3/12) re: Retirement
Vicenta Gibbons to John Ulatowski (11/13/12) re: Grant
- Memos: John Brady to Board of Education (11/30/12) re: Possible
Revision to 2012-2013 School Calendar
Jack Levine to John Brady (11/30/12) re: Audit Firm
- Reports: Amity Regional School District #5 Revenues and
Expenditures 2012-2013
Budget Transfers 2012-2013
- Policy: Personnel Certified/Non-Certified Non-Renewal Policy
4117.4 (a), 4117.4 (b), 4117.4 (c)