

MINUTES

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Nuzzo

Staff members present: Dr. Charles Britton (Principal, Amity High School), Dr. E. Marie McPadden (Amity curriculum director), Superintendent Charles Dumais, Jack Levine, Jim Saisa, Kevin Keller.

Also present: Ruth Natzel, and other members of the public.

A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education (BOE) was held on Monday, September 08, 2014 at 6:30 pm in the Presentation Room at the Amity District Offices.

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman William Blake called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.
3. **Approval of minutes.**
 - A. Regular BOE meeting, August 11, 2014
Motion by Ms. Cohen, second by Ms. Gedansky to accept the minutes as submitted.
 Mr. Hurley states that a correction is needed at the bottom of page 6, "that" should be corrected to "than".
 Mr. Blake stated that, before the vote, he would like to thank Mrs. Natzel for an outstanding job on the minutes.
Vote unanimous with abstentions by Mr. Browe, Mr. Demaio and Mr. Grasso **Motion carried**
4. **Public comment** – none.
5. **Student Report** – The new student representative to the board, senior George Grotheer was introduced. Mr. Grotheer greeted the Board, described recent activities at Amity High School as well as upcoming events and stated he is looking forward to the privilege of working with the Board.
6. **Report on 2014 CMT/CAPT Results** (enclosure). Dr. E. Marie McPadden presented the Connecticut Mastery Test/Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CMT/CAPT) test results to the Board via PowerPoint. Dr. McPadden pointed out changes and improvements in the scores for 2014 and also compared them scores from previous years as well as scores following the same students from 7th grade. Ms. Russo asks if the factors that caused scores to go up and down in comparison to Amity's District Reference Group (DRG) are known. Dr. McPadden answered that there are many reasons for this, including that it's not the same test. Mr. Hurley asked if the improvement in science scores indicates an improvement in the science programs in the middle schools. Mr. Britton answered that 3 years ago we had areas that needed improvement and now we are seeing consistent performance at a fairly high level – we want to see consistency rather than spikes up and down in the scores. Mr. Demaio asked if there is anything on the test that is not covered in grades 7, 8 and 9; are we preparing our students well enough to perform well on these state-mandated tests? Dr. McPadden says that some feedback is received from the state tests and Amity is on the right track but we don't know what the new science standards will entail and after that the new social studies standards after that. Curriculum meetings will take place as soon as the standards are rolled out; of note, there is no date for the standards to be publicized. Mr. Hurley stated that it's unfair to test students on standards that are not yet known. Dr. McPadden states that the new standards will require kindergarten students to count to 100, among other things, so there will be many changes. Mr. Blake asked what the takeaway is from these test results, i.e. are there areas that the district needs to concentrate on more. Dr. McPadden said that we must be sure students understand certain vocabulary-based concepts in middle school because without that, the content and concepts for the other subjects will not be as readily grasped.

Ms. Russo asked about the science program at the middle school in Orange for which funding was cut last year and whether anything has been done regarding remedying this. When the new standards are released, then we can formulate what should be done in Orange. Ms. Cohen asked about looking at specific skills to see where the gaps are. Dr. McPadden said that there is not enough feedback from the tests to determine where the gaps are specifically. Vocabulary and comprehension are two main points of focus at the high school and will this will continue. Teaches gave us feedback that they want vertical integration, which is looking at what is actually taught in each grade for each subject, finding the gaps and developing strategies and plans to fill the gaps. Mr. Stirling asked about how this affects personalized learning. Dr. McPadden said that this is also an area of focus and that this has to be studied and reviewed and then implemented. This could encompass the creation of things such as electronic portfolios and capstone projects. Ms. Cardozo asked about what is done for students individual learning styles and what opportunity there is for this to occur. Dr. McPadden states that strategies are being developed with the help of special education teachers and reading specialists and that individualized instruction should apply to all students, not just to students who fall in the parameters of the Bell curve. Mr. Dumais responded that individualized learning plans are being implemented and students are being given the opportunity to individualize their instruction. Mr. Dumais emphasized that the way the data is presented from the CMT/CAPT from year to year are not really "correctly" reports because the tests are different and the students are different. The tests give us a goal of having quality instructional practice because that is what improves student achievement. Mr. Browe said that mandates come from the state, teachers implement these things, but do we ever survey the students to ask them about the courses taken; that, if they were going to teach the course themselves to their younger sibling, how would you do it? We've been talking about lecturing versus getting students engaged in their learning, is there any instrument for surveying students? Mr. Dumais said that there is no questionnaire but that some teachers ask their students. Mr. Hurley wonders if this should be done in more classes across the curriculum. Dr. Dumais said the questionnaire does exist and they are in the process of asking alumni to evaluate how prepared they were for college. Mr. Demaio asked what the percentage of the students that did not meet goal simply don't want to learn but are taking these tests and how it affects the numbers. Mr. Dumais says there is no numerical answer for this, just the comparison of the DRG. Mr. Demaio asked how many special education studies take the tests and Mr. Dumais replies that most of them take the test.

7. Annual Facilities Report - Mr. Saisa gave an update on summer facilities projects (see the written report in the packet).

Middle schools were cleaned by July and high school cleaning and repair completed by mid-August using a new team approach. There were several positive takeaways from this new approach that can be used in the future.

(Mr. Dumais publicly acknowledged Mr. Saisa and the crew for a job well done along with the acquisition of the finish applicator)

Security upgrades were completed in the middle schools including electronic locks in the library with remote control.

New snack bar completed in the high school cafeteria, awaiting school logos.

Field house upgrade completed, including bathroom improvements.

Preventative maintenance was accomplished; HVAC equipment was inspected and cleaned.

Asphalt project completed with a re-do needed in some spots

Tennis court refurbishment completed.

Mold program implemented.

School Dude work order system was revamped for greater efficiency.

Update on Fuel Cell project - United Illuminating (UI) came on site last week with Fuel Cell Inc. (potential bidder) to evaluate the site and check the layout. It will be two to three weeks until report is received. There is considerable amount of cost savings tied to this HVAC/ natural gas project. The hope is to have the report in time for the October Board meeting. Ms. Cohen asked what the gas has to do with the HVAC. Mr. Saisa replied that because this is a comprehensive project there will be cost savings and incentives if the entire project is implemented. The HVAC project can be started immediately if the board agrees, no need to wait.

Mr. Blake asked if there were any problems with the indoor air quality at Orange Middle School like last year and Mr. Saisa said there have been none. However, the day after Labor Day was very humid and caused some condensation problems but major problems were averted by controlling the air intake for the buildings. Mr. Hurley asked about the cracks on the tennis courts which appear to be worse than was thought. They were not completely taken down to the base and so the cracks will recur in 4 to 5 years. There are several recommendations to completely repair the courts but they are expensive and will not need to be looked at for 4 or 5 years since they've been repaired.

8. **Presentation of Draft Goals** –Mr.Blake stated that there will be a Board retreat, possibly on October 7th, to take up these draft goals and have a presentation from Nick Caruso from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE). Mr. Dumais gave an overview of the goals and the specific steps to achieve each of said the two goals that the board has set (see packet for attachment); 1) Continuously enhance curriculum, teaching and assessment practices to best prepare students with knowledge and skills to succeed in the 21st century. Regarding the specifics of the first goal, Ms. Russo asked whether the test results previously discussed that don't give as much information as we'd like are what we are using to evaluate teachers. Mr. Dumais replied that yes, this is part of the requirements of the State of Connecticut and the tests can still give us a good idea of what is happening although comparing one year to another is complicated. Mr. Browe asked what percentage of the teacher evaluation comes from the testing. Mr. Dumais answered that it could be as much as 20%, perhaps a little less but it depends on the conversation that takes place to set the goal. Ms. Russo asked whether there was a way to discover whether or not everyone has access to technology, i.e., electronic devices, to confirm that every household has access to email and responds? Discussion and explanation followed about how to track this and there will be a conscious effort to overlap communication forms.

Mr. Hurley said that the Board has asked for copy of the health and safety reports and that these have not been received. Mr. Dumais will check this into this.

On page 8 of the presentation, 2014-2015 draft, Mr. Dumais is recommending a small change to the first goal, from "to continuously enhance curriculum, teaching and assessment practices to best prepare students with knowledge and skills to succeed in the 21st century to "continuously enhance curriculum, teaching and assessment practices **to personalize learning** and best prepare students with knowledge and skills to succeed in a **complex global society.**" Ms. Russo said that we need to define "knowledge and skills" more specifically. Mr. Dumais said that there will be some definition of this.

On page 9 an objective is listed as creation of individualized learning for each student; Mr. Hurley asked how this is measured. Mr. Dumais said that there is requirement to have a student success plan for each student in grades 6 through 12 which includes learning styles and other things. Portfolios and capstone projects can be integrated into this goal. We can also take greater advantage of PowerSchool including moving toward standard-based grading; instead of an A in algebra, a student would complete a set of skills in algebra and move on. Mr. Stirling asked if a student could then in theory move on once the knowledge and skills have been completed? The District plans to use Alert Solutions, which is part of PowerSchool, to increase and enhance communications. Ms. Russo asked if there was confirmation of parents receiving the information. Mr. Dumais said that there are ways to confirm that there is communication by use of confirmation of personal information, asking parents to log in at an open house, etc. We also plan to open up Atlas for curriculum to the parents so that they can see it. We also hope to try "unconferencing" (conference with no agenda, with the agenda being developed once the people get there) and use of social media for school information. We will be improving our K-12 coordination and collaboration. The shortened days are a first step in improving instruction and coordination. Through the shortened days and use of Atlas we will adhere to the Connecticut Core Standards.

"2) Continuously improve operations to ensure greatest efficiency and effectiveness." This goal remains the same. The fixed asset module will be added in and we will maximize cost savings and efficiency. We are trying to get everyone to recognize that there is a way to do things that save resources, money and time. Page 14 has two additions; human resources practices and procedures and maintaining clear and current policies. We will have a legal review of our hiring process. We will look at digital document storage. We have purchased AppliTrack and will be taking applications on-line. We will continue work on the hiring process to make it more uniform and transparent. Mr. Hurley asked that we make sure we are doing internal leadership training so that any new positions that open up can be filled internally and we can keep our quality staff here. Mr. Dumais agrees. Ms. Cohen asked about CAFE updates. Mr. Dumais said that we get those updates and he has asked for more comprehensive updates. Mr. Stirling asked if these items can be discussed at the retreat. Mr. Blake replied that this is the plan and if anyone has suggestions before the retreat, please send them to Mr. Dumais who welcomes any and all suggestions.

There is specific information that was gleaned from the leadership conference this summer and is included in this draft.

9. **Correspondence** – none.

10. **Superintendent's report**

- A. Personnel Report** (see enclosure). Since the last meeting we have hired a math teacher and a psychologist. We have not been able to find a qualified Spanish teacher for Bethany, using a long-term substitute.
Math teacher hired for Orange
Assistant coach for volleyball hired.
Three resignations.
- B. Other** – Alumni survey for class of 2009 through 2013 has just come in, results will be compiled and presented to the board.
Woodbridge selectman are meeting on September 10th to choose a replacement for Julie Altman in time for the Board retreat.
Retreat date for the Board is set for Monday October 7th.
Reminder that the next Board meeting is the 3rd Monday (rather than the 2nd Monday), October 20th, in Bethany.

11. Chairman's Report**A. Committee Reports**

1. **ACES** - none
2. **CABE** – Mr. Stirling says the leadership conference will take place on November 14th and 15th and would like to see 3 or 4 Board members attend. Great opportunity to network with other board members.
3. **Curriculum** – Curriculum committee has not met since Ms. Altman left, a new chairperson is needed and a meeting date needs to be set.
4. **Facilities** – Facilities has not met; Ms. Russo has agreed to co-chair that committee. (note that Ms. Russo left the meeting at this point)

5. Finance**a. Presentation of Annual Report on Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures.**

The board wishes to return unused funds in the Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures to the Member Towns. Unused funds are:

Black Box Theatre	\$ 742.21
HVAC Upgrade Project at Amity High School	\$2,766.78
District Office Air Handler	<u>\$ 294.00</u>
 Total	 \$3,802.99

b. Discussion and Possible Action on Contracts of \$25,000 or more.**1. Extending contract for Transportation Services**

Mr. Levine stated, "The Amity Board of Education entered into a five-year contract for transportation services beginning on July 1, 2012, and terminating on June 30, 2017. The contract requires negotiating prices for regularly scheduled runs, late runs and special runs for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. The Transportation Owner-Operators (Contractors) met with me and offered a 2% annual increase provided the contract is extended to June 30, 2020. This seems like a good proposal for both sides. The Amity Board of Education ("Board") has consistently waived the bidding of transportation services, because the community has been extremely pleased with the service. Unless the Board wants to bid this service, the proposed annual increase is modest."

Mr. Levine stated that we share busses with the elementary schools and that Mr. Dumais as well as the previous superintendents have made attempts to get the regional contracts in sync with the member towns. Mr. Horwitz asked if the drivers or the member towns have an aversion to getting them in sync. Mr. Dumais says that he thinks there is an aversion in general to getting them in sync. Mr. Blake asked about changing the terminus of our contract to be in sync with the others. Mr. Blake said the board has been supportive of the current setup with owner-operators but it would be good to know what other districts are paying for the same services and synchronize the terms. Mr. Levine said that he can get this information and this can be tabled until next month because it is early in the process. Mr. Hurley asked if this 2% increase includes the new security needs under the new Hazard Plan, and their responsibilities under the plan. Mr. Dumais answered that no, it is not included, that it would not be required unless the busses were needed for a hazard. This was tabled until the next Board meeting.

2. Extending contract for MUNIS Financial Reporting System

Mr. Levine stated, "We have been successfully using the MUNIS Financial Accounting Systems for about twelve years. The current three-year lease ends on June 30, 2015. We can send out Request for Proposals or extend the contract for an additional three years. Tyler Technologies has provided me with a quote of \$207,198.00 for three years, or \$69,066 per year. The quote has no increase in rates. I recommend we extend the contract for a three year period. The staff is well-trained on the system and it functions very well. The Auditors have been pleased with the financial reporting system. The Amity Board of Education would need to waive the bid requirement, which was done for the prior three-year term."

The following motion is recommended:

Motion by Mr. Stirling, second by Ms. Cardozo to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to sign a three-year extension of the current lease with Tyler Technologies for the MUNIS Financial Accounting Systems for a total cost of \$207,198.00 for three years, or \$69,066.00 per year. The Amity Board of Education waives the bid requirement.

Mr. Hurley asked if Tyler Technologies is the owner of the systems and if all the maintenance and upgrades are included in this price? All is included except for training which would be an extra cost. Mr. Blake called the question.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

c. Discussion of monthly financial statements. Mr. Dumais wanted to point out the need to address the surplus. On page 3, there is a list of 5 items that would be recommended for use of surplus money in an attempt to be transparent with the member towns. Mr. Stirling asked if the suggestion is that we make these public so that the towns are aware of what the needs are. Mr. Dumais says yes, it gives the towns the opportunity to see them. Ms. Cohen remarked that if we are that transparent ahead of time perhaps the towns will not oppose these things being in the budget or they will see that these are necessary items.

d. Director of Finance and Administration approved transfers of \$3,000 or more – none

e. Discussion and possible action on budget transfers of \$3,000 or more

The purpose of this motion is to return unused funds in the Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures to the Member Towns .

Motion by Mr. Sterling, second by Ms. Crocco to return the following unused funds in the Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures to the Member Towns

Black Box Theatre	\$ 742.21
HVAC Upgrade Project at Amity High School	\$2,766.78
District Office Air Handler	<u>\$ 294.00</u>
Total	\$3,802.99

Mr. Hurley asked if the other items that we are saving money for in the capital reserve, is there anything to indicate that any capital projects are underfunded and the monies reassigned rather than give it back to the towns? Mr. Levine replied that there is nothing known at this time. There was a \$3,000 difference taken out of the Facilities budget for the overrun on the cost of paving but there is nothing else that is known at this time. Chairman called the question.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

Motion by Mr. Stirling, second by Ms. Cohen to allocate the unused funds in the Reserve Fund for Capital and Nonrecurring Expenditures to the Member Towns, as follows:

Member Town	Percentage	Allocation
Bethany	20.042%	\$ 762.19
Orange	49.937%	\$1,899.10
Woodbridge	<u>30.021%</u>	<u>\$1,141.70</u>
Totals	100.000%	\$3,802.99

[Note: Percentage distribution is based on 2013-2014 Average Daily Membership]

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

f. Discussion and possible action on new funding requests

District Medical Malpractice Insurance

Thanks to Mr. Horwitz, we had our case reviewed in terms of our medical insurance and Mr. Horwitz was correct in his assessment. In a memo to Mr. Dumais dated August 28, 2014, Mr. Levine stated, "We recently discovered the medical malpractice insurance of our Medical Advisor and on-site physician for varsity home football games may ***not*** cover their work as a contracted service for our District. I believe it would be financially prudent to purchase medical malpractice insurance to protect the District, Medical Advisor, and doctor who attends Amity home football games. Our insurance agent obtained a quote of \$5,100.

This request was initially made last month but withdrawn in order to seek a legal opinion from our Board Attorney. Attorney Kyle A. McClain of Siegel, O'Connor, O'Donnell & Beck, P.C. reviewed all of the material. He stated, "The general rule in Connecticut is that a public entity is immune from liability for damages resulting from the acts or omissions of non-employees and non-agents, as well as damages arising from the ordinarily negligent acts or omissions of employees, officers and agents, as long as those acts or omissions are discretionary in nature. This general rule, however, may be inapplicable or subject to certain narrow exceptions depending on the facts and circumstances of a particular situation. Accordingly, while there is some exposure to liability for damages arising from the professional negligence, i.e., malpractice, of Amity's medical advisor and physician, that exposure is minimal, Therefore, it is my opinion, given the low level of exposure to liability, that the purchase of professional liability is not necessary given the expense." I understand there is no reason for the District to pay for medical malpractice insurance due to the immunity provided by law. However, I believe both doctors may not be covered by their own medical malpractice insurance in their advisory capacity for our District. We know this is true for at least one of the doctors.

We pay \$16,750.00 annually to the Medical Advisor and we pay \$236.40 per game to the doctor who provides medical coverage for Amity Football Team home games. We could require these doctors, or any doctors who perform these duties, to obtain or maintain professional liability insurance, i.e., medical malpractice insurance, that is applicable to the services they provide to Amity; add Amity as an additional insured on such malpractice insurance; and hold Amity harmless and indemnify Amity against all damages or losses resulting from the provision of his/her services. This was the recommendation of our attorney.

The question is whether or not one or both of these doctors, or any doctor, would be willing to obtain and maintain medical malpractice insurance that is applicable to the services they provide to Amity. If each doctor were to obtain such coverage for \$2,550 (as an example, using one-half of our quote), would the doctor want their fee increased to cover their cost of insurance? For the doctor who attends Amity Football Team home games, his TOTAL compensation is \$1,418.40 less taxes. The Medical Advisor's compensation would be reduced by slightly over 15 percent if his premium cost were \$2,550.

The District is required to have a Medical Advisor. It is also important to have a doctor present at our football games, especially in light of the high concern over possible concussions. The current payments to these doctors are relatively low. With this in mind, I recommend the District obtain this coverage to protect the District (for the 'minimal' exposure), Medical Advisor, and doctor who attends Amity home football games. "

Mr. Hurley recused himself from this motion and vote.

Motion by Mr. Stirling, second by Mr. Browe make the following budget transfer to pay for the premium on medical malpractice coverage:

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT NAME	FROM	TO
05-15-0000-5850	Contingency Account	\$5,100	
05-14-2510-5521	General Liability Insurance		\$5,100

Vote unanimous with Mr. Hurley abstaining

Motion carried

g. Other

1. Update on Woodbridge Summer Program at Amity Regional High School and related costs.

Mr. Dumais stated the program was very successful and was managed superbly by the facilities staff. He is in the process of ascertaining how Woodbridge pays Amity for the use of the facilities. A letter has been sent from Mr. Dumais and the auditor. A few more final steps need to be done to complete this but Amity and Woodbridge are working hard to make it happen.

2. Update on Summer Facilities Projects – Mr. Saisa completed this report earlier in the meeting.

3. Update on fuel cell project and engineering study – Mr. Saisa complete this update earlier in the meeting.

Chairman Blake noted that Ms. Crocco had been appointed to the Finance Committee and thanked her for her willingness to serve and also thanked Mr. Grasso for his years of service on that committee.

6. MicroGrid – Update completed earlier in the meeting by Mr. Saisa.

7. Policy – This was covered in the report on Draft Goals earlier in this meeting.

8. Personnel – Mr. Dumais said we have a legal start-date of October 6th for the negotiation process. A date for the personnel committee to meet will be set shortly.

12. Items for next agenda - please forward to Mr. Dumais or to Mr. Blake.

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 pm by Mr. Browe, second by Mr. Hurley

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth E. Natzel, Recording Clerk

Thomas Hurley, Secretary