

## MINUTES

**AMITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** 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:** Julie Altman

**Staff Members Present:** Charles Britton, Richard Dellinger, Shaun DeRosa, Kathleen Fuller Cutler, Kevin Keller, Jack Levine, Marianne Lippard, Terry Lumas, Marie McPadden, Michael Nast, Mary Raiola, Jim Saisa

**Also Present:** Patrick Dudley, Brian Fournier, Jim Leahy; other members of the Public

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A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education was held on Monday, December 9, 2013, at 6:30 p.m., in the cafeteria at Amity Regional High School.

- 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. Election of Officers**

The Board elected officers to serve during the next two-year term.

Ms. Cohen nominated Mr. Blake to continue in his role as Board chair. Mr. Stirling seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

*Motion to close the nominations* (Ms. Cardozo, 2d Mr. DeMaio).

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

*The vote in favor of electing Mr. Blake as chair was approved unanimously.*

Ms. Gedansky nominated Ms. Cohen to continue in her role as Board vice chair.

Mr. Hurley seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

*Motion to close the nominations* (Mr. Browe, 2d Ms. Crocco).

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

*The vote in favor of electing Ms. Cohen as vice chair was approved unanimously.*

Mr. DeMaio nominated Mr. Hurley to serve as Board secretary. Mr. Stirling seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

*Motion to close the nominations* (Ms. Cardozo, 2d Ms. Crocco).

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

*The vote in favor of electing Mr. Hurley to serve as secretary was approved unanimously.*

Mr. Blake thanked Ms. Gedansky for her many years of service in this role.

Mr. Stirling nominated Mr. Horwitz to continue to serve as Board treasurer. Ms. Russo seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.  
*Motion to close the nominations* (Ms. Gedansky, 2d Ms. Cardozo).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***  
*The vote in favor of electing Mr. Horwitz to serve as treasurer was approved unanimously.*

Ms. Russo nominated Mr. Browe to serve as Board assistant treasurer. Mr. Hurley seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.  
*Motion to close the nominations* (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. Horwitz).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***  
*The vote in favor of electing Mr. Browe to serve as assistant treasurer passed unanimously.*

**4. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Regular BOE Meeting, November 11, 2013  
*Motion to approve the minutes as presented* (Mr. Horwitz, 2d Ms. Cohen).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

**5. Discussion of 2014-2015 Budget**

In a memo dated December 5, 2013 from Mr. Nast to Members of the Amity Finance Committee and Amity Board of Education, an update on the 2014-2015 Budget is provided. Total operating expenditures in the preliminary 2014-2015 Budget are \$1,937,619 or 4.36 percent over the current budget. The member town allocations are up \$1,957,760 or 4.53 percent over the current budget. It was noted that Bethany's allocation is up \$352,247 due to a shift in student enrollment.

Mr. Nast described how the calculations were made to arrive at the current figures. Major 'non-negotiable' components of the increase were addressed. Included are \$665,249 in salaries; \$202,650 for paraprofessionals; \$459,610 for medical & dental Insurance/OPEB Trust; \$583,196 for special education transportation & tuition; \$61,200 for PowerSchool; \$19,492 for security; and \$60,000 for a telephone system. Mr. Nast noted that the administrative team looked at long-range plans when crafting the budget.

With a few retirements, there may be some savings if positions aren't filled, however, it is important to ensure that cuts do not affect the quality of the program at Amity. For example, we are implementing PowerSchool and this must be done correctly in order to see the benefits of the change.

Mr. Nast said that he also has concerns about after school security that he would like to address in the next budget cycle. Last year, a well-dressed person entered the school after hours and it was later determined that this person could not be identified.

Another concern that needs to be addressed in the immediate future has to do with the telephone system that we currently use. The company is going out of business and we cannot afford to take a chance that our 911 service might not work.

The budget increases over the last five years have been low, and this seems to have caught up with us. If we cut too much, we will start going backwards with our program. Mr. Nast pointed out that bringing the budget down just two percent will mean reducing the budget by \$1 million.

The administration is struggling with how to offset the projected increase. Not filling vacancies may help, but we want to investigate the impact. We are looking at districts that serve similar communities, such as West Hartford, Glastonbury and Madison. Mr. Nast said that he is seeking input from the Board.

Mr. Hurley said that he didn't see anything about back office computers. This need has been discussed for some time. We have a system that is obsolete and yet we are trying to run a top notch program without basic, current technology. If the system were to crash, we could lose student records and have a major problem.

Ms. Cohen said that Dr. Brady warned the Board about the problem of putting off these expenses. There is only so much that can be cut.

Mr. Nast noted that if we apply the excess from last year to the current budget, the figures could come down.

Mr. Blake noted that Mr. Nast will be working with the staff to address the budget over the next month and will report back next month.

## **6. Public Comment**

Brian Fournier, chairman of the Bethany Board of Education said that the residents of Bethany remain interested in exploring the possibility of sending sixth graders to Amity Middle School in Bethany. Minutes from previous meetings of this Board show that there have been some discussions on this topic, but no action was taken. He feels that a member of this Board has tried to derail the town referendum. He would like a timely response on whether Bethany can pursue the idea of moving the sixth graders to the middle school.

Jim Leahy of Orange, co-chair of the Orange Board of Finance, said that he came tonight to talk about the budget and the impact that it will have to the taxpayers. Every year the District has run into a surplus. Usually, between May and June the surplus increases. Despite a 1.9 percent budget increase, we ended up with a nearly \$500,000 surplus. He feels that the Board should go back and look at the total amount of the budget and take a close look at every expense. There should be an up-front look at some of these numbers.

Mr. Blake said that he would like to respond to some of Mr. Fournier's concerns. The Board did discuss the possibility of moving the sixth graders from Bethany into Amity Middle School in Bethany. During the last discussions, it was determined that rooms were available and this seemed like a worthwhile idea. There was interest in moving forward. The Board was looking for word from the Bethany Board of Education that Bethany would pick up the costs involved in moving the students. We never got a response. Mr. Blake asked that if Mr. Fournier has a problem with one member of this Board that he work it out with that person directly. This Board will give the idea a fair and thorough examination. We'd like to move forward.

## **7. Student Report**

Patrick Dudley, student government representative, said that a number of events took place at the High School recently and they went very well thanks to the support from faculty who helped with the planning. He thanked Mr. Kennedy for his work with the cast and crew on the fall/winter play, Twelve Angry Jurors. The play is thought provoking; with an interesting theme that examines morals and raises questions. Students are getting ready for the winter concert on December 12<sup>th</sup>. There is no admission to the concert and those who enjoy traditional seasonal music, as well as contemporary music, are welcome to attend. Amity students took part in a debate on November 16 and the students performed incredibly well. One team earned a top ranking. Patrick also highlighted the fact that students at the High School recently raised money to help a New Haven soup kitchen.

Mr. Hurley asked Patrick what play is planned for the spring. It was noted that the play will be In the Heights.

## **8. Superintendent's Report**

### **a. Personnel Report**

Mr. Nast discussed the Personnel Report, noting that there are three retirements listed.

*Motion to accept the retirements with thanks (Mr. Hurley, 2d Mr. Browe).*

*Discussion:* Mr. Hurley said that he would like to thank those retiring for the work they've done getting the reading scores up to the highest levels the District has seen and making us one of the top districts in the State.

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

*Motion passed.*

### **b. Other**

Mr. Nast said that he would like to change the calendar to move the Professional Development Day from March 21<sup>st</sup> to February 14<sup>th</sup> which appears to make more sense in the schedule.

It was noted that this item needs to be added to the agenda to be acted upon.

*Motion to consider and act on change to the calendar* (Mr. Stirling, 2d Mr. Hurley)  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

Mr. Stirling questioned whether this would affect the bus schedule for BOWA district.

Mr. Nast said that it would not.

*Motion to change the Professional Development Day from March 21, 2014 to February 14, 2014.* (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Cohen).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

Also looking at the calendar, Mr. Nast said that he would like to delay the exams in the second quarter to offer students time over the weekend to prepare.

*Motion to consider and act on change to the calendar* (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Gedansky).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

*Motion to approve change to the second quarter exam schedule at the High School* (Mr. Hurley, 2d Ms. Cohen).  
*Vote in favor unanimous.* ***Motion passed.***

Mr. Browe asked if there is any new information about a regional schedule.

Mr. Nast said that there was talk at an educator's meeting of a common schedule statewide, which would dictate when vacation schedules would be. This scenario, having everyone on the same schedule, would have advantages and disadvantages. Principals and teachers like the idea, however, the idea wasn't popular with school board members.

Mr. Browe questioned whether districts would be penalized for not adhering to a regional schedule.

Mr. Nast said that he wasn't aware of any penalties being considered for districts choosing not to adhere to the common schedule.

Mr. Nast noted that he received a letter from John Barile, superintendent of schools in Bethany, requesting consideration for a proposal to send sixth graders from Bethany to Amity Middle School in Bethany.

Ms. Russo said that members of this Board have expressed interest, but need more information. She questioned the appropriateness of Mr. Fournier's earlier comments. She believes that there is space at the middle school and

would like to offer it to Bethany if it would help reduce costs. If there is a way to make this work, the Board should explore it.

Mr. Hurley said that this issue was left off with the Board waiting for Bethany to come back with a proposal. He believed that Bethany wasn't interested when more information wasn't provided.

Mr. Blake said that he believes that this issue should be turned over to the new superintendent for a recommendation. He hopes to identify a new superintendent by early next year.

Ms. Cohen said that the town of Bethany should come to this Board with information and a commitment. The Board wasn't planning to invest money to explore this issue.

Ms. Russo, Mr. Blake, Mr. Browe, and Mr. Stirling all voiced interest in the proposal by Bethany to move sixth graders to the middle school building. Mr. Stirling noted that once the Board has a more definitive proposal, it would have to be considered by each of the subcommittees.

Mr. Nast said that he wanted to let everyone know that the superintendents from the three towns consulted with each other at 4:30 a.m. today to consider the weather and returned every phone call that he received regarding the weather. He added that he truly appreciates members of the Board keeping him abreast of situations unfolding at other schools, such as the recent lockdown in New Haven. This information is very useful.

Mr. Stirling said that he is sorry to lose quality teaching staff to retirements, but was interested in learning more about the timing of retirement announcements. Mr. Nast noted that retiring faculty must let the administration know of their plans by December 1, 2013 if they want severance pay. Those notifying the administration at a later date would have to wait.

Mr. Hurley said that following the insurance discussions at the last meeting, he would like to thank Mr. Levine for explaining the numbers.

## **9. Chairman's Report**

### **a. Committee Reports**

1. ACES – There was no report.
2. CABE – Mr. Stirling reported that the CAPSS convention took place. It was an excellent opportunity to learn about the future of education. Individualized instruction was an emerging trend that was discussed. This education model could allow students to graduate at a younger age if they've mastered the material. This is an idea that will likely be discussed over a period of years.

3. Curriculum – There has been no meeting since the last Board meeting.
4. Facilities – There has been no meeting since the last Board meeting.
5. Finance
  - a. Discussion and Possible Action on Contracts of \$35,000 or More

Mr. Levine noted that due to the efforts of Technology Education Specialist Lisa Lassen and District Technology Coordinator Shaun DeRosa, Amity was awarded a grant of \$186,568. Plans are to replace every switch in the District. The switches will be compatible with the new virtually segmented network architecture as well as any future VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone system that may be deployed. The result will be an updated infrastructure utilizing full 1Gigabyte bandwidth across the entire network. We will have segmented and managed virtual networks. The system will also be designed with possible future growth in mind so we do not find ourselves in a similar situation in the future.

Mr. DeRosa said that it is important to be able to do State testing without worries about system breakdowns. He compared the current technology situation to running a superhighway over a country road. There are currently 421 computers that students can use at the High School. Mr. Levine noted that the price for the work would likely exceed the amount of the grant. There is money in the budget for technology and the Contingency account can be used for any additional cost.

Ms. Cardozo questioned what the range in prices would be.

Ms. Russo said that without a bid, the recommended motion is like a blank check.

Mr. Stirling said that members of the Amity Finance Committee shared the same thoughts. Mr. Levine noted that as an alternative, the Committee specified that the amount from the Contingency Account could not exceed \$25,000.

Mr. Nast and Mr. Levine stressed that they did not want to wait, as the cost to complete this work would be lower before the end of the year and the upgrades could be completed sooner rather than later.

Ms. Russo said that while this is grant money, it is still money for the school.

Mr. Levine said that bids will be opened this Friday. If the bids are higher, he and Mr. DeRosa can determine how to scale back the work.

Ms. Russo said that a special meeting can be set up once the bids are opened.

Mr. DeMaio stated that Amity can't be the only District in the State experiencing this problem with the infrastructure.

Dr. McPadden said that some districts are administering the CAPT and CMT. The District did apply for \$430,000 of grant money.

The Board set a date for a special meeting to take place at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> in Orange to discuss and possibly act on the submitted bid proposals.

b. Discussion of Monthly Financial Statements

There were no questions.

c. Director of Finance and Administration Approved Transfers Under \$3,000

There was no discussion.

d. Discussion and Possible Action on New Funding Request

In a December 3, 2013 memo from Mr. Levine to Mr. Nast, he recommends the Board approve a budget transfer of \$12,899 for a replacement hot water heater at the Orange Middle School. The hot water heater has been ordered. The water heater developed a small leak. If the tank completely fails, we would not be supplying domestic hot water to the building. This is a sanitation issue for the kitchen and other building occupants as they would not have hot water to wash dishes, plans, or hands. Kitchens are required to provide 180 degree rinse in the dish washer machines and that could not be achieved with the lack of domestic hot water supplied to the booster heater in the kitchen.

*Move to make the following budget transfer of \$12,899 to pay Tower Hill Sales Associates, Inc. for the purchase of a stainless steel tank for the Orange Middle School:*

<u>Account Number</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
05-15-0000-5850	Contingency Account	\$12,899	
02-14-2600-5731	Equipment – Replacement		\$12,899

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

*Motion passed.*

e. Presentation of Amity Audit Status Report

Mr. Levine noted that Ms. Lumas and the finance staff did a marvelous job on the audit. Mr. Stirling noted that the contract for an auditor will be put out to bid soon.



6. Policy – There is no meeting planned at this time.
7. Personnel – Mr. Blake said that an email will be sent out soon regarding assignments, he recommended that Board members respond to the email to ensure that their preferences are met.
  - a. Executive Session – Negotiations

*Vote to enter Executive Session and invite Mr. Nast to participate (Ms. Russo, 2d Mr. Hurley).*

*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

The Board entered into Executive Session at 8:03 p.m. and returned to regular session at 8:25 p.m.

- b. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the Amity Regional School District No. 5 Administrators' 2014-2017 Contract  
*Motion to accept the agreement (Ms. Cohen, 2d Ms. Gedansky).*  
*Discussion:* Mr. Blake thanked the administrators. We have a contract.  
*Vote in favor unanimous.*

***Motion passed.***

#### **10. Items for the Next Agenda**

No new items were added.

#### **11. Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m.*

***Motion passed; meeting adjourned.***

Respectfully submitted,

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Marianne Lippard, recording clerk  
Thomas Hurley, secretary

**References/Attachments:**

**Minutes:** Amity Finance Committee Meeting, 10/21/13

**Reports:** Amity Regional School District No. 5 Budget Transfers 2013-2014  
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Year-to-Date Budget  
Report, 12/3/13  
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Revenues and Expenditures  
for FY 2013-2014  
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Executive Summary – Third  
Quarter 2013  
Amity Regional School District No. 5 Audit Status Report,  
11/27/13

**Memos:** Jack B. Levine to Michael R. Nast, 12/5/13, re: Award of  
Contracts of \$35,000 or More  
Jack B. Levine to Michael R. Nast, 12/3/13, re: New Funding  
Request for Fiscal Year  
Michael R. Nast to Members of Amity Finance Committee and  
Amity Board of Education, 12/5/13, re: Update on 2014-2015  
Budget