

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman William Blake, Mr. John Belfonti, Mr. Christopher Browe, Ms. Patricia Cardozo, Ms. Sue Cohen, Mr. Steven DeMaio, Ms. Amy Esposito, Ms. Rita Gedansky, Mr. Thomas Hurley, Ms. Tracey Lane Russo; Ms. Sheila McCreven Mr. James Stirling and Ms. Diane Urbano.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

Staff members present: Dr. Charles Dumais, Ms. Terry Lumas, Mr. Shawn DeRosa, Mr. Jason Woods, Dr. Marie McPadden, Ms. Mary Raiola, Ms. Anna Mahon and Mr. Seth Davis.

Also present: Mrs. Ruth Natzel, Mr. R. J. Kaoud, and other members of the public.

A regular meeting of the Amity Regional Board of Education (BOE) was held on Monday, December 14, 2015 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 6:35 pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by those present.
3. **Swearing in of new Board member Amy Esposito from Orange.**
4. **Election of officers-** Per the Board bylaws, Chairman Blake turned the Chair over to Dr. Dumais for nomination and election of Board Chair.

Dr. Dumais opened the floor for nominations for Board Chair.

Mr. Blake was nominated for the position of Chairman by Ms. Gedansky, 2nd by Ms. Cohen.

There were no other nominations; nominations were closed.

Vote unanimous (Ms. McCreven abstained by her absence)

Motion carried

Mr. Blake took over as Chairman and thanked the Board for their trust and support.

Mr. Blake opened the floor for nominations for vice-chair.

Ms. Lane- Russo was nominated for the position of Vice-Chair by Ms. Cohen, 2nd by Mr. Hurley

There were no other nominations; nominations were closed.

Vote unanimous (Ms. McCreven abstained by her absence)

Motion carried

Mr. Blake opened the floor for nominations for secretary.

Mr. Hurley was nominated for the position of secretary by Mr. Browe, 2nd by Mr. DeMaio.

There were no other nominations; nominations were closed.

Vote unanimous (Ms. McCreven abstained by her absence)

Motion carried

Mr. Browe was nominated for the position of treasurer by Mr. DeMaio, 2nd by Mr. Hurley.

There were no other nominations; nominations were closed.

Vote unanimous (Ms. McCreven abstained by her absence)

Motion carried

Ms. Cardozo was nominated for the position of assistant treasurer by Ms. Cohen, 2nd by Mr. Browe.

There were no other nominations; nominations were closed.

Vote unanimous (Ms. McCreven abstained by her absence)

Motion carried

Mr. Blake welcomed the new officers and thanked Ms. Cohen for her years of service (since 2002) as an officer.

5. Approval of minutes.**A. Regular BOE meeting, November 09 , 2015 (enclosure)**

Motion by Ms. Cohen, 2nd by Ms. Russo to accept the minutes as read.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

6. Discussion and possible action on 2016-2017 calendar (enclosure)

Motion by Mr. Hurley, 2nd by Mr. Belfonti to accept the calendar as presented.

There was a question from Ms. Russo regarding the calendar in comparison to the elementary schools and a question regarding the date set for graduation. Dr. Dumais answered that there were a few differences between the calendars because of contract issues/professional development. Ms. Cardozo asked if the total days, 181, was low for Amity. Dr. Dumais answered that there were 182 days last year.

Ms. McCreven arrived at 6:45 pm

There was discussion regarding the graduation date and whether or not graduation should be the last day of school, knowing that the last day of school could change if there are numerous snow days. It was agreed that a note could be made on the calendar that graduation is scheduled for that date as written but that it would be subject to change.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

7. Adult education report – Seth Davis (enclosure, page 9)

Mr. Davis highlighted the enclosed report regarding adult and student programs. There has been a successful summer drama program; band programs are at a steady number. There is continued strong enrollment in the arts, ballroom dancing, yoga and tai chi. For students there is driver education and an SAT course that are doing well. Enrollment was down this fall; a postcard was sent out for online registration rather than a catalogue in order to save money but this seems to have led to decreased enrollment so they will go back to a printed catalogue.

There were comments and questions from the Board members about printing a catalogue next time and ways to offset the cost of the printing, perhaps making the catalogue smaller/less wordy and have more detailed information on line. Ms. Urbano asked about the financing of the courses and asked whether it was meant for the programs to make a profit. Mr. Davis explained that the courses are not meant to operate to make a profit but rather to be a public service and break even and certainly not to operate at a loss. Mr. Stirling stated that he and his wife took an adult education course for the first time and that they really enjoyed it. Mr. Browe also commented that his daughter has a great experience in the summer drama program. Ms. Cohen spoke about other educational opportunities provided by ACES and suggested that perhaps Amity could use their summer program for student credit recovery.

8. Public Comment

Dr. Brian Laubstein from Bethany spoke. He stated his concern over the science education provided by Amity and the sending elementary school in Bethany.

Chairman Blake announced that Ms. Gedansky is retiring from the Board after many years of service. She was formerly a teacher in the district and she and her husband continue to be supporters of Amity athletics. A reception to honor Ms. Gedansky will take place at a later date. Ms. Gedansky thanked the board members and those present for all their support.

9. Student Report

Mr. R. J. Kaoud gave an update on events at Amity High School over the past month as well as informing the Board of upcoming events. Winter sports have begun. During the week of Thanksgiving week school spirit week took place and was successful with a pep rally on that Wednesday. The school play was performed in early December and it was

well done and well-received. There was a fundraiser for the drama programs, 6 hours of Star Wars for which admission was charged. Last week the middle school students came and spent a day at the high school which included meetings with Ms. Mahan and other staff regarding courses and expectations at Amity as well as a tour of the school with high school students assisting. Homecoming Dance was the last Friday in November; the committee for the dance worked hard and made it a great event.

A new program was started called "Amity Talks" (similar to TED talks found on the web) which was a student idea. The talks took place after school and were live-streamed and were very well received. So far, only teachers have presented; the next phase will be teachers and students and the third phase will be students.

Mr. Stirling asked about the student response to the school play; Mr. Kaoud stated that the students learned lessons about peer pressure, rumors and misconceptions. Ms. McCreven stated the students in the play understudied with the wrestling team in order to learn to wrestle authentically for the play.

Ms. Urbano stated that she visited the Senior Lounge and was impressed with it and the students.

10. Correspondence – none.

11. Superintendent's Report

A. Personnel Report – (enclosure)

Dr. Dumais highlighted the names of those who are retiring from or leaving the district in his report.

B. Other

Dr. Dumais reported on some questions and items that were brought up at the last Board meeting: He stated that tabletop exercises for security have been ongoing as part of improvement in security and in staff response in case of an emergency.

Dr. Dumais reminded the board that each principal sends out a weekly update of events for the schools.

Dr. Dumais updated the board regarding the policy for administration of psychotropic medication – these are only administered under the advisement of a physician.

More staff are being trained in emergency medical procedures and procedures for procurement and storage of EpiPens and hospital choice when an ambulance is called for a student.

Dr. Dumais reported on the freedom of information in public comments and what our attorney has advised in this regard; the Board should protect themselves by not allowing the confidential information in the minutes but that a speaker can certainly disclose whatever they choose. There was much discussion regarding public comment at the Board meeting, the fact that the meeting is live-streamed and recorded, whether the student is over or under the age of 18, and what the rights and responsibilities are for the Board and for the public. Ms. Lane-Russo stated that some Boards have a form that is filled out if a person speaks on the record to give permission for their comments to be broadcast and included in the minutes. Dr. Dumais will get some clarification on whether or not information should be included in the minutes if a member of the public specifically states they want it in the minutes.

Mr. Browe asked that perhaps the Board could have a special meeting/workshop/retreat with the Board attorney present to answer these kinds of questions. There was discussion regarding the best way to get this legal information in terms of time and cost. Dr. Dumais stated that this could be done under the auspices of CAFE at much lower or no cost. Dr. Dumais reported that today he led the 2nd Instructional Rounds with a focus on student collaboration and student-generated questions.

Ms. Mahon has been participating in Great Schools Partnership.

Dr. Dumais highlighted further items in his report regarding staff participation in various workshops (Dr. McPadden, Ms. Raiola).

Mr. Hurley asked how we detect a knowledge gap in groups of students and what is done to remedy that. Dr. McPadden answered that the information from the current testing gives excellent information regarding any gaps and then the teachers work to incorporate the necessary information and make all adjustments necessary.

Ms. Urbano asked if this addressed the question the parent asked in public comments. Dr. Dumais reinforced Dr. McPadden's answer. The State science test is done in 5th grade, 8th grade and 10th grade. The District has no control over what is taught in 5th grade but they District is working closely with the elementary schools to make sure that science standards are met. Ms. Lane-Russo stated she took the public comments as "no science is being taught in 7th and 8th grade." Dr. McPadden answered that indeed middle school students are being taught science. Dr. Dumais stated that he would be happy to update the Board regarding this subject.

Parent University held on November 17th attended by 30 people. The next one will be on January 12, 2016 at Orange Middle School.

Dr. Dumais highlighted other upcoming meetings in his report as well as other upcoming plans.

12. Chairman's Report -

A. Committee Reports

1. ACES

Ms. Cohen attended a special meeting at which time student art was chosen to be printed on holiday cards, which she handed out to Board members. She reported ACES will be improving and expanding its facilities in Hamden and New Haven.

2. CABA

Ms. McCreven reported that the CABA convention took place last month. There was much pertinent information presented with excellent speakers and informative breakout sessions. Mr. Stirling also reported that he gleaned much from his attendance at the convention. Ms. Cohen commented on the elementary-age children who did a presentation at the convention.

3. Curriculum

The Curriculum Committee has not met since the October meeting where much was accomplished; they will meet again in January.

4. Facilities

A. Facilities Department monthly report, November 2015 (enclosure)

Ms. Lane-Russo reported on the Facilities Committee meeting in November that resulted in the enclosed plan for capital improvement.

Chairman Blake commended the Facilities Committee and the administration for being pro-active regarding this capital improvement plan.

There were questions and discussion regarding the projects to be bonded, how they should be broken down and whether or not these items are necessary items or a "wishlist". Mr. Levine answered and explained the process that took place regarding the projects on the spreadsheet.

Ms. Lane-Russo left the meeting at 7:55 pm

There was lengthy discussion by the Board members regarding bonding, funding and planning and how to best present this in the budget. Mr. Levine and Dr. Dumais answered all the questions the Board had regarding the plan.

5. Finance

A. Presentation and discussion of Superintendent's update of 2016-2017 budget

1. Major budget drivers and risk factors

2. **Potential bonding of facilities projects**
3. **Justification for bonding projects**

Dr. Dumais updated the Board on the budget process. The initial budget requests were an increase of about 5.5%. Dr. Dumais highlighted the changes for the member towns, fixed costs associated with staff contracts and healthcare, the OPEB trust, "risk versus choice factors". Variables include the possibility that Bethany may drop some of their school buses which would increase the figure for Amity's bussing needs. The figure for special education transportation and tuition in the budget is a best-guess figure at this point and is an approximately \$300,000 increase. Amity also has a debt of \$145,000 owed to State of Connecticut due to refinance of building projects where Amity saved money. The State has not called this amount due but considering the condition of the State budget, it is anticipated that this would be called in; therefore, it is recommended that this amount be placed in reserve to cover this cost.

Mr. Stirling asked why Amity has to absorb the cost if Bethany is the one reducing the buses. Mr. Levine explained how the "shared bus" situation works.

Dr. Dumais stated that the final budget will be ready to present to the Board in January.

B. Discussion of monthly financial statements

Ms. McCreven asked about the "identification of a high number of white autistic students" as stated in the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting regarding a special education grant assessment, and what the training for staff was. Dr. Dumais will get further information about this from Ms. Raiola.

C. Director of Finance and Administration approved transfers under \$3,000 (enclosure)

D. Other

1. Update on financial audit

Mr. Levine stated that the audit is finished and it is under 2nd-partner review. The full report should come to the Board in January 2016.

6. Policy

A. Second reading of the following:

1. **Policy 1331 – Community Relations – smoke-free environment**
2. **Policy 5141.4 – Students – Reporting of child abuse and neglect**
3. **Policy 5144.1 – Students – Use of physical force, physical restraint/seclusion**
4. **Policy 5144.4 – Students – Discipline, physical exercise and discipline of students**

Motion by Ms. Cohen, second by Ms. Urbano to approve Policy 1331, 5141.4, 5144.1 and 5144.4

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

B. First reading of the following (pages 46 – 111):

1. **Policy 5141 – Student Health Services**
2. **Policy 5141.21 – Administering medications**
3. **Policy 5141.22 – Communicable diseases**
4. **Policy 5141.231 – Psychotropic drugs**
5. **Policy 5141.25 – Special health care needs**
6. **Policy 5141.3 – Immunizations**

Mr. Hurley explained the changes in the policies presented for a first read.

Ms. McCreven asked about the inclusion of head lice as a communicable disease. This would be a decision made

by the medical director of the district at the time and could also include other contagious disease scenarios.

7. Personnel

Ms. Cohen reported that the Personnel Committee met – one contract has a tentative agreement ratified and one contract will be going to arbitration. She highlighted the other items that were on the agenda for the Committee meeting.

13. Items for next agenda – please forward any items to Dr. Dumais or Mr. Blake.

14. Adjournment

Mr. Hurley told the Board that the Policy meeting scheduled for December 21st has a time change and may not even be held; he asked the members to please watch their email for notification regarding the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Hurley , 2nd by Mr. DeMaio to adjourn at 8:45 pm.

Vote unanimous

Motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth E. Natzel, Recording Clerk

Thomas Hurley, Secretary